

No. 31 of 2009



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2009

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MAURITIUS

Fourth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 31 of 2009

Sitting of Tuesday 24 November 2009

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis

at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPER LAID

The Ag. Prime Minister: Sir, the Paper has been laid on the Table –

Prime Minister's Office -

Certificate of Urgency in respect of The Mauritius Blood
Service Bill (No. XXII of 2009)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

LAND BASED OCEANIC INDUSTRY PROJECT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked Dr. the Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Land Based Oceanic Industry Project, he will state –

- (a) if any legislation will be introduced in relation thereto;
- (b) the number of phases thereof;
- (c) if the strategic partner has now been chosen and, if so, on what terms and conditions;
- (d) the outcome of the calls for equity participation and for expressions of interest in the Green Data Centre;
- (e) the mode of financing the infrastructure, and
- (f) the sums disbursed as at to date thereon by the Board of Investment, the State Investment Corporation and Government.

The Ag. Prime Minister (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker Sir, the Land Based Oceanic Industry Project conceived in 2005 is based on the commercial exploitation of very deep ocean water currents with valuable characteristics including a constant six degrees cold temperature enriched in mineral and nutrients.

In 2005, a Task Force was established by Government under the chairmanship of the Director, Mauritius Research Council to carry out a pre-feasibility study on the establishment of a deep sea desalination mineral water facility. The Task Force included the representatives of the Ministries responsible for fisheries, agro industry, public utilities and finance, the Mauritius Oceanography Institute, the Board of Investment and two co-opted members, namely Mr Mohamed Vayid and Dr. B. K. Baguant.

It benefited from the advice of Professor Patrick Takahashi of the Hawaiian Natural Energy Institute and Mr Mike Smart, Project Manager of Petzetakis of South Africa, a firm specialised in seawater pipe laying.

Dr. A. Suddhoo, Director of Mauritius Research Council, Mr Mohamed Vayid and Dr. Aubeeluck, representative of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment made a trip to Hawaii and visited Makai Ocean Engineering, the National Energy Laboratory of Hawaii and the Water Bottling Plant and other installations and submitted its report in December 2005. The Recommendations of the Task Force were as follows -

- (i) Mauritius may be positioned at a vantage point to exploit deep sea water;
- (ii) an initial amount Rs10 m. be provided for technical studies and market surveys;
- (iii) oceanographic surveys be carried out with a view to determine the purity and mineral value of the water;
- (iv) a new entity be created to encompass different activities and a regulatory body be set up to supervise, monitor and control standards;
- (v) a campaign be carried out to launch and attract investors, and
- (vi) a public company be created with an authorised capital of Rs500 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in January 2006, the Mauritius Research Council contracted Makai Ocean Engineering of Hawaii to work out a conceptual design and economic assessment and recommend the best site for the installation of the intake pipe, taking into account the marine and land based characteristics.

Twelve potential sites were identified and after detailed technical and financial analysis, three sites were retained, namely Flic en Flac, Les Salines and Belle Mare.

Based on the technical and financial analysis of the three sites and bathymetry tests, Flic en Flac was recommended as the best site. One of the determining criteria was the shortest distance from the coast to reach water at 1000 meters depth and the lowest seawater capital development costs.

The Government is most grateful to the Government of India for providing assistance of the Indian Navy in bathymetry and water sampling. Such an exercise would have been extremely costly to the Government of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in October 2006, a company under the name of Mauritius Land Based Oceanic Park Limited (MLOPL) was set up with the State Investment Corporation as the main shareholder, with an open shareholding to accommodate investors in the project. The MLOPL would eventually have exclusive concessionary rights to pump water and distribute same to downstream operators.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now come to part (a) of the question regarding legislation, I am informed that the Prime Minister's Office is working with the Attorney-General's Office on the appropriate legal framework for the implementation of the project.

However, the basic legislative framework is to be found in the Maritime Zones Act 2005. Given the nature and magnitude of the project, the final legislative framework specific to this project is being finalised by the Attorney General's Office, given that specific concession will have to be given to the Mauritius Land Based Oceanic Park Ltd.

As regards the number of phases, a site of 120 hectares belonging to Médine Sugar Estate has been identified for the implementation of the project. The first phase consists of 10 hectares to exploit the coldness of the sea water at a depth of 1000 meters for air conditioning of a data centre of 10,000 square metres. Local and international data centre operators would have the opportunity to lease and operate IT infrastructure from Mauritius or building their own data centre. Out of the 10,000 square meters identified for green data centre, a demand for 6,000 square meters has already been identified by the Board of Investment. The lead partner will bring in the balance.

The subsequent phases of the project will comprise green and eco-friendly activities in relation to aquaculture, renewable energy development, pharmaceutical products and desalination plant for bottled mineral water of high quality.

In 2007, a consortium of legal, financial and technical advisers Gide Loyrette Nouel was recruited as Transaction Adviser after international bidding for a total price of USD985,000 to develop necessary project documents and assist in identifying potential bidders. A flexible project structure had been identified with an upstream strategic partner investing in pumping and related infrastructure to

supply deep sea water to downstream operators. The final report of the transaction adviser was obtained in August 2008. After a two stage of bidding process to appoint a strategic partner for the project, no reasonably acceptable proposals were received. The contract of the transaction adviser was terminated and only \$644,250 were paid.

Expression of Interest 2009

An expression of interest for equity and strategic participation for a revised project oriented on Green Data Centre was launched on 07 July 2009. At the closing date of 31 July, expressions of interest were received from seven parties out of which three were responsive as follows -

- (a) Bhumishq Group – Mauritius;
- (b) Immobilier et Conseil Ltée – Mauritius, and
- (c) Thompson Chalon and Associates, a consortium of South Africa, USA investors.

Following an Investor Conference held on 29 August 2009, and after examination of the offers, the Mauritius Land Based Oceanic Park Ltd agreed that

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- (i) Thompson Chalon and Associates meets the requirements as the potential lead partner, and
- (ii) Bhumishq Group and Immobilier Conseil have manifested keen interest to participate in downstream operations.

Thompson Chalon and Associates have been selected on the basis of its vision of the park, the time frame for implementation of the project, the financial capability and the ability to secure operators for 10,000 square meters of green data centres.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between MLOPL and Thompson Chalon and Associates on 13 November 2009. The purpose of the MoU is to provide a framework of partnership between MLOPL and the strategic partner. The MoU is valid until end January 2010, by which time financial closure should have been achieved. The strategic partner has undertaken to obtain commitment from data centre operators and other downstream players to carry out business in the context of the project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the financing of the project -

- (i) it is estimated that phase I of the project comprising pumping of water onto land for cooling 10,000 square meters of data centre would require an investment of around \$60 m.;
- (ii) based on the forthcoming Master Plan and Feasibility Study on the investment for phase I, currently being undertaken by the lead strategic partner, the appropriate mix of equity and debt financing will be determined;
- (iii) the strategic partner has agreed to participate in the shareholding of MLOPL up to 75%. The remaining 25% equity will be held by the SIC together with SIT and the DBM. An initial equity participation of \$10 m. is being committed out of which the lead partner will inject \$7.5 m., and
- (iv) as regards offsite infrastructure comprising provision of electricity, water, access road and drainage, Government has already made a token provision of Rs10 m. in the Budget 2010. The final cost would be assessed in the context of the ongoing Master Plan and Feasibility Study.

The House may wish to note that the *Agence Française de Développement* has agreed to provide technical assistance for the preparation of a *Cahier des Charges* for the promoter to comply with under the *Convention de Financement* which I signed recently.

Mr Speaker, Sir, lastly, as regards the sums disbursed as at to date by the BOI, SIC and Government -

- (a) in 2006, Government incurred an expenditure of about Rs6 m. for the pre-feasibility study undertaken by Makai Ocean Engineering together with the engineering design for the pipe laying as well as downstream commercial activities;
- (b) an amount of Rs380,535 has been disbursed by MLOPL on two overseas missions which were undertaken by the Director of Mauritius Research Council in May 2008 and the Managing Director of the State Investment Corporation in January 2009, respectively, and

- (c) an amount of \$644,250 has been disbursed with regard to payment of the transaction adviser, Gide Loyrette Nouel (GLN) consortium, hired in November 2007.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think, I heard the hon. Ag. Prime Minister say that the legislation being prepared will have to cater for specific or special concessions that will be granted to the company concerned, that is, Mauritius Land Based Oceanic Park Ltd. Can we have an indication of what specific or special concession we are talking about?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is difficult for me, at this stage, to spell out the details, but essentially this is being worked out and it will be worked out with all partners concerned.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister of Finance, in his Budget Speech, was not very specific. I quote: “phase I of the park will begin in 2010”. Can I request the Ag. Prime Minister to be more specific about when should the pumping of the water start? When can we expect the first firms in the park to start operating?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said, by January 2010, the lead partners will come out with the details of the feasibility and so on. After that, we will work it out, but we must not be over-optimistic as well. It is a difficult new technology for Mauritius and we have to be cautious as we go along. But I am quite confident that this project will take shape in 2010, whether it is mid 2010 or last part of 2010, but it will take shape. The laying down of the pipe is not an easy project, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is difficult, it has been difficult to choose the site and even today questions are still being put about the morphology of the seabed and so on and so forth. I can give assurance to the House that we will go quickly, but with caution as regards this project.

Mr Bérenger: I am a bit confused because I heard the Ag. Prime Minister talk of a strategic partner at one point, then the lead partner and then the strategic lead partner. At one point I seem to understand – I think I understood - that the exercise to find a strategic partner for the whole project did not work out. Can I know where things stand? Do we have a strategic partner or lead partner for the whole project or only for the first phase, that is, the park?

The Ag. Prime Minister: We have firmly a lead partner for the first phase, but there has been the expression, as I said, from the other two, Bhumishq and another one, for participating in the project. At the moment the 10,000 square metres of cooling data centre is being taken care of. The others will follow and, as

far as I gather, the other two that were interested, are very interested in going downstream and in providing other facilities. Cooling is not the only activity, as we have said, there is also the question of generating wind energy, photovoltaic clean and renewable energy. There is a lot of prospects, but the two other companies have expressed an interest to continue working with a lead partner and I hope they will be partners, whether we call them sub-leading or associate leading, whatever it is, but they will be there.

Mr Bérenger: It means that if we had chosen a strategic partner for the whole project and it would have become the majority shareholder or otherwise in the company concerned, in the Mauritius Land Based Oceanic Park Ltd., but now, from what I understand, it is the lead partner for the first phase that has come in 75% shareholding in the company. How are we going to accommodate the others and specifically if we do reach a decision on a strategic partner for the whole project?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't think we will get a strategic partner for the whole project. I believe in taking it step by step and at this juncture, I repeat again, we have got a firm project with a possibility of others joining in as we go along and the MLOPL will be responsible for coordinating this project. So, let's take it one by one! But, as I repeat again, I feel myself it is an exciting project; we are talking about renewable energy, green ecopark, aquaculture, mineral water and so on. As we get along, we will incorporate them in.

Mr Bérenger: Can I make a request as to whether the hon. Ag. Prime Minister could circulate the breakdown of shareholding and Board membership of Mauritius Land Based Oceanic Park Ltd before and after the recent transaction? As we know, we can go to the Registrar of Companies, but this has just taken place. Can the Ag. Prime Minister circulate the breakdown of shareholding and Board membership before and after the last transaction?

The Ag. Prime Minister: At this juncture, Mr Speaker, Sir, the MLOPL has got a shareholding of Rs13.5 m., DBM: Rs3 m. and SIT: Rs5 m. This is the sort of input, but by January we will know.

Mr Bérenger: If I can move on to the infrastructural cost and how the infrastructure is being financed, can I have an indication again of the time frame as to when we expect infrastructural works to start?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, it will be after January. Whether it is in June, July or August, I can't say, but it will be after January.

Mr Bérenger: Can we have an idea, for the first phase, at least, of what will be the electricity requirements?

The Ag. Prime Minister: We are banking on the sea water air conditioning supplying more than 50% of the energy requirements. It has not been worked out yet, but I am confident it will be achieved through cooling. There has been an interest also to generate renewable energy, but we will come to that. Thomson Chalon and Associates has presented a project only last week about renewable energy. They said it is a new technology. It is not on anywhere else. So, it is difficult for me to say, but we will go along with it and see how it works. The idea is to save electricity and our energy bill and to reduce our CO₂ emission.

Mr Bérenger: I think I heard the hon. Ag. Prime Minister say that for the first phase, the major part of the land area to be occupied by firms interested in that data park has already been targeted by companies. Are those companies in presence of what they will have to pay in terms of electricity and other charges?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am sure they will work it out as they come along, but they have an idea, Mr Speaker, Sir. The answer is yes. Based on their requirements elsewhere in Mauritius and the possibility of salt water air conditioning, the answer is yes. The estimation for the phase I is 20 Megawatts. How this is produced is another matter for discussion.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether, apart from Hawaii, do we know of any other project which has successfully been implemented and which could inspire Mauritian experience?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of anywhere else. I would like to go a little bit further than the Private Notice Question. They bottle and sell to Japan mostly. When we embarked, we did it mostly on the special water - I call it special water - but we could not get any interest at that time because we were looking at the Middle East. But, there has been a renewal of interest recently. I won't say anymore. This is probably third or fourth in our project agenda, but it is still there. It has not gone away.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the area at sea, may I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether we have an idea of the perimeter at sea which is going to

be used for the project and whether it is going to be delimited so as to create an exclusive zone where nobody could have access to it?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Makai is working on it, Mr Speaker, Sir and I will provide the details. I have not got it, but we are looking into it and we must not forget also that we are going to have an environmental impact assessment on this project. It is not going to go on just like that, we have the EIA also.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that Hawaii is the pioneer in the field of land based oceanic industry and we also know the negative impact of such an industry on the fauna and the flora in Hawaii. Since we are embarking on the first phase of the project as from next year, can the Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether studies have been carried out, since we are talking of the western coast where we have a lot of hotels and fishermen villages? Can the Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether the MRC or any other body has carried out a study on the impact of such an industry on the fauna and the flora of that part of the island?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is yes. When the MRC visited Hawaii, they looked into all the positive and negative aspects of the project and we learned from the mistakes that were made and will correct them.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Ag. Prime Minister has just said that they are looking also at the possibility of tapping energy. Precisely, with the experience of Hawaii, would the hon. Ag. Prime Minister agree that because the initial project was to tap energy, they have found that it was not profitable to use that energy on a commercial and industrial scale, because they have done that experience? Are we not going through another experience which might lead to unnecessary expenses of public funds?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I said, let us start with this data centre first and work our way. We have dreamt a little bit and there is no harm in dreaming. We have dreamt of aquaculture, pearl production, seaweed production, we have talked about medicinal application and pharmaceutical, but we have something concrete today and a concrete one is a cooling data centre and also production of energy from renewable.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we agree with the Ag. Prime Minister that we are dealing with a new highly technical matter, especially in terms of legislation and law. Has he given thought to the possibility of retaining foreign consultants in order to vet our legislation and also, in the very near future, when the time will

come to sign agreements and MoUs with the foreign partners, to protect the interest of the Mauritian side? Should we not either seek the help of the Commonwealth Secretariat to provide us with legal experts or legal consultants or retain the services as the CEB or other estate agencies often do? Does he not think we should pick on the brains of legal experts and legal consultants?

The Ag. Prime Minister: It is a very good suggestion, but the hon. Minister of Finance tells me it is provided for and also we will get accompaniments from the AFD and others to see to it that we are doing it properly. But for sure, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a new, difficult, unknown project and we have to embark on it slowly and surely, but accompanied by our friends whether it is *Agence Française* or whether it is an internal firm. I agree with the hon. Member.

Mr Lesjongard: Since we have already identified the lead partner and we are going for the first phase of the project, can the Ag. Prime Minister confirm whether the lead partner is investing totally in the offshore infrastructure even if we are going for just the data centre to start with?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I have said, the first part is getting the water on land and the 10,000 square metres that I have said and then they are going to invest in it. I have said that already.

Mr Bhagwan: Being given that the site at Flic en Flac has already been chosen, would not it be advisable that public relations, at least, brief the people of the region and also fishermen on the clause of the concerned project?

The Ag. Prime Minister: For sure, yes.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The hon. Ag. Prime Minister just said that when the MRC proceeded to Hawaii, they have learnt from the weaknesses. Has the MRC produced an Impact Assessment Report where it is spelt out what are the weaknesses and what would be the impact on the surrounding? Is this report available?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just said, there is a preliminary report, but we are going to strengthen it, we are going to look at the EIA.

Mr Bérenger: On 26 May, the Ag. Prime Minister informed us that the recommended site is near Flic en Flac. Can we know where it is more or less exactly, what part of the coast, how near to Flic en Flac? Has it been confirmed

that wind energy will not be possible? Has this weighed in when the final decision was taken?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition raised this matter a few months ago and I replied. It is near Flic en Flac and I am informed that it is in the north of Flic en Flac.

(Interruptions)

And if need be, I will provide the information and submit the detailed plan to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I am informed that it is behind Médine Sugar Estate, bordering the sea.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to the hon. Ag. Prime Minister! The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/1186 and B/1195 have been withdrawn and that PQ Nos. B/1190 and B/1196 addressed to the Ag. Prime Minister will be answered by the hon. Attorney General and the hon. Minister of Education.

POLICE – MINIBUSES - MITSUBISHI ROSA - PURCHASE

(No. B/1176) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the minibuses of make and model Mitsubishi Rosa, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) respective date of purchase;
- (b) police stations to which they have been allocated;
- (c) cost of each minibus;
- (d) number thereof in running conditions, and
- (e) amount of money spent in terms of maintenance and repairs, if any, for each.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Police Department acquired fourteen 25-seater minibuses make Mitsubishi Rosa in November 2007, and four 26-seater minibuses of the same make in November 2009 following a tender exercise. The award of the contract for the first

procurement exercise was approved by the then Central Tender Board and the second one was approved by the Central Procurement Board. One minibus each has been allocated to the seven Police Divisions, two have been allocated to the Passport and Immigration Office and the remaining nine form part of the vehicle pool of the Transport Guard Room.

As regards part (c) of the question, the cost of each minibus purchased in November 2007 is Rs1,204,190.38 whereas those procured in November 2009 is Rs1,693,940.66 each.

As for part (d) of the question, seventeen of those minibuses are in good running condition and one was heavily damaged in a road accident. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping has assessed the vehicle to be beyond economical repair and has recommended its disposal through the Board of Survey.

As regards part (e) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the cost of maintenance of a vehicle is directly related to the frequency of its usage and its mileage. I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that there is a serious problem with the braking system of these vehicles, because usually it is after 5,000 kilometres roughly that these vehicles are sent for servicing. There are those purchased in 2007 which are sent after only 1,500 or 2,000 kilometres. There is a real problem, especially with the braking system.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is right in pointing out that there was a problem, not in the braking system, but in the usage of the braking system. The brakes had to be changed quite frequently and after a while the police realised that there was a problem, they called for expert advice and this has been rectified. It is more of a matter of usage than of the brakes themselves.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the police drivers should be examples in driving such vehicles. But my information is that in rainy seasons, when these vehicles are speeding at only 40 to 50 kilometres, when they apply the brakes, it stops only hundred metres away which can cause accident. This has been the cause of the one that was declared total loss. May I suggest that the hon. Ag. Prime Minister looks into it?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot make any comment on anecdotes which I hear. I leave it to the experts to find out, but, for sure, I have

looked at the details of all expenditures and the Commissioner of Police is satisfied that - after working with the Police Vehicle Transport Unit - all the claims are justified. As I said, there was a question of – I repeat - brakes being used, but this has been rectified.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the Ag. Prime Minister which institution recommends the road worthiness of these police vehicles?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I said, at the Transport Department, there is a Police Vehicle Transport Unit.

POLICE OFFICERS - RISK ALLOWANCE

(No. B/1177) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the risk allowance payable to the police officers working on the frontline, in line with the recommendation of the PRB Report 2008, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police –

- (a) a list of the Divisions of the Police Force which are concerned therewith, and
- (b) Information as to if the police officers working as reinforcement for policing and composite patrols on specific occasions are paid the risk allowance and, if not, why not.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, in accordance with the recommendations of the PRB Report 2008, as subsequently amended by the PRB Errors, Omissions and Clarifications Report 2009, a monthly risk allowance equivalent to one and half increments at the initial of the relevant salary scale, subject to a maximum of Rs600 is paid with effect from 01 July 2008 to police officers posted at the CID, ERS, police stations and those on the frontline working on shift or performing operations duties involving higher than normal risk associated with the nature of their work. Accordingly, the following Divisions are concerned with this recommendation -

- police stations, including Rodrigues and Agalega;
- Divisional Support Units;
- Divisional Operations Rooms;
- Emergency Response Service;

- Divisional CID, including Field Intelligence Officers;
- Major Crime Investigation Team;
- Traffic Branch (Field Officers);
- Airport Police;
- National Coast Guard;
- Scene of Crime Office, and
- Special Support Unit.

In addition, following the publication of the PRB Errors, Omissions and Clarifications Report in June 2009, officers of the Special Mobile Force have also become eligible to the payment of risk allowance.

The PRB Report 2008 also recommended that a monthly risk allowance of Rs1,000 be paid to officers posted at the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, the *Groupe d'Intervention de la Police Mauricienne*, Air Pilots, Aircrew Winchman/Life Savers of the Police Helicopter Squadron and police officers of the Special Mobile Force posted at the Explosives Handling Unit. It is a quite comprehensive list.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on the occasion of a major event or for policing purposes in a specific area to deter crime, personnel from administrative units are detailed on duty in support of Divisions usually for one or two days. As such officers who are not posted on a permanent basis on the frontline and they do not work on shift basis, they are not qualified for the risk allowance recommended by the PRB.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Ag. Prime Minister said, those who are on the frontline are usually operational officers. As mentioned in the last part of the question, those who are administrative cadres, the IT Unit, the IR officers and so on, are called upon to shoulder responsibilities during the end-of-year activities, the May Day big meetings and during general elections. Doesn't he think that it would be just fair if these allowances could be extended, even on a *pro rata* basis, because they are there on the frontline, they are used to do administrative works and they face the same risk as their other colleagues?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this point has been canvassed by the police officers concerned and the Commissioner of Police, but according to the PRB, they are not within that list. But I will transmit this request.

GENERAL ELECTION – LEGISLATION – COMPULSORY VOTING

(No. B/1178) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the forthcoming general election, he will state if he proposes to introduce legislation with a view to making voting compulsory.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, compulsory voting, although it is not a new concept, still remains a controversial issue. There are arguments for and against. According to the international Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), of which Mauritius is a member, most democratic Governments consider participation in national elections as a right of citizenship. Some consider that participation at elections is also a citizen's civic responsibility. Indeed, there are some 30 countries which have introduced compulsory voting in their electoral laws. Some have gone so far as to impose sanctions on non voters. However, it is equally true that in many cases the compulsory voting law is not enforced at all. The hope is that the mere existence of the law would be enough to get people to the polling stations. Besides, we also have examples of countries which practised compulsory voting in the past, but have now abandoned the practice, for example, Venezuela and the Netherlands.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the leading argument of the advocates of compulsory voting is that by increasing turnout, compulsory voting makes the decision of the governing party appear more legitimate. They also argue that it has an educational effect on citizens and that it leaves political parties free to campaign on policies rather than utilising resources on getting people out to vote.

On the other hand, opponents of compulsory voting argue that compulsory voting is not consistent with the freedom associated with democracy. It is a limit on freedom. The right to vote contains the right not to vote. Opponents also question whether a higher voter turnout necessarily makes the Government more legitimate if the high turnout is against the will of the voters. According to IDEA, it has been proved that forced voting results in an increased number of invalid and blank votes compared to countries that have no compulsory voting laws. Another consequence of compulsory voting is that it encourages what is called "donkey voting", i.e. simply voting for anyone just to be in compliance with the law. This creates a bias in favour of top candidates on the ballot paper. At the end of the day, compulsory voting is not actually compulsory voting - it is compulsory ballot casting.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Electoral Commission in England, which examined the issue of compulsory voting some time back, concluded that compulsory voting would not in itself address the underlying causes of low turnout, and in particular

the apparent lack of engagement between potential voters and politics. In the United States also, opinion polls have revealed that most Americans have persistently been against the idea of compulsory voting.

Insofar as Mauritius is concerned, the level of participation in all the National Assembly elections held since 1983 has been in the region of 80%, which can be considered as a relatively high turnout, and compares favourably even with countries practising compulsory voting. It is also well above the 61.4% turnout in the 2005 Parliamentary Elections in the United Kingdom.

Mr Speaker, Sir, taking into consideration our democratic tradition and the deep respect for personal freedom and given the fact that Mauritius is recognised as a lively and politically literate society with a turnout at general elections which is already high, we do not feel the need to introduce compulsory voting at this stage.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether the practice, as it is now, that political parties provide transport on the day of the elections and this contributes ...

Mr Speaker: This is not allowed as it is not relevant to the question.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

Mr Speaker: This is not relevant to the question!

Mr Varma: With all due respect, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Ag. Prime Minister made reference to resources being used by political parties. I was coming to that point. He made reference to resources being used by the political parties as an argument in favour of compulsory voting. That is precisely my question. Can I continue, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker: Yes, the hon. Member can carry on. I did not hear about the resources.

Mr Varma: Yes, it was. Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House as regards compulsory voting, the argument in favour of it, as you rightly pointed out, is that resources are used by political parties who have the means and what could be envisaged in the legislation to circumvent that aspect, that transport be provided on the day of the elections?

Mr Speaker: Which legislation is the hon. Member talking about?

Mr Varma: The electoral legislation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: We are talking about compulsory voting.

Mr Varma: Yes, but, the hon. Ag. Prime Minister has made reference to resources being used by political parties.

Mr Speaker: Yes, if the hon. Member has a direct question to remove the resources used by political parties.

Mr Varma: All right!

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me read what I said -

“They also argue that it has an educational effect on citizens and that it leaves political parties free to campaign on policies rather than utilising resources on getting people out to vote.”

Mr Speaker: But the Ag. Prime Minister has not said resources used by political parties. He said rather than utilising resources.

MBC – CHIEF NEWS EDITORS

(No. B/1179) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Chief News Editors in post at the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to their respective -

- (a) qualifications;
- (b) terms and conditions of employment, and
- (c) posting.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that the post of Chief News Editor as such does not exist on the establishment of the Corporation. Therefore, parts (a), (b) and (c) of the Question do not arise.

POLICE CELLS – DETAINEES - DEATH

(No. B/1180) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs

whether, in regard to the death of detainees which occurred in the police cells, since June 1995 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police -

- (a) a list thereof, and
- (b) information as to where matters stand in relation to the inquiries carried out into the death of late Kaya and of late Ramlogun.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 1995 to date, cases of death of detainees which occurred in police cells are as follows -

Year	Number of cases
1995	2
1996	1
1997	Nil
1998	5
1999	3
2000	Nil
2001	5
2002	1
2003	Nil
2004	2
2005	2
2006	1

2007	1
2008	2
2009 (up to 19 November)	1

Part (b) of the question is stipulated as follows -

“information as to where matters stand in relation to the inquiries carried out into the death of late Kaya and of late Ramlogun.”

The Ag. Prime Minister: As for part (b) of the question, regarding the case of late J. R. T., also known as Kaya, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made by the hon. Prime Minister to PQ No. B/661 on 30 June 2009. I would, however, like to set the records straight by highlighting once again the facts of this case.

- On 21 February 1999, Dr. Surnam carried out an autopsy and he concluded that there was no evidence of foul play.
- On 25 February 1999, a judicial inquiry was carried out by a Senior District Magistrate. More than 70 persons deponed. In his report, the Senior District Magistrate concluded that there was no evidence of foul play.
- Mr Speaker, Sir, while the inquiry was on, the family of late J. R. T. asked for a counter autopsy, which was effected by Dr. Ramstein in the presence of Dr. Modun and Dr. Oogarah. Other officers carried out forensic examination.
- The family of late J. R. T. requested Government approval to carry out further examination on the brain of the deceased and the Prime Minister agreed spontaneously to the request. This was carried out by Professor Graham at Glasgow.
- In the report which he submitted, Dr. Ramstein concluded that death had been caused by trauma when he was thrown to the floor and his head was shaken.

- The Senior District Magistrate found flaws and blatant contradictions in Dr. Ramstein's report.
- Notwithstanding the conclusions of Dr. Surnam and the findings of the Senior District Magistrate, the Prime Minister, taking into consideration criticisms about police brutality and doubts expressed about the precise cause of death of late J. R. T., decided, again spontaneously, and at a Government to Government level, to request the British Government to send a Home Office Pathologist to review the evidence and submit findings.
- Following this request which was accepted, Dr. Hugh White came over to Mauritius to carry out the evidence review exercise. The latter noted that Dr. Ramstein had also reported no skull fracture and no injury to the teeth. There was only a small bruise on his lower lip. Mr White went on to rebut all findings of Dr. Ramstein. He concluded that the findings were not typical of an assault and he accordingly disagreed with Dr. Ramstein's conclusion. In fact, Dr. White brought out that the post mortem findings did not support the contention that late J. R. T. died out of shaking or following a violent impact or impact against the floor of his cell.
- Despite findings concluding to the absence of foul play, the family of late J. R. T. lodged a plaint against the State, the Commissioner of Police and other officers claiming damages to the sum of Rs10 m.
- On purely humanitarian grounds, Government offered an *ex-gratia* amount of Rs4.5 m. to the family of late J. R. T. The settlement was made by way of a judgment of the Court on 09 October 2006 and was ratified by Plaintiff, Mrs. V. T, acting in her own name and as legal representative of the two children of late J. R. T.

As for the case of the late R. R., I am informed that an inquiry was carried out and upon completion thereof, four police officers from the Major Crime Investigation Team were prosecuted for "having willfully and unlawfully committed an act prejudicial to the Constitution of Mauritius" and "having willfully and unlawfully conspired to do a wrongful act". In a judgment delivered on 29 May 2009, the Magistrate of the Intermediate Court dismissed the case against the four police officers. However, the Director of Public Prosecutions appealed against a judgment on 19 June 2009. The appeal has been fixed for merit on 21 February 2011.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, the fact that the late Kaya and the late Ramlogun got compensation from the State, does not that mean that there has been prejudice, *une reconnaissance des torts de la part de l'État et que cette compensation est un aveu.*

Mr Speaker: I am sorry the hon. Ag. Prime Minister said that it was an *ex-gratia* payment without liability.

Mr Guimbeau: Of all the many cases the hon. Ag. Prime Minister just stated, is it the only two cases that have received compensation? What about the others that have just been mentioned?

Mr Speaker: The question is about information as to where the matter stands as far as these two cases are concerned.

Mr Guimbeau: I've asked to give a list of all those who died in police cell. I want to know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister, how many of them got compensation from the State like late Kaya and late Ramlogun?

Mr Speaker: I am sorry this is not part of the question. The hon. Member should have asked whether inquiries have been made in all the cases. This has not been stated.

Mr Lesjongard: I thank the Ag. Prime Minister for giving all those information related to the death of late Kaya, but will he agree that the children of late Kaya are still battling to know the truth regarding the death of their late father?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, my only regret is that the Prime Minister is not here. He has gone beyond, well beyond, to establish the truth to see that there is no doubt of what happened. I am sad to note that in spite of all that, in spite of that extensive reply, there is still an effort to cast doubt. Shameful!

Mr Varma: I've heard the Ag. Prime Minister speak about compensation being paid to the relatives of late Kaya. Has any compensation been paid to the relatives of late Ramlogun as well?

The Ag. Prime Minister: The answer is yes. Concerning the amount, I will communicate it to the hon. Member.

Mr Varma: Could the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether the compensation was also paid on humanitarian grounds without admission of liability by the State?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I will look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lauthan: Can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he has any detail about those 26 cases which made approximately two deaths yearly during that period of time? How many died as a consequence of police brutality and how many committed suicide among these 26 cases?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have the information here, but I am sure I can communicate to the hon. Member about death – I've got a list here - by hanging, by asphyxia due to hanging and so on and so forth. I can provide details, but I will not give the names, of course.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, this research literature on suicide worldwide shows that people do not commit suicide just like that. They do send an SOS. Now that we have degree holders in police studies, it will be good if a study could be made of those cases to determine in how many cases they do send an SOS through which they seek help before committing or attempting suicide.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this comment applies to a lot of other circumstances as well. Now, if we are talking specifically about detainees in police custody, this can be done, I am sure. But having said that, I've spoken to the Commissioner of Police on these issues and he tells me how difficult it is as within a space of a few minutes the act is done, whether it is by hanging or otherwise.

Mr Ganoo: Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm that, in spite of the fact that the case of Ramlogun has not been disposed of since, the DPP has made an appeal against the decision of the court, yet *ex-gratia* payment has already been paid to the heirs?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I've said before, I am not conversant with all the facts in the case of Ramlogun. I am told that a payment has been made and I will supply the information to whoever is concerned.

Mr Guimbeau: I just wanted to know why the two families only have been compensated and not all the others.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has to come with a substantive question. Does the hon. Member think that the hon. Ag Prime Minister will have the information? Come with a substantive question! Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: May I know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether there has been a decision to pay compensation *ex-gratia* in the past before paying these two relatives?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member wants to know whether this has been the practice.

Mr Jhugroo: Has this been the practice in the past?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member wants to know whether this was the practice of Government.

The Ag. Prime Minister: It depends on the circumstances; on a case to case basis.

Mr Barbier: The hon. Ag. Prime Minister gave us details with regard to the autopsy of late Kaya, but does he have any details of the autopsy carried out on late Ramlogun?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I have not asked for the details, but I can obtain them, if need be. I am not sure whether this is going to satisfy anybody. These are very highly technical and subject to different interpretations. We have to be careful how we handle information.

POLICE BRUTALITY – REPORTED CASES

(No. B/1181) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to police brutality, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since May 2007 to date, indicating the names of the victims.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since May 2007, cases of alleged – and I say alleged – police brutality have been reported to the police as follows -

<u>Period</u>	<u>No. of Cases reported</u>
May to December 2007	155

Year 2008	290
January to 19 November 2009	223

Mr Speaker, Sir, insofar as the names of the complainants are concerned, it is not in order, nor is it in their own interest to make their names public. I wish to bring out that, in its 2008 report, the National Human Rights Commission has, *inter alia*, mentioned that the number of reported cases of alleged police brutality in Mauritius tends to have stabilised over the years and that previous perception of impunity is now being dissipated.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards police brutality, I put a question in Parliament about the setting up of an independent institution to overview these cases. Could the Ag. Prime Minister inform the House where matters stand?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this matter has been brought up before and the Prime Minister's Office is working on it.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to police brutality, recently the Attorney General said something, and I quote –

“Si ena dimoune ki gagne bater plis, c'est communauté créole ki gagne bater plis”.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want the hon. Ag. Prime Minister to confirm whether this is true or not.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I think this issue has been raised so many times in this House and answers have been given. I don't think it is appropriate for the hon. Member to raise this matter here.

Mr Guimbeau: No, it is.

Mr Speaker: No! Hon. Spéville!

Mr Spéville: Mr Speaker, Sir, among all these cases, can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister how many concern Rodrigues and how many police officers have been suspended with regard to police brutality?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do have the information, but I can communicate it later.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the past, we have had the issue of video recording of statements by accused. May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister where we are with the possibility of implementing such a system of video recording of statements made by accused?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I'll follow up this point and let the hon. Member know.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he will consider initiating a study to see whether there is any ethnical connotation in police brutality, as it has been the case in many countries, such as U.K and so on?

Mr Speaker: Is there any problem as regards ethnical?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, one day we argue we are one nation, one population, we should not break our population up into bits and, now, we are asking the contrary.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions B/1212 and B/1213 have been withdrawn. Hon. Lauthan!

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS - ACADEMIC YEAR 2009/2010 - INTAKE

(No. B/1197) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the last intake for the present academic year at the University of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University, information as to the number of students who have -

- (a) applied for seats thereat;
- (b) been selected, and
- (c) been enrolled, indicating in each case, the respective courses.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the University of Mauritius as follows -

- (a) 6,948 students have applied for a seat at the University of Mauritius for academic year 2009/2010;
- (b) out of these, 5,579 students have been offered a seat on, a least, one program, and
- (c) 3,956 students have been enrolled.

A list giving the number of students enrolled in respective programmes is being compiled and will be tabled as soon as it is ready.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, students often complain that they make an application to the University and, in the meantime, they do seek for a job somewhere, but the University never replies back in case the application is rejected and they keep waiting while, at the same time, they can't take a job. Why does not the University take steps to reply? Even if it is in the negative, they should tell them that their applications have been rejected.

Dr. Bunwaree: I will communicate this information to the University.

VIETNAM - PANGASIOUS FISH – IMPORTATION

(No. B/1198) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the importation of pangasius fish from Vietnam, he will state

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- (a) the number of permits issued, indicating the names of the permit holders;
- (b) the quantity thereof imported, since January 2009 to date, and
- (c) if he is aware that there is a controversy regarding the consumption thereof and, if so, if an inquiry has been carried out in relation thereto.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, from the period January 2009 to date, 14 import permits have been issued by my Ministry to seven operators for the importation of pangasius fish from Vietnam.

The names of the permit holders are as follows -

- (i) Frigonoor Ltd.;
- (ii) Indian Ocean Seafoods Co. Ltd.;
- (iii) New Cold Storage Co. Ltd.;
- (iv) Otwo Processing Co. Ltd.;
- (v) Seaqueen Foods Mauritius Ltd.;
- (vi) Sealicious Ltd., and
- (vii) Veera & Co. Ltd.;

With regard to part (b) of the question, a total of 193.5 tonnes of pangasius fish/pangasius fish fillets has been imported.

Regarding part (c) of the question, there was an article in 'L'Express' of 29 July 2009 and 'Weekend' of 02 August 2009, wherein mention was made that the pangasius fish imported from Vietnam was being produced in an unhygienic environment and that the fish might not be fit for human consumption.

Following the publication of the articles, my Ministry convened a meeting on 06 August with the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life, the Ministry of Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter and the competent authority to examine the issue. It was found that the pangasius fish was imported since the year 2007 and, since then, there is no report of ill health by consumption of this species of fish.

It was also established that random samples of the fish imported were tested, and no adverse report was obtained regarding the quality of the fish. Samples are taken by officers of my Ministry for microbiological analysis, which are carried out at the food technology laboratory to confirm fitness for human consumption. Results from the samples analysed have shown that the fish is fit for human consumption. Additionally, analysis of samples is also done by the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life. Results have revealed so far that samples comply with food regulations and are safe for human consumption.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there was also a controversy concerning the labelling of the fish, which was sold as "*fillet viel*", thereby confusing it with the local '*vielle fish*'. Meetings were held with the Consumer Protection Unit of the Ministry of Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter and Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to sort out this issue. It was decided to include in the import permit specific

conditions relating to the labelling and packaging of imported fish. These include the indication of the common name and scientific name of the fish imported, as indicated in the import permit, amongst others, to ensure that there is no misunderstanding on the name of the fish imported.

Mr Speaker Sir, it is relevant for me to inform the House that import permits are issued by my Ministry for pangasius fish to be imported only from EU approved establishments in Vietnam. These establishments which are approved by the competent authority of Vietnam are listed by the Health and Consumer Protection Directorate General, i.e., DJ Sanko of the European Commission and appear on the EC Website for approved establishments. Besides, each consignment of pangasius fish imported is accompanied by a health certificate issued by the competent authority of Vietnam certifying the product to be fit for human consumption. On arrival, the consignments of pangasius fish are released after thorough verification of quality by a team of officers from the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life, the competent authority and the Fisheries Division of my Ministry.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister say whether his Ministry has reliable official information on the way this pangasius fish is bred in Vietnam?

Mr Faugoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister lay a copy of this on the Table of the Assembly?

Mr Faugoo: As I said, the hon. Member should go on the website of the EU where this is provided. We only import from those establishments which are recognised by the EU.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I take it then that, in spite of the fact that the Minister is in presence of official information on the way this fish is bred, he will not lay a copy of it on the Table of the Assembly?

Mr Faugoo: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have any copy of any information. We rely on the certificate which accompanies the fish we import and also on the recognition which is given by the EU to those establishments which culture this fish.

Mr Speaker: Unless this is being questioned.

Mr Varma: The hon. Minister made mention that tests were carried out following an article in the press. Have other parties complained about the quality of the fish?

Mr Faugoo: No, it was not carried out following the complaints that we have received. I said that, usually as a matter of routine, whenever there is importation, we have samples taken at random and tests are carried out. This is a usual feature when we import any fish for that matter, Mr Speaker, Sir. Apart from that, there was no other complaint.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker Sir, can the hon. Minister say whether he has information to the fact that this fish has been barred from importation in some European countries because it does not tally with the EU norms?

Mr Faugoo: If the hon. Member has any information, I would request her to lay it on the Table of the Assembly and I will take action. As far as I know, my information is that this fish is being exported to the EU. In fact, Vietnam produces 1.3 metric tonnes of this fish and 50% goes directly to the EU, and they are all from those recognised fish ponds, Mr Speaker, Sir. If she has anything to the contrary, she can lay it on the Table. There were only two countries which banned temporarily the importation, maybe because of hearsay, but they have started to import again.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I have one last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. *Est-ce que le ministre peut donner la garantie aux consommateurs que ce poisson est élevé dans des conditions sanitaires correctes, que sa traçabilité n'est pas douteuse et que sa consommation n'est pas nuisible à la santé?*

Mr Faugoo: Does it mean that Europeans in the EU are consuming fish which are not fit for human consumption? I cannot personally give any guarantee. The guarantee I can give, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that this is recognised by the EU and we are importing things which are being imported by the European Union.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Since there has been a controversy on the matter, there has been a documentary film which had been shown on the way this fish is bred and there is, among consumers, *une certaine crainte de consommer ce poisson, je demande au ministre de donner la garantie que ce poisson n'est pas nuisible à la santé.*

Mr Speaker: The Minister has answered.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker Sir, as I said, there may be different sources. I am confirming to the House and to the people of this country who consume fish that the source from which we bring this fish is reliable; it is recognised by the EU, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY – CONTRIBUTIONS

(No. B/1199) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to Corporate Social Responsibility, he will state the number of companies/establishments which have agreed to make contributions therein, indicating the –

- (a) amount of money expected to be received by the end of this year, and
- (b) projects identified to benefit therefrom for the constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned last Wednesday in my Budget Speech 2010, all profitable firms are now required to either spend 2 percent of their profits on CSR activities or transfer the amount not spent to Government.

The law provides, and it is, therefore, mandatory, that every company shall use its CSR Fund to implement an approved programme by the CSR Committee, or an approved programme under the National Empowerment Foundation or finance an approved NGO. Those companies are also encouraged to run their own programmes through the approved NGOs and corporate partners.

Insofar as the coverage of the CSR activities is concerned, the CSR Committee has already published, in October 2009, the operational guidelines for use by companies.

In order not to cause delays in the execution of projects, the CSR guidelines provide that companies with CSR Fund of Rs2 m. and above, have to submit their corporate programme for approval to the CSR Committee, whereas those companies with CSR fund of less than Rs2 m. will have to apprise the CSR Committee of their activities in the established areas of intervention. These guidelines are aimed at ensuring that the CSR activities are well-coordinated and achieve the set objectives.

On the other hand, the National Empowerment Foundation will develop national programmes within the areas of intervention in partnership with other

agencies including NGOs and Ministries to tackle issues that can be addressed effectively only through the synergy of close collaboration between the Government, private sector, NGOs and civil society.

As I had stated in the House, the National Programmes will cover -

- an integrated social housing programme for some 5,000 families with very modest income.
- Support to women to improve their skills, increase their earnings potential and improve family welfare.
- inclusion of children from deprived areas through vocational education and training in music and art.
- social integration of our citizens with disabilities, the mentally handicapped and those with visual and hearing impairment.
- promotion of sports among our youths to empower them, for example, through the professionalisation of football, and
- enhancement of the HIV/AIDS and Needle-Exchange programmes in collaboration with organisations with proven achievements like PILS and NATReSA.

I also mentioned that since the publication of the CSR Guidelines, seven largest companies are investing some Rs150 m. in approved projects covering socio-economic development including housing for the very poor, health education and training, leisure and sports and the environment. This is in addition to a significant number of projects being launched by approved NGOs that have obtained direct support from companies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, CSR contribution from all companies is expected to be around one billion rupees. The amount to be spent by the end of the year will depend on the speed of implementation of CSR activities. Already, I am informed by the CSR Committee that, by the end the year, the value of CSR projects is expected to be around Rs400 m.

Insofar as part (b) of the question is concerned, the House may wish to note that CSR activities focus on citizens and the community covering a wide range of interventions that I have already mentioned earlier. As such, it transcends

geographical delimitations like constituency boundaries. Of course, this does not preclude that these CSR projects will also cover the region of Black River.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. vice-Prime Minister say whether there has been a Memorandum of Understanding which has been signed between the CSR Committee and the MRA and, if so, will he provide information thereon?

Dr. Sithanen: MRA, I am not aware. What is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the MRA has issued guidelines, that in the event that the 2% is not disbursed on CSR activities, how it will be remitted to the MRA.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is very important that we should know and I think that the hon. vice-Prime Minister, himself, knows, having said it in a press conference that the real objective of the CSR Committee is not to give money to the MRA. He just said that the CSR was voted in July, the Committee was set up in September and he said that clear guidelines had been issued in October. Is he aware or will he confirm that, by the end of the year, if the money involved has not been spent, that money would go to the MRA?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me make a couple of points very clear. Never in the history of this country has any Government proposed a CSR. It is this Government that has done it. It takes time to implement the programme. As soon as the guidelines have been issued by the Committee, I have started to work with some companies. I have spelt out very clearly that there are many schemes. The first scheme applies to those who are doing well. They will have to submit their CSR programme to this Committee and it will be approved following the guidelines spelt out by the Committee. Then, the National Empowerment Foundation will also approve what we call, a National Programme. One of these National Programmes is social housing. We have also told them that they also have to work with eligible NGOs. A list of more than 150 NGOs have already been approved within the framework and parameters sanctioned by the Committee. It is only six months and it took us three months to reach agreement. At the beginning, there were some hesitations and we have said very clearly what will happen at the end of the period. But the end of the period is not fixed because for some companies the financial year ends in July, some in September and some in December.

Ms Deerpalsing: Precisely on the answer that the hon. vice-Prime Minister has just given that some of these programmes like the professionalisation of football or the fight against HIV/AIDS are long-term objectives, is there in the

CSR guidelines, for those companies which are doing their own CSR, a requirement that the engagement goes beyond the business cycle, that is, these will have to be long-term objectives?

Dr. Sithanen: This is very clear. The housing programme will not be completed in one year; it is going to be a six or seven-year programme. There are some programmes that, by their very nature and their very objectives that we want to attain, would be a very long-term nature. Obviously, the amount of money spent will vary from year to year. As long as they comply with the requirement of 2% over a long-term period, Mr Speaker, Sir, as long as they fulfil their requirement on a yearly basis, it will be approved.

Mr Ganoo: Will the hon. vice-Prime Minister be kind enough to lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the approved guidelines and NGOs?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a copy of the guidelines with me and I think this is a fair question. I will supply to the House both the guidelines and the list of NGOs. For the enlightenment of the House, both are available online, this is e-Government.

Mr Varma: The hon. vice-Prime Minister has made mention of the CSR Committee. Could he inform the House of the composition of that Committee and the name of the Chairperson?

Dr. Sithanen: The composition of the Committee is made up of two Members from Government, two members from the private sector and two members from NGOs. We have appointed the Chairman who is Mr Petit, the CEO of Airports of Mauritius Ltd. We have to choose six, but when we have chosen six out of so many, there are always some people who are not very happy about it.

Mr Barbier: Sir, concerning the eligibility of NGOs, may I know how does it work? Is it the NGOs or is it Government that decides according to a list? If it is Government, may I know what are the criteria used to select these NGOs to be eligible for the CSR?

Dr. Sithanen: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the sake of effectiveness, we have used a combination of supply-driven and demand-driven measures. There is a list of NGOs that work with various Ministries, especially the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions and the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development & Family Welfare and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. They are known and we've taken the decision to publish them. There are others who have made an application and based on the

criteria laid down, for instance, they must have done this particular activity for x number of years. Otherwise it does not make sense. They need to be registered with the Registrar of Associations to publish their accounts because we need to be careful that we do not have a mushrooming of NGOs just because they have smelt money.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I keep telling people that there are always two types of mistakes. One is what people call type 1 mistake and type 2 mistake. Type 1 mistake is that those who deserve and who are eligible and do not get it, we take the commitment that they will become eligible. Type 2 mistake is for those who are not eligible, *'in passe dans filet'*. After some months, we will know who they are and the necessary sanctions will be taken to make sure they do not make an abuse of the system.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I come back on the question of MoU with the MRA. Since the Minister has not been able to provide us with clarifications, if there is a MoU which has been signed with the MRA, is the Minister prepared to lay it on the Table of the Assembly?

Dr. Sithanen: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, we've just started and this will become applicable at the end of the year. Let us start the CSR, Mr Speaker, Sir! Let people benefit from it!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform us whether MACOSS made some suggestions as they were challenging this list of NGOs at a certain period of time? Has this been cleared?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, in any democracy, you cannot be the judge, the jury and the executor at the same time. MACOSS is an umbrella organisation. It would not be fair for MACOSS to sit on the Committee that will decide how the money is spent. Having said that, I have agreed with MACOSS because being an umbrella organisation, if ever they have projects that satisfy the eligibility criteria spelt out by the Committee, they will receive funds. In fact, I have gone further with MACOSS. In many cases, they do a good job in terms of capacity building, training and human resource development. One of the objectives is basically the professionalisation of NGOs and capacity building for NGOs. There are many NGOs, Mr Speaker, Sir, who are grass root organisations, they have excellent ideas, but they do not know how to prepare a business plan, a project that can be funded by CSR. So, we have agreed that NGOs that provide training, capacity building and help other NGOs to submit projects, will receive CSR funds, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister also mentioned in his Budget that as far as the IRS projects are concerned, three of them have developed their CSR plans to the tune of Rs50 m. Although he also said today that we should not view CSR projects on a geographical or constituency basis; does he not think that in the case of the IRS projects which are very often situated on the fringe of poor neighbourhood and depressed areas, there should be a deliberate attempt, in the case of the IRS projects that the main beneficiaries should be the poor communities in the vicinity of these IRS projects?

Dr. Sithanen: Let me make two points, Mr Speaker, Sir! Poverty is poverty, wherever it is, and we need to address the problem of poverty and exclusion wherever it is. Having said that, we know very well that, basically, there are some areas which are more deprived than others and the hon. Member knows very well that in the case of the IRS in the south west, I have personally intervened to request these IRS promoters to allocate most of their resources to combating poverty and fighting exclusion in the region and to develop a good programme. I have also told that to Médine. They are doing a good work in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility on the west coast, but we have also provided flexibility in the system, Mr Speaker, Sir. There would be a national programme, but there would also be a regional programme and a local programme. There will be a combination of local, regional and national, and there would be some money earmarked for our compatriots in Rodrigues also. We have not fixed figures, but a percentage of the CSR amount of money will also be earmarked for our compatriots in Rodrigues to fight exclusion and to alleviate poverty.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. vice-Prime Minister talked about the NGOs, those who are registered and we know that in almost every village, there is a *force vive*. Can he say whether the CSR Committee is also considering projects asked by the *forces vives* to be implemented?

Dr. Sithanen: Sir, if these *forces vives* constitute themselves into a NGO, we have absolutely no problem as long as they meet the criteria that have been spelt out by the Committee.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.00 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

BAMBOUS, TAMARIN & RIVIERE NOIRE – ERADICATION OF ABSOLUTE POVERTY PROGRAMME

(No. B/1200) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme, he will state if any in-depth inquiry has been carried out in Bambous, Tamarin and Rivière Noire, since the implementation thereof and, if so, indicate the -

- (a) number of families identified;
- (b) needs identified to be addressed in the short and long terms, and
- (c) actions taken.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, six months back, in my Budget Speech in May 2009, I had informed the House that the different institutions, namely Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups, EAP, DCP and Empowerment Programme, would be brought under the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) to provide a single platform to facilitate coordination and bring efficiency and effectiveness in the various interventions in the fight against absolute poverty, and for the socio-economic empowerment of the vulnerable families.

In fact, with this new structure, the NEF is now able to optimise in the use of its human and financial resources and harmonise its intervention under the different programmes.

Regarding those receiving assistance, the NEF is developing a centralised database on each vulnerable family with an identification of their specific needs under different Programmes. Such information will ensure an integrated approach to focus measures on family needs and facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the interventions under the different programmes.

Insofar as the region of Black River is concerned, the following interventions have been made under the EAP, the Trust Fund and the Empowerment Programme.

Under EAP, a Coordinating Working Group (CWG), comprising stakeholders from the private sector, representatives of NGOs and relevant public agencies, was set in July 2009 for the region of Bambous. In fact, the CWG is catering for -

- first, the model village at La Valette, Bambous where 198 families are being supported in terms of life skills, remedial education and income

generating activities, so as to ensure their smooth integration in that region, and

- second, the pockets of poverty in the locality of Bambous, namely Cité La Ferme/Camp La Paille, Vandagne and Camp Rodriguais. A needs assessment is being conducted in these pockets and, as to date, 50 families out of some 160 have already been identified and profiled.

Furthermore, a similar profiling and needs assessment exercise was started in September 2009 at Tamarin and Petite Rivière Noire. To date, 25 families have already been profiled. The preliminary needs assessment has revealed that the following issues will have to be addressed, namely -

- (i) life skills training for dysfunctional families;
- (ii) provision of complementary education;
- (iii) treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers;
- (iv) training and re-skilling of the unemployed;
- (v) infrastructure, such as access roads and drains, and
- (vi) social housing.

I am informed that, once the profiling and needs assessment are completed, an Action Plan will be prepared in consultation with the stakeholders in that region to support those families in a holistic manner, with a view to bringing them out of the poverty trap. Meanwhile, consultations with relevant stakeholders in the region are being held to set up another CWG.

Furthermore, back in September 2008, some 102 children were identified in the district of Black River as not attending pre-primary school regularly. They have now been taken care of under the National Pre-Primary School Project of EAP and are benefiting from the package of incentives offered under that project. Periodical assessment has confirmed that the attendance of these children has improved. In fact, these children are being provided with -

- (a) pedagogical materials;
- (b) uniform, shoes, school bags and related items;
- (c) school fees, where this has to be paid;

- (d) a meal every school day;
- (e) “*Accompagnement Scolaire*” by NGOs;
- (f) transport facilities where needed, and
- (g) medical screening.

Next year, in January 2010, out of the 102 children, some 50 of them, aged five, will be joining Standard I, and will continue to benefit from the same facilities that were provided to them at pre-primary school level.

As regards the Trust Fund, it is already providing immediate support to the vulnerable families in the region of Black River. In this respect, the Trust Fund has, since the beginning of this year, approved the construction of 233 CIS housing units for a total amount of Rs14.4 m. and distributed school materials to 550 needy children for a total sum of Rs755,000.

On the other hand, under its national “Placement for Training Programme”, the Empowerment Programme already provided training and placement to some 128 individuals in the district of Black River, who have - all of them - afterwards secured a job.

Additionally, under the Special Programme for Unemployed Women, a project, in collaboration with an NGO, *Association Tamriv*, relating to capacity building and employment of women in various home services was launched in 2008 for the region of Black River. To date, some 47 women have been trained, amongst others, in gardening, housekeeping, and childcare and 45 of them have secured a job already. To support mothers at work, some 25 women have been trained and are taking care of children whose mothers are at work.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have, so far, mentioned progress made under the various initiatives under the NEF. We are, however, not stopping here. In fact, the House will note that, in my Budget Speech, a week back, I, again, emphasised on Government’s commitment to deliver on the promises on economic growth, wealth creation and sustainable development, and remain focussed on our core social responsibilities. We have given social progress and wealth creation the same right of way and that Government has built a diversified and strong platform from which to combat poverty, fight exclusion, promote inclusive growth and secure social progress.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the vice-Prime Minister has just mentioned that his enquiry has revealed that there is a social housing problem in Black River. This social housing problem is giving rise to promiscuity, which requires immediate attention. Can we know when the social housing projects will be completed in this region?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already started. In fact, it's the first, not only in the history of Mauritius, but in ACP countries. There is the Integrated Social Development Housing Project at Bambous. 198 former squatters have received social housing, training for the men, the women and we are ensuring that the kids go to school. I have also mentioned how many CIS housing units are being built, with assistance from the Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups. I have announced in the Budget that we have a programme for 5,000 housing units for families earning less than Rs5,000 and another 5,000 for families earning between Rs5,000 and Rs10,000.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The vice-Prime Minister keeps saying that the housing problem has been completed and I am sure that he is talking of La Salette when he mentioned Bambous.

Dr. Sithanen: I mentioned it in my answer.

Mr Speaker: First of all, I will have to have some guidance from the hon. Member whether the housing problem that she is talking of falls under the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme. If it falls within that programme, then yes, otherwise there is a Minister in charge of housing.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: It does, Mr Speaker, Sir, because when the hon. vice-Prime Minister mentioned the Social Housing Project at Bambous, it is for people who have come from other regions and not the people from Bambous who have benefitted from this project. What I am asking is: when will people from Bambous itself benefit from the Social Housing Project under the EAP Programme?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a fundamental rule of fairness in all society. Poverty must be alleviated and exclusion must be fought wherever it is from. I have not personally checked where each and every one of the 198 deserving families which have benefited from houses comes from. We will do the rest according to the programme spelt out in the Budget.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not dispute this fact, but my question relates to people from Bambous. I do not dispute the fact that there has been a Social Housing Project which has been completed in Bambous, but my

question relates to the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme for the people of Bambous.

Mrs Perrier: Regarding this problem of lodging, the vice-Prime Minister mentioned that he would have some houses in the vicinity. Can we know where and how many have been requested according to the inquiry that has been carried out?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a need assessment that has been done to identify the requirement and wherever we have land, we implement housing projects. Where we do not have land, we have to enter into an agreement with those who have the land and we know who are those who have land. I have announced in the Budget that in the context of the agreement reached between the Prime Minister and the MSPA, 1,000 of the 2,000 acres of land would be used for social housing. My colleague, hon. Dr. Kasenally has done an excellent job and we have already identified some of these *terrains*. Construction will start once all the formalities are completed.

Mr Barbier: With regard to the housing project at Bambous, la Salette which the hon. Minister just mentioned, may I know what was the part of contribution from the State and Médine and from all other stakeholders, if any?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reveal to the House that some people came to see me about two years ago. They said: “Rama, we need to do something for these poor people”. And we decided that we will help these very poor people. Initially, it was supposed to cost Rs50 m., but it turned out to cost about Rs250 m. Most of it has been invested by Government. There is a misconception that when we do a land exchange deal, the *terrain* comes from the sugar sector. It may come from the sugar sector, but the exchange deal itself means that there is a *qui proquo*.

Mrs Perrier: The hon. Minister talked about the problem of availability of land, but is he aware that in 2004, we had identified land in Case Noyale for lodging and this land is still there and, according to some answers made some time back by the hon. Minister Dulull, he said that he could not give this land now, because it is on the coast and he could not make low-cost housing there. So, there is land. Can the hon. Minister look at it again?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me, again, emphasise to the House. I know that some of my friends, on the other side, do not like when I say it. Never in the history of this country has so much been done for the poor, through such a variety of instruments from the National Empowerment Foundation, Eradication of

Absolute Poverty and the CSR for the IRS Scheme. So, we are doing everything that is possible.

With respect to the land, the hon. lady will have to ask a specific question to the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands. I am sure my good friend, the Minister will reply.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The hon. vice-Prime Minister had mentioned about pre-primary school projects, but is he aware that since I drew the attention of the House to the fact that primary school students who fall under the EAP Programme in Black River did not have their school materials till September and nothing has been done? The calendar year is over, but they did not receive any school material for the primary school students?

Dr. Sithanen: This is regretted. In fact, the week before last, I chaired a meeting on the Trust Fund for the Vulnerable Group and I told them that we need to make sure that these poor kids get their school materials at the beginning of the year. Again, let me remind the hon. lady that the EAP did not exist before, Mr Speaker, Sir. There were 2000 kids of 3 to 4 years old who were not going to school. It is this Government that has introduced the EAP in the Budget, but we will make sure that these kids get their materials.

Mr Speaker: Could you just communicate the information to the hon. Minister and he will look into the matter and make the necessary amendment, please?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I am asking a last question, following the reply made by the vice-Prime Minister. Since now the EAP Fund exists and since funds have been voted for this specific purpose and these people have not received what they should have received, does the hon. Minister propose to take to task these...

Mr Speaker: No, I think there is one thing. The Member and the vice-Prime Minister are in the House. If there are such small details, she can address them to him. If it is not sorted out between her and the vice-Prime Minister, then she can come with a Parliamentary Question. If we go on like this, other Members will not have the opportunity to put their questions. I will allow a last question. Is there anybody? Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

BATS – NUMBER – SURVEY

(No. B/1201) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to bats, he will state if –

- (a) any survey has been carried out to assess the present number thereof, and
- (b) he is aware of the disastrous effect they are presently causing on fruit trees and, if so, indicate the remedial measures that will be taken.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the first scientific survey of bats in Mauritius was effected in September 2006 by the National Park and Conservation Service of my Ministry. The survey revealed that the population of bats had reached around 25,000 compared to a population of 10,000 estimated back in 1974. We are actually finalising the modalities for the conduct of a new survey in collaboration with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

With regard to part (b) of the question, I have been advised that complaints regarding damage caused by bats to fruits were first made in 2002. A National Bats Committee was set up in 2003 to address this issue, but not much was done to alleviate the problem. Following the 2006 survey, Government took the decision to cull the bats during the period October to December 2006. However, this measure was not successful because culling could only be done between 16.00 hours to 18.00 hours when the bats which are nocturnal are normally still in their habitat. It is worth mentioning that according to the Wildlife and National Parks Act, the shooting of natural species cannot be effected at night, that is, between 18.00 to 6.00 hours the next day.

The damage caused by bats to fruits has reached an alarming rate this year and there is a high risk that fruits like mango and litchi may not be available in sufficient quantity on the local market and fruit growers may sustain substantial losses and consumers may have to pay a higher price for these fruits. My Ministry has accordingly taken the following measures to mitigate the damage -

- (i) the launching of a national sensitisation campaign in October this year to promote the netting method and to inculcate good agricultural practices, such as pruning of trees. In that context, demonstration of the handling and using of nets and the training of growers have been conducted across the island. Leaflets have also been distributed and posters affixed in different parts of the island;

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in that context, - one particular net - the net is being showcased on a litchi tree bearing fruits reaching maturity, by the new truck road at Trianon in the compound of Margarine Industry. Similar demonstrations will be considered in other strategic places.

- (ii) the introduction of a one-off scheme to encourage a large number of fruit growers to purchase nets. The scheme comprises a grant element of 75 percent of the cost of the net for a maximum of five trees. It will be in operation until January of next year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that the Mauritius Fruit Bat (*pteropus niger*) is an endemic species and exists only in Mauritius. It has been categorised as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Mauritius also has an obligation under the Convention of Biological Diversity to protect the bat.

My Ministry proposes to review the Wildlife and National Wildlife Act to make specific provisions in regard to bats, including the possibility to cull if the population reaches pest level. As I mentioned earlier, a comprehensive survey of the bat population will be undertaken soon and the data will be communicated to the International Union for Conservation of Nature for a possible reclassification of the species. The status of species is classified as follows -

- Extinction in the wild
- Critically endangered
- Vulnerable
- Threatened
- Common

If the species is classified below the 'threatened' category, then culling could be resorted to, Mr Speaker, Sir. However, the best solution remains the netting of trees, a practice which is common and effective in many countries where bats exist and is a pest.

Mr Bérenger: Culling is done by whom?

Mr Faugoo: It can be either done by the Authority or we can also seek the support of fruit growers to do culling.

Mr Bérenger: May we ask the hon. Minister who provides the nets? Are they provided to planters only or members of the public?

Mr Faugoo: We are not providing nets, Mr Speaker, Sir. They are being sold in the open market. What we are doing, we have a scheme whereby we are reimbursing 75% of the cost and for a maximum of five nets.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister tell the House if all the measures, which he mentioned, have been communicated to the fruit growers?

Mr Faugoo: It has been communicated, Mr Speaker, Sir, through the extension services of AREU and we have also put a communiqué in all the press.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has made mention that the measure which was taken in that planters should resort to netting. Could the hon. Minister inform the House whether there have been arrangements made with his colleague, the Minister of Commerce, so that there are sufficient nets on the market to be purchased?

Mr Faugoo: In fact, AREU is looking into this. I understand it was about Rs2,500 per net to cover one tree. Since we have started the scheme, the price has gone down and it is Rs1,600 now on the market.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has mentioned that measures would be taken if the bats reached pest level. May we have any indication as to what number of bats should be reached for them to be determined as pest level?

Mr Faugoo: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, it depends on the classification by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. When we did the first survey in 2006, it was 25,000 and we are classified as vulnerable. I don't know what methodology they use, but it depends on that particular institution for classification.

Mr Speaker: A last question, hon. Varma!

Mr Varma: Could the hon. Minister inform the House when the Act of Parliament will be amended?

Mr Faugoo: In fact, we are working with the State Law Office, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**PORT LOUIS/MONTAGNE LONGUE – CASINOS, GAMING
HOUSES & BOOKMAKERS**

(No. B/1202) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the casinos, gaming houses and bookmakers presently operating in the Constituency No. 4, Port Louis and Montagne Longue, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the number thereof, indicating their –

- (a) respective location, and
- (b) the date on which each permit was issued.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Gambling Regulatory Authority that no licence has been issued to individuals or companies to operate a Casino or a Gaming House, nor has any licence been issued to any bookmaker to operate off course fixed odds betting on local horse racing in the region of Port Louis North/Montagne Longue.

However, there are two licensed Totalisator and two Bookmaking Companies offering fixed odds betting on local races, through remote communication – I understand this is telephone.

There are also six Bookmaking Companies that have been issued with the appropriate licences to operate outlets offering fixed odds betting on foreign football matches in that region.

In respect of parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am tabling the list of companies operating outlets in that area, their location as well as the date of issue of the licence.

Mr Jhugroo: May I ask the hon. vice-Prime Minister whether he is prepared to entertain requests from inhabitants of the constituency wherever there is need for closure of these gaming houses or casinos?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is asking a question whether the hon. Minister is prepared to entertain requests to close down. The persons must write to the Board - which has issued the licence - for cancellation. Next question!

BANK OF MAURITIUS – BUDGET & AUDITED ACCOUNTS

(No. B/1203) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Bank of Mauritius, he will state if Government will consider amending the Bank of Mauritius Act with a view to –

- (a) having its budget approved by Government and the accounts thereof audited by the Director of Audit, and
- (b) obtain the prior approval of his Ministry for all overseas missions undertaken by the officers of the Bank, including the Governor and his deputies.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, in November 2004, a new Bank of Mauritius Act came into effect that provides for greater degree of autonomy to the Central Bank.

Section 3(3), of the Bank of Mauritius Act 2004 provides that the Bank of Mauritius shall perform its functions independently and also spells out its operational and management independence.

Sections 31 and 32 provide for the Board to determine the budget of the bank and for the accounts to be certified by external auditors as may be appointed by the Board. The law also provides for a copy of the audited accounts to be laid before the National Assembly and to be published in the *Gazette*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is up to the Board and management to ensure that the accounting of the bank be carried out in conformity with accounting principles applicable to Central Banks and best international practice.

As regards the overseas missions of the officers of the bank, this is an operational matter to be decided at the level of the bank.

Changing the law for the Budget and overseas missions of officers of the bank to be approved by Government, and for the accounts to be audited by the Director of Audit would go against the principle of independence of Central Banks.

Therefore, Government is not considering the proposed amendments to the Bank of Mauritius Act.

However, while the benefits of Central Bank independence are undisputed, the nexus between independence and accountability must be upheld. More independence and more autonomy must go hand in hand with more transparency.

Internationally, as Central Banks have become more independent, the demand for transparency has increased both for reasons of accountability and legitimacy.

The Governor must not confuse between the independence of the bank and his own accountability to the Board and his responsibility to act within the legal framework of the BoM Act.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the independence of the Bank of Mauritius is 100% a public entity, and that the account of the Executive, the Judiciary and the Parliament, three pillars of our democracy are being audited by the Director of Audit, therefore, will the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance state in what way the independence of the Bank of Mauritius is impeached if the accounts of the Bank of Mauritius are to be audited by the Director of Audit and subjected to the Public Accounts Committee?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the law enacted in this very august Assembly speaks very clearly of the operational and management independence of the Central Bank. Let me make it very clear, we are talking about institutions, not people. I have a responsibility to protect the integrity and the sanctity of institutions, notwithstanding the fact that some people may abuse of these principles.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance agree with me that the law of the Bank of Mauritius, as it is now, the Bank of Mauritius has constituted itself in a Government and, therefore, leading to an unacceptable and indecent abuse of authority and privileges by the Governor?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is because of these two gentlemen...

(Interruptions)

They enacted the legislation, Mr Speaker, Sir and, as I said, we need to make the distinction between the operational and management independence of the Central Bank, and the need for transparency, accountability in order to conform to good governance principle. The hon. Member knows very well. I think it is the third or fourth time that he asked this question, and I invariably give the same answers.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan first and then I will come back to the hon. Member. Hon Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Does the vice-Prime Minister find it normal that the Governor of Bank of Mauritius travels five times more than the hon. Minister of External Affairs? His *per diem* is five times more than that perceived by the Minister of External Affairs or even the hon. Prime Minister.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the only thing that I can tell...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lormus Bundhoo, please!

Dr. Sithanen: ... hon. Bhagwan is that I receive the same complaint and I am sure you must have read what you just stated from letters that are circulating. They come on my table and that of the hon. Prime Minister on a regular basis.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. vice-Prime Minister say to the House whether he is aware of the terror installed at the Bank of Mauritius with regard to certain members of staff?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I receive and the hon. Prime Minister also receive and I am sure many Members in the House receive many letters of complaint about the attitude and the behaviour of the Governor. There was one instance where Cabinet had to take a decision to reverse a decision made by the Central Bank with respect to two employees.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. vice-Prime Minister agree with me that at a time when all the public sectors of the economy, including the social services are being asked to make sacrifices and exercise strict control, the Bank of Mauritius has embarked on a free spending spree of public funds, which is an insult to the working class of this country? Is the hon. vice-Prime Minister aware of the grave and serious allegations of abuse of privileges at the Bank of Mauritius leading to substantial waste and dilapidation of public fund?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said in this House that I have to carry the burden of the cross of replying for actions that I have no control upon. I have received many complaints on what the hon. Member has just said, Mr Speaker, Sir. I tend to agree with what he is saying, but this is not in my hand.

(Interruptions)

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the vice-Prime Minister aware of the conflict between the Board and the Governor and between the management and the Governor?

Dr. Sithanen: Of course, I am aware. Everybody in Mauritius is aware. This morning itself, I received a letter about the conflict between the Board and the Governor.

Mr Jugnauth: In the light of the answer that has just been given by the hon. vice-Prime Minister to the question put by my friend, hon. Dayal, can the hon. vice-Prime Minister say what is preventing the Government from taking any action?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, I'm sorry.

Dr. Sithanen: The hon. Member knows very well what the answer is, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the vice-Prime Minister agree with me that in spite of several Parliamentary Questions put in this august Assembly with regard to the several frequent missions of the Governor and some top officials accompanied by some privileged preferred staff, the Governor has shown a total disrespect of the outcry of the House and has continued the *tamassa*. Therefore, there is an urgent need that all the missions be approved by the hon. Prime Minister or, at least, by the hon. vice-Prime Minister. I have in mind all the travelling expenses that should have been spent in a year have to be spent in three months – not to mention the unlimited wining, dinning *au champagne rosé*.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is having a sadistic pleasure in asking questions, but I think he is barking at the wrong tree.

Mr Speaker: No, the hon. vice-Prime Minister cannot say that the Member is barking.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sithanen: You know what I mean. I do not know what to say on this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: In a reply to a parliamentary question which I put, we were informed that the Governor was not taking his salary; he was putting it like a 'sit' in a special account somewhere. Can we know by now whether this has been settled, whether he is taking his salary which according to our information is around Rs400,000 monthly and he is paid in foreign currency? Is this the case?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware, but I must say that I did read in a newspaper. I have to check the veracity of the information that he is drawing his salary now. I speak under correction, Mr Speaker, Sir. I'll have to check.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to say that there is no sadistic pleasure here; it is a question of public fund, poor people's money, our money. We have to be judicious while spending it. In view of the fact, that the Governor is not accountable to anybody, will the hon. vice-Prime Minister agree with me that a Fact-Finding Committee or any sort of inquiry is more than imperative to look into the abuse of authority, privileges, the oppressing and victimisation of employees?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is clearly an embarrassing issue. I have had long discussions with the hon. Prime Minister on this issue and we have tried to bring some sanity into the management of the Bank of Mauritius. The hon. Prime Minister has spoken to the Governor. I have spoken to the Governor myself on several occasions. I have also spoken to members of the Board because I believe that we need to protect the integrity and the credibility of the institution. The Secretary to the Cabinet has tried to mediate in order to find a solution that would best serve the interest of the Central Bank.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. Sithanen: The senior adviser in the office of the Prime Minister has also tried to mediate. In spite of this, it would appear that we continue to receive the type of complaint that the hon. Member has mentioned with respect to abuse of power and privilege. So, I have had long discussions with the hon. Prime Minister and Government has decided to set up a Fact-Finding Committee in order to enquire into the alleged abuse of power and abuse of privileges by the Governor.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I, therefore, ask the hon. vice-Prime Minister that in the name of transparency and fairness that the Governor steps down temporarily during the time the inquiry is being conducted?

Dr. Sithanen: This is not within my power, but I hope in the name of transparency and fairness, this could take place.

Mr Jugnauth: Can we know the terms of reference of this Fact-Finding Committee and the composition of the Committee?

Dr. Sithanen: We do not know yet. We have to discuss with the State Law Office. As I said, I have had a long discussion with the hon. Prime Minister before he left because I knew what was going to be the tone of the hon. Member's question. We have agreed after discussion to set up this Fact-Finding Committee. So, now we have to look into the modalities.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to our information, the Governor has been harassing senior professionals working at the Bank of Mauritius. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can discuss seriously with the hon. Prime Minister to have this false king step down pending the deliberations of the Fact-Finding Committee?

HIGHLANDS/PHOENIX – CEMETERY - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1204) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if, during a meeting with the representatives of the inhabitants of Highlands and Phoenix, at the seat of the Quadri circle, he has proposed providing land for the construction of a cemetery and, if so, indicate if the land has been identified.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker Sir, for the past few years both the Municipalities of Vacoas/Phoenix and Quatre Bornes have requested a plot of land for the purpose of constructing a new cemetery as the citizens of both towns were having difficulties to bury their close ones.

A few portions of land were identified but were all found unsuitable from the point of view of the Water Resources Unit of the Ministry of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities and the Environmental Health Engineering Unit of the Ministry of Health & Quality of life as these lands were close to rivers or underground water table.

Finally, a team of stakeholders comprising officers of my Ministry, the Environmental Health Engineering Unit of the Ministry of Health & Quality of life, the Water Resources Unit of the Ministry of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities and the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands eventually identified a portion of land near '*Les Trois Mamelles*' mountain in constituency No. 15. This land belongs to Médine Sugar Estate Co. Ltd which has agreed to sell it to my Ministry.

Procedures have already been initiated for the acquisition of the plot of land and its eventual vesting in the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands for the purpose of constructing a cemetery.

BASSIN ROAD, HIGHLANDS – ABSORPTION PITS - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/1205) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether he will state if he has received complaints from the inhabitants of Bassin Road, Highlands, in regard to the overflow of absorption pits and, if so, will he state if remedial actions have been taken.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in May 2009, some inhabitants of Bassin Road, Highlands complained about an acute problem of flooding and overflowing of pits.

I am informed that the Wastewater Management Authority has carried out a survey and found that two families are particularly affected by the problem of overflowing pits, due to an absence of storm water drains. One of the families has resolved the problem by increasing the absorption pit capacity.

The house of the other family, unfortunately, is on a low lying site with inadequate space to increase the capacity of the already saturated absorption pit. The family has been advised to have recourse to pumping and desludging of the pit.

My Ministry has also informed the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands of the need to construct storm drains in the locality.

ROAD SAFETY - CAMPAIGNS

(No. B/1206) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether,

in regard to serious and fatal road accidents, he will state the number of cases thereof, since January 2009 to date, indicating the campaigns carried out by his Ministry on road safety and the amount of money spent thereon.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit that since January 2009 to date, 110 fatal road accidents have been registered. Unfortunately, 120 persons have lost their lives in these accidents.

Efforts to improve road safety and to curb down road accidents are limitless and inexhaustible. Ways and means are being deployed, ranging from the application of specific traffic management measures, setting speed limits, fixing of speed calming devices, installation of guard rails and segregate pedestrians from vehicular traffic and so on. Nonetheless, emphasis is put on education and sensitisation as it is considered that it is the best way to address the problem.

My Ministry has carried out two major campaigns this year. The first one was held in March 2009 for the two wheelers. The campaign focussed on the need for the riders to be more visible to other road users and the need to wear protective and securely fastened helmet. The second major campaign, "Safer Driving" was launched not later than on 16 November 2009 and will be conducted over a period of 15 days. It targets the drivers of all categories of vehicles. This particular campaign is emphasising on the need to drive within safety limits. For these two campaigns, my Ministry has spent a total of Rs5,197,920.20.

Apart from these two major campaigns, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has continuously carried out Road Safety Education and Sensitisation. Thus more than 20,500 students from 136 primary and secondary schools and 1,750 senior citizens from 33 senior citizens clubs have been sensitised on the vulnerability and on precautions that they should take as road users.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another campaign on the theme "Driving under Intoxication" is scheduled during the end of the year festive period and a sum of Rs4,361,490.00 have been earmarked for the purpose.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that one of the causes of serious and fatal road accidents is speeding, may I ask the hon. Minister how many speed guns are in operation today and whether he intends to have more in the future?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have got three speed cameras and we are trying to procure another three in January.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, has the attention of the hon. Minister been drawn to the fact that for the past months and even years, this question of vehicle emission, *la fumée noire*, has been the cause of fatal accidents, *qui a eu un relâchement que ce soit au niveau de la police de l'environnement ou les officiers de la NTA, à travers les lacunes de la législation existante et même le manque de matériel*? This is a long outstanding problem. I would like to know whether due diligence will be given to this question of vehicle emission, even buses and lorries.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, vehicle emission is a cause of concern definitely, but we haven't come across cases where as a result of vehicle emission there have been dangerous accidents, but, of course, we also share the same concern and we have given instructions to NTA to procure additional equipment in order to strengthen more our existing control of vehicles.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, follow up.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it was a joint action as it was done in the past? The police has been working in isolation, the *police de l'environnement* on one side and the NTA on the other. I would like to know whether a joint action with the *police de l'environnement*, the police authorities and the officers of NTA could set up a task force to work together to clear this problem.

Mr Bachoo: In fact, the traffic branch of the police as well as the NTA, are working together on that issue.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have got two questions. Can I put them at one go?

Mr Speaker: No, please! Put one question at a time!

Mr Varma: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister mentioned that 120 persons have lost their lives in fatal accidents this year. How does that compare to preceding years?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a slight decrease, but still we have got, at least, 1½ months to go. Last year, it was 128, this year it is 120, but we are scared. We hope that the number does not go up.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister also made mention that there was a sensitisation campaign as far as riders of motorcycles are concerned to wear their helmets. Is he aware that for electrically propelled cycles, the drivers don't

wear helmets? Is he aware of that and, if so, what are the remedial measures that are being envisaged?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are trying to amend our existing regulation in order to include those electric cycles also and we are doing it. I hope in the weeks to come, it will be ready.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all very concerned about this high number of fatal accidents and the figures given by the hon. Minister confirm that we hold the world record in that field! Does the hon. Minister have the statistics of the profile of these drivers? For example, has a survey been conducted to know out of these 120 cases whether the drivers were under the influence of alcohol or the age group of these drivers, whether they were young drivers, has he got any details?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have got the details, but I am not aware whether we have the detail of age group with us, but I'll definitely communicate and let you know the details.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister mentioned about road safety. When we drive, especially at night, most of the time the traffic lights are chopped and this causes lots of accidents.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, when this matter is brought definitely to our notice, we take actions immediately. But, unfortunately, we just can't avoid one or two breakdowns, but, as far as possible, I have given instructions to my officers to see to it that all these things are in proper control. In fact, in Mauritius, we have got only one firm which is specialised in repairing these traffic lights and that explains, at times, our inability to cope with the number of demand that we get.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, over the last few months we have seen a proliferation of powerful motorbikes on our road and, very often, they drive *en file indienne*, like we say. Can the Minister inform the House what is being envisaged to control that type of driving?

Mr Bachoo: Well, this is against the law. The best I can do, I can request Police authority to take action against those people.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Soodhun!

CHILD ABUSE - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN - REPORT

(No. B/1207) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to child abuse, she will state the -

- (a) number of staff in post at her Ministry, and
- (b) actions Government proposes to take following the report submitted by the Ombudsperson for Children.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are at present 33 officers posted at the Child Development Unit of my Ministry to deal with cases involving children. The remaining 21 officers are posted at the Head Office are involved in the different programmes of the Ministry. As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that a meeting was held with the Ombudsperson for Children on Thursday 05 November 2009 regarding the cases which she has mentioned in her report and which have already been dealt with by my Ministry. Mr Speaker, Sir, the main shortcomings highlighted by the Ombudsperson for Children in her report was that there was a lack of prompt intervention on behalf of the CDU because of poor co-ordination among the main stakeholders namely, the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life, the Police Department and the CDU. To redress the situation, the following measures have been put in place –

- (a) A meeting chaired by me has already been held with other Ministries and Departments on Wednesday 04 November 2009 to revamp the Protocol of Collaboration and Assistance to child victims of abuse. Another meeting is scheduled for the first week of December with various other stakeholders, namely officers in charge of residential care institutions and NGOs to ensure that all protocols are being adhered to and with a view to improving the networking put in place.
- (b) Internal monitoring meetings chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry are now held on a weekly basis where case conferences are conducted so that the Ministry is in a better position to find appropriate solutions for complicated child related issues.
- (c) The lengthy bureaucratic procedure regarding the approval of EPOs has been shortened.
- (d) A monthly meeting between my Ministry and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has also been proposed to address issues of concern in relation to children.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to these measures, my Ministry is shortly launching pastoral care to children in shelters and residential care institutions.

Children go through trauma and are unable to confide in caregivers. Now after the introduction of pastoral care children will be able to speak out in utter confidentiality. Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is already operating hotline 113 on a 24 hours basis. In view of the increasing number of child abuse cases, my Ministry is making arrangements to provide an additional hotline. My Ministry has also made a request to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment for the recruitment of additional staff so as to effect prompt and efficient service delivery. Moreover, six new vehicles are being added to the existing fleet to ensure more rapid intervention of the CDU.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker Sir, the hon. Minister made mention of 33 officers who are posted at the Child Development Unit and 21 who are posted at Head Office. Could the hon. Minister inform the House how many officers have been recruited over the past five years and whether they have been appointed by the PSC or by the powers delegated by the PSC?

Mr Speaker: If the hon. Minister doesn't have the information, he can ask the hon. Member to put a substantive question. Next question hon. Guimbeau!

RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGES – INFRASTRUCTURE - FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

(No. B/1208) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to religious pilgrimages, he will state if Government makes financial provisions thereof in relation to infrastructure and other facilities and, if so, indicate the amount of money spent thereon, since July 2005 to date.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, since independence, it has been the practice of Government to improve public services wherever major religious activities are held. These improvements are financed under respective recurrent budget of appropriate Ministries providing their service. We are pursuing the same policy

Mr Guimbeau: The hon. Minister has confirmed that Government makes financial provisions in regard to religious pilgrimage. Would it not be fair, Mr Speaker, Sir, that part of the provisions be made available to Air Mauritius as a kind of sponsor on air tickets, so as to reduce the price of those Hajjis in need? I think it would be fair, Mr Speaker Sir.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question relates to the financial provision for infrastructure.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. Yes, it is for infrastructure.

Mr Guimbeau: I did mention to infrastructure and other facilities.

Mr Speaker: Facilities related to infrastructure.

Mr Guimbeau: No, I am talking to facilities related to the pilgrimage itself, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have mentioned that we don't have anything specific in the Budget, but what we do, we take from different Ministries, for example, Local Government if in case non-classified routes are concerned for upgrading non classified routes we take from environment and National Development Unit, from Ministry of Social Security. This is the way we try to gather the funds required in order to upgrade existing structures in the country. That is all.

Mr Guimbeau: I agree with the hon. Minister, but I think it would be most fair that those Hajjis in need who have to catch a plane to *la Mecque* benefit from this provision, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bachoo: That does not fall within my Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

EDUCATORS - DUTY FREE CAR FACILITIES

(No. B/1209) **Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the duty free car facilities granted to the educators of the public sector, he will state if the latter have been informed that, contrary to the agreement that they had signed, they will not be entitled to duty free car facilities for a period of seven years, as opposed to the period of six months, as indicated in the initial agreement.

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Dr. B. Hookoom): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to this question. According to recommendation made at paragraph 18.2.26 (ii) of the PRB Report 2008 and in Errors, Omissions and Clarifications Report 2009, officers (including Educators), though less than 50 years, who have never benefited from duty remissions, but drawing a monthly salary of Rs40,000 (top salary) would be eligible once during their career for the purchase of a 70% duty remission car with

engine capacity of up to 1400 cc or a monthly car allowance of Rs1,600 in lieu of the 70% duty remission on a car of engine capacity of up to 1400 cc. Such beneficiaries may take advantage of duty remission again, if they qualify for 100% duty remission on reaching salary point of Rs41,250. However, officers who would reach salary point Rs41,250 by virtue of the provisions at paragraphs 10.52 and 10.53 of the PRB Report 2008 that is to move incrementally above their top salary would be allowed to take advantage of duty remission on a car again after seven years have elapsed as from the date of purchase of their 70% duty remitted car. For the sake of parity, officers who are drawing a monthly car allowance of Rs1,600 in lieu of the 70% duty remitted car would benefit from a monthly car allowance of Rs3,000, in lieu of 100% duty remitted car, only after seven years have elapsed as from the date they have opted for the monthly car allowance of Rs1,600. Officers who have opted for a monthly car allowance of Rs1,600 may be allowed to purchase a car on which 70% duty would be remitted after having drawn a monthly car allowance of Rs1,600 for a minimum period of six months as recommended at paragraph 18.2.22(a) of the PRB Report 2008.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he would be ready to consider cases where an officer had opted allowance instead of the duty remission for a period of six months and then after which he attains the salary scale of Rs41,250, to decide to take up a car instead of the allowance at that particular point?

Dr. Hookoom: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are looking into the matter.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

WORKERS – INJURIES – MEDICAL FACILITIES

(No. B/1210) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the workers who sustain injuries on their site of work, he will state the measures taken by his Ministry to ensure that they receive adequate medical follow-up or medical facilities from their employers.

Mr Chaumière: Mr Speaker, Sir, whenever workers are injured on a site of work, it is the duty of the employer, under section 45 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005, to provide such equipment and facilities as are adequate and appropriate in the circumstances to enable first aid to be rendered to the workers concerned. Where the injury necessitates removal of the worker to a hospital or

other medical institutions, the employer has to promptly and, at his own expense, provide an appropriate means of conveyance for the injured worker.

Once the injured worker has attended a medical institution, it is the responsibility of that institution to provide the appropriate medical treatment, and ensure the required medical follow-up. My Ministry is not in a position to do so.

Mrs Grenade: Mr Speaker, Sir, can you allow me to raise a matter with regard to my question? It concerns someone who has been injured on his site of work. I am sure that the hon. Minister is aware of that accident which occurred on 29 September 2008 at the CEB, where there have been five people injured; three severely touched, among which one worker is still waiting for treatment. May I ask the hon. Minister what can he do with regard to this situation? Because this worker *doit faire des greffes, il est dans un état vraiment critique, et je demanderai au ministre ce qu'il peut faire pour venir en aide à ce travailleur.*

Mr Chaumière: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very sympathetic to this cause; because I know the person very well, and it so happens that this accident occurred when I was just appointed Minister. The matter is not within the purview of my Ministry, but I will pass on the message to the appropriate institution - to the parent Ministry.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister one question, Mr Speaker, Sir? The hon. Minister has stated the law as it is, as well as the responsibility of the employer and Government. I am referring to the National Pension Scheme. But can I ask him whether we should not consider the possibility, in sectors with a lot of occupational hazards, sectors of high risk, for example, in the construction sector, factories, industry or power plants, of legislating, so as to make it compulsory for the employers there to take an insurance cover for their employees? I repeat not in all sectors; that would be a bit difficult; but in certain specific sectors, like power plants, construction and so on?

Mr Chaumière: I do concur with the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have given thought to that myself. I must say that, according to information that I have gathered from the Ministry of Social Security, there are schemes under the National Pensions Act. But I think that, as regards certain cases, these are not sufficient, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Varma: The hon. Minister has said that he has given thought to that idea. Is that thought being translated into action in the near future?

Mr Chaumière: Once again, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not a decision which the Government can take alone. We have to discuss with all the stakeholders, with the employees, with the employers. I think that the hon. Member will agree with me that, as a Government, we cannot take a decision that will have far-reaching consequences without consultation with all the stakeholders.

Mr Ganoo: The employer pays the injured worker for the first 15 days, I think, and the National Scheme pays for the rest of the days when he is on medical leave.

Mr Chaumière: After 15 days.

Mr Ganoo: ... when he is at home, and so on. But this is payment of wages; we are talking of payment of a compensation for injuries suffered!

Mr Chaumière: That is why I am telling the hon. Member that we are looking at these possibilities.

MOBILE TELEPHONE SECTOR - FOURTH OPERATOR - CORRESPONDENCES

(No. B/1211) Mr Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to allowing a fourth operator in the mobile telephone sector in Mauritius, he will -

- (a) state where matters stand, and
- (b) table copy of the correspondences dated 03 and 04 August 2009 respectively, from his Ministry to the Information Communications Technology Authority.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the ICT Authority that it had received applications for a Public Land Mobile Network licence from the following three companies -

- (i) City Call Ltd, on 06 March 2009;
- (ii) Spiritage International (Mauritius) Ltd., on 20 April 2009, and
- (iii) Cesca Ventures Ltd., on 15 May 2009.

The last application, however, took shape as from 13 August 2009.

In line with section 24(3) of the ICT Act for processing applications for licence, the ICT Authority gave public notifications for these applications in two dailies. For City Call Ltd., the notification appeared on 16 March 2009, while for Spiritage International Ltd. and Cesca Ventures Ltd., the notifications were on 06 May 2009 and 05 June 2009 respectively.

On 25 May 2009, the ICT Authority wrote to my Ministry, seeking decision of Government for the grant of a fourth mobile licence in Mauritius.

On 02 June 2009, ICT Board was informed by my Ministry not to issue, until such time deemed appropriate, a licence to a fourth mobile operator.

On 03 June 2009, the ICT Authority decided not to grant the application, and communicated the decision to the applicant, namely City Call Ltd.

On 29 June 2009, City Call Ltd. served a notice of appeal before the ICT Appeal Tribunal against the decision of the ICT Authority.

Furthermore, on 06 October 2009, the ICT Authority and my Ministry were ordered to appear before the Supreme Court, in relation to an application for an injunction made by City Call Ltd. to restrain and prohibit the respondents from issuing any mobile licence to any other applicant, pending the determination of the appeal before the ICT Appeal Tribunal. The case has been fixed for 04 December 2009.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am advised that, as there is a case pending before the Supreme Court, the subject matter is *sub judice*, and it will not be in order for me to answer at this stage. However, when the case is over at the Supreme Court, I will lay both letters on the Table of the Assembly.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, although we take note that the matter is at the court, we know what is being said outside on this particular case. Can the hon. Minister inform the House that, at any point in time, his Ministry issued directives or letters to the ICTA, contrary to Government's decision? I am not asking to produce the letters. I am asking the Minister to inform the House whether his Ministry, upon his insistence as Minister, issued letters for the granting of permits.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned in my answer that, once the case is over, I will lay both letters, and we will comment on the matter.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, we know that the case is in court. The hon. Minister is not replying to me. What I am asking the Minister, as a Member of

Parliament, is to inform the House - I am not asking the content or whatever - whether he, as Minister, has instructed his officers, contrary to State Law Office, to issue a directive or a letter to the ICTA in that particular case?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member means in this particular case. The Member has to understand that the matter is *sub judice*. There is an application, and the hon. Minister has, in his answer, given details. If any answer is going to be prejudicial to the case, I will not allow, because the matter is *sub judice*. This question might be prejudicial to the application. Let the court find out.

Mr Bhagwan: The Minister is not replying to my question. Can I ask the hon. Minister, under your guidance, whether he has given directives as Minister? Is it yes or no?

Mr Speaker: No, he cannot do that. Let the court find out. He has promised the House to give the answer once the case is over. The hon. Member can come and ask whatever details he wants.

(Interruptions)

Next question!

YVES CANTIN HOSPITAL – ELECTRICITY SUPPLY – FAILURES

(No. B/1212) Mr Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the recent failures in electricity supply in various areas of the country, including the region of Black River, as a result of which inconveniences and prejudices were caused to the staff and patients of the Yves Cantin hospital, he will state the remedial measures Government proposes to take to avert any such recurrence.

(Withdrawn)

TERRE ROUGE - SUGAR CANE PLANTERS – LAND - ALLOCATION

(No. B/1213) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the sugar cane planters of Terre Rouge, whose land were retrieved as a result of the ex-Tianli project, he will state if they have now been allocated their plot of land as promised and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

**“MAURITIUS STRATEGIC PLAN ON TOURISM 2009/15” –
REPORT - IMPLEMENTATION**

(No. B/1214) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the report entitled “Mauritius Strategic Plan on Tourism 2009/15”, he will state the -

- (a) amount of fees paid to the consultant;
- (b) date it was finalised and submitted;
- (c) actions initiated, if any, and
- (d) schedule for implementation.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that a total amount of Euros 34,520 has been paid to Oliver Dunstan Bennett who was appointed as Consultant for the preparation of the Mauritius Sector Strategy Plan on Tourism for the year 2009-2015. The report was finalised and submitted on 20 June 2009.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning part (c) of the question, an Action Plan has been incorporated in the report detailing the various measures recommended to be taken with a view to ensuring the sustainable development of our tourism industry. The recommendations are wide-ranging and cover numerous fields relating to marketing and promotion, product development, tourism framework, environment, infrastructure, training, etc.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (d), on assuming office in July 2005, I opted to pursue practically the same tourism development strategy as subsequently recommended by the Consultant in the Sector Strategy Plan.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has, therefore, since 2005, undertaken many initiatives to improve and diversify our tourism product portfolio while, at the same time, intensifying our promotional efforts in traditional as well as in emerging markets and new segments. In this respect, my Ministry has implemented the following -

- development of an annual tourism marketing plan by the MTPA;

- consolidating our presence in existing markets;
- promotional campaigns carried out to increase penetration of niche and emerging markets;
- development of an improved and user-friendly website at the MTPA
- carrying out of visitor's perception survey;
- development of cultural heritage through restoration and revalorisation of historical buildings;
- tourism training programmes;
- embellishment of tourist sites/locations;
- emphasis on green productivity.

Other recommendations will be gradually implemented.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that other Ministries and Agencies are already implementing various other projects which have been recommended in the Tourism Sector Strategy Plan and falling under their respective responsibilities, such as efforts to address beach erosion, development of offshore islets in line with islets management plans, implementation of tourism satellite account, creation of tourist villages, encouraging technical competencies in handicraft production, improved arrival cards, improved road network, airport development, etc.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker Sir, I have requested the Steering Committee which was set up to monitor the project relating to the preparation of the Tourism Sector Strategy Plan and comprising officials of my Ministry and other relevant Ministries/Agencies as well as representatives of the private sector to advise on other projects that should be undertaken as a priority.

Mr Bhagwan: I have a supplementary question, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is possible for the House to have a copy of that report at the Library of the National Assembly or circulated for Members to, at least, take notice?

Mr X. L. Duval: I will look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking about the Strategic Plan of the Tourism Industry and one of the components of the Plan is environment

protection. Has the attention of the hon. Minister been drawn, especially these days, that *l'île Maurice n'a jamais été si sale*, that littering is a constant problem, that Mauritius, during the past months, has been converted in certain areas as dumping grounds and scrap vehicles are being spread around near hotels which are not being catered for, and whether actions are being initiated and what action Government intends to take in that direction?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, with economic prosperity, with the bad habits of Mauritians, generally it is a fact that there is littering all over the place. It has been like this for a long time, but it is not really getting any better. I recently met my colleague, the Minister of Local Government, and there is an Action Plan which is being prepared and implemented because it is genuine worry the amount of dirt and litter that there is everywhere.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House in that direction, especially, the end of the year is coming and tourists also, whether a national anti-littering or a cleanliness campaign will be launched in connection also with other sorts of health problem?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Environment, has recently passed regulations to considerably stiffen the fines with regard to littering. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that the police will be holding over the weekend itself - it has nothing to do with the question, it is a coincidence - a bit of an exercise to catch people who are littering over the weekend. Everybody has to beware. That's one thing. The regulations have been passed. The Tourism Authority has purchased a number of lorries which are now cleaning the North of the island. The Minister of Environment, myself and l'*AHRIM* have a programme for the whole of the East which is now being cleaned by private contractors, in addition to what the local authorities are doing. A similar programme will be done in the North of the island, it will start in December and I hope to do the same thing in Flic en Flac region and Mahebourg. This is a problem, but we are aware of the problem, and there are things that are being done.

Mr Bhagwan: I have two questions, Sir. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether his attention has been drawn concerning the problem of stray dogs and also *corbeaux* in the different gardens of Port Louis and even Balfour garden and whether any action has been initiated in that respect?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as stray dogs are concerned, my Ministry finances the catching and euthanizing of about 1,500 to 2,000 dogs every month. This is being done by the MSPCA. It is a new project and it has been

going on for about two years. We also partly finance the sterilization of dogs. These are the two things that we do. As far as ravens are concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, we also contribute to the Ministry of Agriculture's effort to euthanize ravens.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that we have different gardens, apart from the Pamplemousses Garden, everywhere around Mauritius, the Souillac garden, the Balfour garden and even in Curepipe. Can the hon. Minister, at least, inform the House whether he has discussed with the local authorities and those responsible for the gardens not to work on a piecemeal basis, at least, to have a national policy to upgrade our gardens under the responsibility of one authority, even it is the Tourism Authority?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a matter for the Minister of Agriculture, but I will pass on his remarks.

MAURITIUS TENNIS FEDERATION – TRAINING SESSIONS – MONEY COLLECTED

(No. B/1215) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Tennis Federation, he will state the fees charged by the Federation for training sessions, indicating if the money collected is remitted to the Federation and, if not, why not.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me thank the hon. Member for his interest in tennis. I am given to understand that there are about 20 national tennis players who are training on a daily basis and that each player is paying a monthly fee of Rs1,200 directly to the Federation.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the fees being charged at Petit Camp by the Mauritius Tennis Academy which is found within the premises of the Mauritius Tennis Federation, ranges from Rs15,000 to Rs30,000 monthly?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we don't have any tennis academy. We have only the federation and there is a contract signed with Ace Tennis – I think the hon. Member wants to say Ace Tennis. Ace Tennis is still functional at Petit Camp. It is on the basis of a contract signed between the Tennis Federation for a period of five years starting July 2007 at a monthly subscription of Rs50,000. I agree that Rs1,200 appears to be excessive to pay for tennis. But knowing the specificity of tennis, my Ministry would ensure that the fees for the eventual Tennis Federation should be reviewed.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, when we talk of the concept of democratisation or regionalisation of sports, does not he find it indecent or not affordable by most of the parents in this country to pay Rs15,000 to Rs30,000 on a monthly basis for their sons or daughters to practice tennis?

Mr Ritoo: Well, we have free courses as well. Those who want to have excellence in tennis can still pay that sum of money, because this is done worldwide anyway. It is only in the Tennis Federation and the swimming competition that we have such conditions. Otherwise, all the sports disciplines are free.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that since 2007, out of eight tennis courts available at Petit Camp, six falls under the responsibility of Ace Tennis, whereby fees of Rs15,000 to Rs30,000 are being charged and only two tennis courts fall under the responsibility of the *Federation de Tennis*? That is, three tennis courts available are only two and the tennis courts available and the Ace Tennis are available only between 16 hrs to 18 hrs, that is, the peak time when those children have to practise tennis there.

Mr Ritoo: As I said to the hon. Member, there is no obligation on any licensee to go through Ace Tennis to play tennis. If you want to achieve excellence - and I told the hon. Member that the specificity of tennis is different from other sports discipline because we have got specific coaches for each category. That is why such an amount of money is charged and this has been the practice everywhere for a long time already. I am prepared to review.

Mr Lesjongard: I think the Minister should review because if we are aiming at our...

Mr Speaker: No, please! The Minister has said that he is going to review; there is no need for the hon. Member to comment on it. If he has another question, he can put it.

Mr Lesjongard: My question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is whether the present Government believes in the democratisation or regionalisation of sports in this country.

Mr Speaker: No, no! Next question!

**MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS - MR R. D. – COACH –
TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**

(No. B/1216) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he will state if one Mr R. D. is employed as coach at his Ministry and, if so, indicate his terms and conditions of employment.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr R. D. was recruited in May 2002 by the Mauritius Sports Council as Assistant Coach, to promote Table Tennis. Because of his good performance at national and international levels as a Table Tennis player, his services have been placed at the disposal of the Table Tennis Federation to provide advanced training to the national selection.

I am informed by the Mauritius Sports Council that Mr R. D. is employed on a contract basis renewable every year. He has been promoted as Coach in July 2009, with a monthly salary of Rs11,200, excluding compensation. He also draws a mileage allowance of Rs5,504 monthly.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he finds it normal that a national coach is asked to act as a traffic warden on VIP parking during the holding of the university games recently?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the scheme of duty of that specific Table Tennis Coach provides that he is supposed to provide assistance to the Sports Federation for the promotion of Table Tennis and to perform such cognate duties as may be assigned.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the Minister confirm whether that gentleman was requested to act as a traffic warden during the university games at the University at Réduit?

Mr Ritoo: He was never forced to do so, he acted voluntarily. I myself I was a football coach, I was conveying the players every time; that was voluntary so that the sporting event is....

(Interruptions)

It is outside the scope of the work.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lormus Bundhoo, please keep quiet! There is no need for you to add to the answer.

Mr Bhagwan: No, this is not the case. I know this athlete, I can mention his name, he is an international athlete who has brought lots of pride and medals to Mauritius; he is Mr Descan. I think somebody at the level of the Ministry - not the Minister - *un esprit malade qui a agit d'une certaine façon. Je sais que le ministre a agit en conséquence.* The Minister has redressed the situation. Can we ask the Minister that such a case does not happen to any other international athlete, that they are being humiliated in such a way by certain *officier malade*?

Mr Ritoo: I said that it is a team work, so maybe it is a team spirit.

MR A. C. AND MISS K. F. Y. - HIGH LEVEL SPORTS ASSISTANCE

(No. B/1217) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the proposed review of the criteria for the beneficiaries of the High Level Sports Assistance, he will state where matters stand, indicating if the assistance granted to the athletes Mr A. C. and Miss K. F. Y. have been reviewed and, if not, why not.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to PQ B/764 which he put to me some time ago and in the reply to which, I gave various details regarding the High level Athlete Scheme, including the categories concerned, the criteria used and the duration of the assistance.

The High Level Sports Unit has already made proposals on the review of criteria for grant of financial assistance to high level sportsmen and sportswomen. These proposals are under consideration at my Ministry and I will table a copy of the new criteria as soon as they are approved.

The new criteria will equally apply in the case of Mr A. C. and Miss K. F. Y.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the hon. Minister confirm that since I've put my question, that is, since July this year, nothing has been done in the case of Arnaud Casquette, an athlete who is suffering these days?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Arnaud Casquette representing athletics had been removed from category one world level and had been included in category 2, that is, the intercontinental level. The first reason is that as per medical report, Mr Casquette had been advised to avoid running and jumping till July 2009, he can only jog, swim and use a bicycle. He would be re-examined.

The second reason is that Mr Casquette could not perform to attain the objectives set for the *francophonie* games. Third, in addition, his main target set

for this year, that is, the *francophonie* games is an intercontinental event and this only justifies his inclusion in category 2.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, when I put my question last time, I stressed on the fact that he was going through some financial problems and the Minister promised that he would look into the matter. Can he inform the House whether he has looked into the matter and what decision has been taken in the case of Arnaud Casquette?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Arnaud Casquette was due to restart practising sports in September 2009. However, he was not able to participate in the *Sixième Jeux de la Francophonie*. The committee noted that during the recovery period of his injury, the High Level Sports Unit financially supported Mr Casquette though no performances were recorded. He could no longer be kept in the category for a further period of 4 months. He was, therefore, downgraded to category 3 and he is drawing an allowance of Rs4,000 per month.

PRIVATE TUITION - SURVEY

(No. B/1218) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to private tuition, he will state if Government will consider the advisability of carrying out a full-fledge survey in relation to the number of students and funds involved and make recommendations to preventing it from undermining the mainstream education system.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ No. B/619 on 23 June 2009, on the same issue, I indicated that the practice of private tuition which has been in place for decades is widespread in Mauritius and that some information about its scope and financial spread is available. Obviously, private tuition reinforces inequity and places a significant additional burden on parents when the actual education system is ostensibly free. On the other hand, parents exercise their choice to have recourse to private tuition for their children to succeed.

No scientific survey has been conducted but few studies have been carried out and indicate that private tuition has serious implications at all levels.

In fact, a study carried out by the University of Mauritius already in 1989 clearly brought out the fact that private tuition not only represents a financial burden on the poor families but also causes stress and health problems to pupils. Further, it does not leave much time for their emotional, social and physical development. My Ministry has been looking into ways and means to come forward

with a strategy to prevent private tuition from undermining the mainstream education system.

As a matter of fact, in our Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020, we have highlighted the need to review our current policy of private tuition. The outcome of consultations we had, led to the conclusion that a holistic approach should be adopted to tackle the issue. This implies a review of the existing summative form of assessment through the introduction of continuous assessment which is formative in nature.

The whole exercise would then gradually pave the way for a review of the CPE that, in its present form, leads to an overreliance on private tuition. This explains the rationale behind the proposal for an alternative to private tuition at Std IV level as highlighted in the Strategy Plan.

My Ministry has had discussions with the MIE and the MCA for an “Enhancement Programme”. The modalities of this programme which are being worked out not only cover pedagogical aspects, but also carry co-and extra-curricular components. This innovative approach would be a departure from the traditional frontal teaching in that it would render the learning experiences of children more enriching, enjoyable and rewarding because of its participatory dimension.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that the last study by the University of Mauritius dates back to 1989, would the hon. Minister agree that a full-fledge survey today would help us, in fact, see to it that private tuition is not undermining, as I said, the mainstream education system?

Dr. Bunwaree: We’ve had other reports also; I’ve mentioned only this one because it seems to be the most interesting one. We have some which were done even later, but we all agree that we have to do something.

In fact, the hon. Member has made his point. We are trying to do something, at least, with Std IV next year and then gradually with all that is being proposed in the Strategy Plan to do away with it, at least, to regulate wherever it is necessary.

GOVERNMENT GUARANTEED STUDENT LOAN SCHEME

– BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1219) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic

Empowerment whether, in regard to the Government Guaranteed Student Loan Scheme, as announced in the 2008/2009 Budget Speech, he will state the number of students who have benefited therefrom as at to date.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): With your permission, Sir, I wish to reply to this question.

The House may wish to be informed that so far 29 students having secured admission in a local post secondary institution recognised by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) have benefited from loans from commercial banks guaranteed by the Human Resource, Knowledge & Arts Development Fund (HRKAD) operated by my Ministry.

Nine other applications are in the pipeline and will be finalised by the end of this month.

Mr Jugnauth: Can the hon. Minister inform the House what are the conditions that are laid down for a student to benefit from that scheme?

Dr. Bunwaree: To be eligible for this loan, Mr Speaker, Sir, the loan scheme is aimed at Mauritian students, of course. The students should provide evidence that he or she and his or her parents/spouse cannot provide guarantee for the loan. The student should have secured a seat in a Tertiary Education Commission recognised local post secondary education institution. The programme of study should not be less than the equivalent of one academic full year of study. There is a fifth condition. The student should not have benefited from any scholarship, but I am looking into this also. In some cases, students can have benefited from a scholarship, but there need to be some topping up and they should be allowed to apply for the loan.

Mr Jugnauth: Would the hon. Minister agree that this scheme is, in fact, less favourable than the tertiary education support scheme that was introduced before and would he consider to improving the criteria, the conditions so that he can make it as favourable, if not more favourable?

Dr. Bunwaree: We are looking into further ways of trying to extend to all students, as the idea is to try to allow all students, who can go to university, to be able to pursue university studies.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Minister what is the sum which has been disbursed for that scheme in view of the fact that we have had 29 students who have been awarded the funds?

Dr. Bunwaree: These loans are given by commercial banks, I am not aware.

AUTOMATIC PRICING MECHANISM - MEETINGS

(No. B/1220) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Automatic Pricing Mechanism, he will state if Government intends reviewing the –

- (a) frequency at which the Committee meets, and
- (b) maximum fluctuation percentage of prices from the current 7.5% to the former 20%.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that since the introduction of the Automatic Pricing Mechanism (APM) in 2004, prices of the petroleum products were reviewed on a quarterly basis. With this quarterly exercise and in accordance with the Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Petroleum Products) Regulations 2004, the STC was not allowed to pass on an increase or decrease in prices of petroleum products on the World Market to consumers immediately.

In order to allow consumers to benefit from a fall in prices of petroleum products on the world market, the Regulations were amended in November 2008 to provide for the determination of the prices of petroleum products on a monthly basis on the third working day of every month in accordance with the price structure set out in the second schedule of the Regulations. Any adjustment in the retail price of petroleum products is considered within the range of 2.5 to 7.5 per cent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have observed that the price of Brent on the world market has stabilised within the range of USD 65 to USD 80 per barrel over the past few months. Further to my observations, I have set up a technical committee in September 2009 to consider the optimum frequency of carrying out the APM exercise with a view to its improvement.

Once the assignment is completed, I will inform the House accordingly.

Mr Jugnauth: Would the hon. Minister agree that this present system – reviewing monthly the prices – is, in fact, not practical and cumbersome. In fact, it has to mobilise a number of officers from the authorities. In the light of this and in the light of representations also made by partners of that sector, would he review the situation to make it as it was before that is, on a quarterly basis?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe the hon. Member has read in the press that is why he has put this question.

Mr Speaker: He has the right to do so.

Mr Gowressoo: I said in my answer that I have set up a technical committee to review all this.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Jugnauth!

NATIONAL LOTTERY - SOCIAL PROJECTS

(No. B/1221) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the National Lottery which was recently launched, he will state the social projects Government proposes to finance from the proceeds thereof.

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act 2007 provides for promoters to pay an agreed proportion of their net proceeds from lottery games into the Consolidated Fund. These funds are meant to be used to finance the implementation of projects relating to community development, the promotion of education, health, sports and culture, for reimbursement of the public debt of Government and for other related purposes.

As I stated in my Budget Speech, through the proceeds of the National Lottery Government is giving our country the means to upgrade civic life and protect our heritage. We are expecting revenues of around Rs400 m. in the next year which will allow embellishment of the cultural and physical landscape through support to the following eight endeavours.

First, excellence in Arts and Culture including support to our national artists, the development of music in the country, the upgrading of Plaza to

serve as an Opera House and the setting up of a Mauritius Symphony Orchestra.

Second, promotion of our national heritage – covering parks, historic places, archaeological sites and museums such as the Mahebourg Museum and the National Institute.

Third, expansion and upgrading of Sports and Recreation facilities, including creation of a National Sports Academy and construction of a stadium in the South West.

Fourth, excellence in education including encouraging interest in science and technology. Bright students from poor background will be awarded scholarships to pursue tertiary education.

Fifth, improving health in areas which take a heavy toll on the quality of life such as diabetes, diabetes for children, Alzheimer, lupus and other non communicable diseases.

Sixth, preservation of the Environment with targeted high impact programmes to revitalise our villages and urban peripheries such as the implementation of the new concept of Eco-Village in six coastal areas, namely La Gaulette/Le Morne, Poudre D'Or, Trou D'Eau Douce, Pointe aux Piments, Souillac and Vieux Grand Port.

Seventh, empowerment of women and promotion of gender equality including assisting Non State Actors to operate programmes and centres for women, construction of a Women Empowerment Centre at Rivière du Poste and a shelter for Women and Children in Distress at Belle Mare, and

Eighth, addressing the pressures of an ageing population with the emphasis on a better quality of life for our seniors, including provision of health track and keep fit equipment and the purchase of two low floor buses for the elderly to travel to the Recreational Centres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a Committee will shortly be set up to finalise and issue guidelines to determine the eligibility of projects for funding under the proceeds from the National Lottery. The Chairperson of the Committee shall be Mr Ravin Dajee, Managing Director of Barclays Bank, Mauritius.

Mr Jugnauth: Can the hon. vice-Prime Minister inform the House whether this committee will, of course, decide on the social projects to be carried out and the amount of money that will be spent for each social project?

Dr. Sithanen: Yes. There are some guidelines which have already been provided in the Budget. The Committee would have to make sure how the money is distributed and also the timely implementation of projects. I think flexibility also will have to be a key factor. Some projects probably will take longer to be implemented. So, we need probably to have a system where it is possible to transfer money from one project to other projects.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! I must inform the House that the Table has been advised that P.Q. No. B/1190, which is still on the Order Paper, to be answered by the Attorney General, has been withdrawn.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10(2)

The Ag. Prime Minister: Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph 2 of Standing Order 10.

Dr. Sithanen rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

‘L’EXPRESS’ NEWSPAPER – ARTICLE 21.10.09

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to inform the House that I have received a privileged complaint from the hon. First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka, hon. Jugnauth relating to an article which appeared on page 7 of the daily issue of ‘l’Express’ of 21 October 2009 under the caption ‘*Quand les uns rient, d’autres partent*’. I took time to consider. I am of the view that the contents of the article may constitute an offence under section 6 subsection 1 paragraph (n) of the National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of your ruling and, in virtue of Standing Order 74, sub-paragraph 4 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly 1995, I beg to move the following motion -

“This Assembly is of the opinion that the article published, at page 7 of the daily issue of ‘L’Express’ of Wednesday 21 October 2009, under the caption “*Quand les uns rient, d’autres partent*”, reflects on my conduct be and is hereby referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions with a view to determining whether an offence or offences have been communicated in breach of the National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act and for such appropriate action as he deems fit.”

I am tabling a copy of the issue of the newspaper in which the article appeared.

Question put and agreed to.

At 3.41 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.17 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the Mauritius Blood Service Bill (No. XXII of 2009) was read a first time.

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2010) BILL**(NO. XXI OF 2009)**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2010) Bill (No. XXI of 2009).

Question again proposed.

Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I came to this House to listen to the Budget of the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, like many Mauritians, one of the issues which were hitting me was the following: what type of Budget will it be? Will it be a Budget that has an electoral note or tone to it? Will it be what a lot of Mauritians thought it would be, namely that it was only sweeteners because of the forthcoming general election? Those were the things which were, on my mind, at that time. But, when I came to this Assembly and sat down here, before the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment started his speech, what came to my mind was the backdrop that had to be taken into account; what had gone through during those past five years, the challenges that us, as a nation, and this Government, has had to face when coming up with a Budget, and the changes in the way things have operated through big changes on the international scene. One should not forget that, at the time when this Government came to power in 2005, it had a particular backdrop, which was what the now hon. Leader of the Opposition, then Prime Minister had kept on saying, namely that “there was a very bad economic situation”. He had been going on and on about it in order to justify and explain why thousands and thousands had lost their jobs. This is something which we, when we came to power, had to face. It was also, without having to refer to skeletons, a fact that we had to face a situation where there was not a lot of Foreign Direct Investment in our country; there was a huge lack of it. It was also the time when there was the dismantling of the Multi-Fibre Agreement; it was an era, where preferential treatment that us, a small island, member of the ACP, was taking advantage of for many, many years, had simply disappeared. All the advantages we had as an ACP country, a sugar producing country, had disappeared, the guaranteed price vis-à-vis the European Union for our sugar had simply disappeared. We had other challenges as well.

Let us not forget the time when the price of petroleum had skyrocketed, and this was indeed a very huge challenge. There was another huge problem, which was the price of food; basic food had skyrocketed. As if that was not enough, you had to come up with the global financial crisis, and what we, as a nation, should

remember is that it is a global financial crisis that is not a doing of us in the developing world; it is not the doing of us in the south. The reason why the whole world has had to suffer a global financial crisis is because it started in the west, in the United States of America and in financial centres like in London. Its effects have been mostly felt by countries that are developing countries and one of them is Mauritius.

In the light of all these backdrops, when I was here to listen to the Budget Speech of the hon. vice-Prime Minister, I was very, very pleased - not surprised, but pleased - to hear that it had nothing to do with an electoral Budget. When I listened to him, there was one saying that came to my mind, and it's the following: "When something is not broken, why change it?" In other words, the Budget of the hon. vice-Prime Minister was nothing but a continuity of what had started in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 and, then, it culminates to this year. It was a continuation of the good work, of bold and intelligent measures taken by this Government, more so at the time when other countries, for example, our neighbour, South Africa, at the time of the global financial crisis, there were blackouts in certain towns because there was no electricity supply. Why that? Because the price of petroleum had skyrocketed and, for this reason, they had blackouts in many towns there! They had to as though ration how electricity was distributed. There were many countries in Africa and around the world where people were suffering from famine. They could not even buy a loaf of bread. There were countries with natural resources in their earth and, in spite of all those abilities of those countries to stand on their own feet and produce much more from natural resources, which we have not, they have had to suffer the effects of the food crisis. But, us, in Mauritius, through the subtle, intelligent and sometimes even bold initiatives of this Government, through the leadership of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, and the excellent work of our vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, we have had not to suffer as much; we have not had the consequences and the ill effects of this global financial crisis.

Let us not forget also another important element. We have left behind to history the age of protectionism. We are no longer living in a world where we can consider ourselves to be lucky enough and to have the chance of being protected, just because we are a small island or just because we are member of the ACP. Gone are those days! We have now entered a new age; the age of liberalisation, where no one owes us a living, and we have to compete with the whole world out there. This was the backdrop and, for that, I would like to congratulate the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment for his excellent work and this whole Government for having put their heads and minds

together, in order to help us navigate this dangerous course, navigate those difficult days. In spite of all those difficulties and those challenges that could not have been thought of in 2005, when we came to power, we could not have thought or predicted that we would have a global financial crisis. We could not have predicted that the price of petroleum would almost treble; we could not have predicted all that. I read the Government Programme of 2005-2010, because sometimes it is good, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to go back to the source, and I wanted to see whether this Government stayed the course and delivered upon its promises in the Government Programme of 2005-2010. When I read the words of his Excellency, the President of the Republic, in the Government Programme, I am, once again, pleased that almost 90% of what is in that Programme have been implemented and delivered. This is what I call a serious Government that sticks to its words and does what it says it will do. This is my view of the whole Budget of the hon. Minister of Finance.

Having said that, it is my duty to be here today, not only to go along every single of the excellent measures of the hon. Minister of Finance, but I would like also to thank him for the excellent help that he has given to my constituency, namely No. 13. The hon. Minister of Youth & Sports came up - and it is referred to in the Budget - and said that there is going to be a national stadium. What type of national stadium? Exactly as the one in the North, Anjalay! Each and every area and corner of this country has stadiums; even in the west coast. Now, it has been recognised that our constituency, which represents the deep south of this island, does not have a national stadium. It is our due, and I am thankful that this Government has recognised - through the proceeds of the lottery, as explained by the hon. Minister of Finance - that be built in my constituency, near the region of Souillac, a national stadium that will be the pride of this country, and that will make the people of my constituency and the south of this island proud to have had confidence in this Government.

A lot more has been done in my constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When one starts from the village of La Flora and goes all the way through Grand Bois and the village of Bois Cheri, one just has to go there in a car to see that there have been lots of investments that have been made in terms of infrastructure. At one time or the other, there were no pavements on the Royal Road from La Flora to Bois Cheri. There were no drains, no handrails. But what I am happy to note and to say to this House is that, due to the efforts of this Government, of the hon. Minister of Finance, of the hon. Ministers concerned, those three villages, from the very beginning of La Flora all the way through to Bois Cheri, have drains, pavements, and even handrails. What is most important also is not only the main

road, but even the lateral roads, the small roads, because this is the constituency where we have very heavy rainfalls. With heavy rainfalls, in the past, a lot of houses were flooded with rain water, but this Government has invested massively in drains. It is one of the constituencies where we have had huge investments in drains to help flood prone areas.

The hon. Minister of Local Government has also informed the House and it is also confirmed in the Budget Speech that the Stadium of Souillac is going to be lighted. There is going to be floodlights on the football pitch of Souillac as well as on the football pitch of Rivière des Anguilles. If this is not conscientious on his part, I don't know what it is! It is very, very nice of him to have thought of us in that way and it is through his actions that he will be judged. And let me say that I, myself, am very proud and pleased to note that his actions speak louder than his words.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are lots of infrastructural developments and investments that have been brought to my constituency. My colleague, hon. Peetumber, as PPS of that constituency has done a lot of work to see to it that every single village sees development, that every single village sees a change after the general election of 2005. In fact, every single village has seen changes and this is through the excellent work of the PPS of the constituency, hon. Peetumber, my good friend, hon. Mardemootoo and me. As a team, we have seen to it that changes be brought along those five years. Of course, with the help - I cannot stop thanking him - of the hon. Minister of Finance and every single Minister of this Government, who have contributed to the benefit of the villages of Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac.

I am duty bound, therefore, not only to come to sing the praise of the Budget, but also as a Member of Parliament, to draw the attention of the House to certain issues that have to be remembered and that have to be corrected. Certain issues seem to be forgotten sometimes and one of those issues concerns the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions. Obviously, when going through all the documents that have been given to us on Budget day, I have looked at the estimates with regard to the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions and that has not been taken care of. I will say what exactly that is. In 1987, an amendment was made to the law by the Government of the day to amend the Civil Status Act and that amendment of the Civil Status Act created a situation where people who got married religiously, their marriage was not recognised as being a marriage and those people had, by law, to get married civilly as well. In 1990, the then Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth - now, His

Excellency the President – brought about an amendment to the Civil Status Act to re-establish the fact that religious marriages were recognised as being valid marriages. But, at the same time, the Civil Code was never amended and stayed the same as it was in 1982, because it was Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the then Prime Minister of the country, who saw to it that specific provisions be made in the Civil Code to recognise those people who got married religiously only and not civilly. But, at no time, that was deleted or amended by the Government of the MSM in those days. It was kept as it was in the law books. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not know why, but, according to my own figures and my own research, there are approximately 800 women who have got married religiously only and who have been caught by this problem between 1987 and 1990 where there was some sort of change in the law which was in conflict with the specific provisions of the Civil Code, Article 228, *alinéa 1 du Code Civil*. The result is that, today, more than 800 women who have married religiously are not receiving pensions from the State. In spite of the fact that the Civil Code clearly states at Article 228, *alinéas 4, 5, 6 et 7* that any person who gets married *religieusement et pas civilement, a le droit de recevoir et de percevoir la pension de l'État, non seulement de l'État mais les enfants des personnes qui se sont mariées religieusement ont les mêmes droits que les enfants des personnes qui se sont mariées civilement*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not only this Government, but this problem occurred even under the previous Government. Ever since 1990 this problem is there and it is an anomaly that needs our attention. Women and, here, obviously, there are Muslim women who have married religiously, who have done what we call the *Nikkah* and they are not receiving their pensions. That is in violation of the Civil Code. It seems as though the officers of the Social Security Office, ever since 1990, have only read the Civil Status Act, which is in English, and have failed, I don't know why, maybe because it is in French. They have not referred to the *Code Civil* that has force of law and, for those reasons, I believe and I pray to the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions, hon. Mrs Bappoo and the Ministers of this Government, most particularly, the Minister of Finance, that this lacuna, this error in interpretation of the law, this failure to read what the law is, should be corrected. And what would that mean? It would mean that all those women have not been receiving pension since 1990 for a failure of those people at the Social Security Office. I am not, in any way, pinpointing the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions here or the one before. Never! What I am saying is that there is a lacuna here. The lacuna is having failed to read the law because what the result would be is that they should receive their pension with a back pay for the last twenty years. This provision, for the sake of justice and

transparency and for the sake of legality, should be corrected as soon as possible. This is an issue I wanted to raise and I thought it was very important to do so because out of those 800 people not receiving pensions, there are also the children of those 800 people who are suffering, most of them are widows and are not receiving pensions out of a simple mistake made by officers responsible at the Social Security Office.

There is another issue which I would have liked to see in the Budget and it is the following. There have been talks with regard to facilities being given to the two buses which have been bought for the old-age pensioners, those people who have worked so hard for our country and who have invested themselves for our country and, obviously, have to be repaid in terms of kindness from those who are at the head of the State. Those two buses are very welcomed.

However, there is one issue which I would like to talk about here. A country which says that it is nice to its people is very often, as Mahatma Gandhi said - normally you also find out how nice they are to dogs - people who are not good and nice enough to animals, they are not cultured people. Here, I am not talking about animals; I am talking about disabled people, those who go around with wheelchairs, walking sticks or crutches. When we look at our country - let's not go further than Port-Louis - we see that Port Louis, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a place where a disabled cannot go around in a wheelchair. Quatre Bornes or any single town in this country is a place where the disabled cannot move independently. What type of society are we that we have infrastructure that is not built and designed to cater for the disabled? What type of society are we that we do not have buses that we can call public transport that are built and designed to cater for the disabled? What type of society are we when we have to accept in silence that the disabled of this country are stuck and try to depend on the generosity of their own family members to take them out in a car, in a taxi or just around where they live or sit outside their doorstep to breathe some fresh air and not be bedridden the whole day? This is not the type of society I would like to belong to and I am convinced that this is not the type of society every single Member of this House would like to belong to. Therefore, it is imperative when we have so many infrastructural projects being put *en chantier* that the very basics should be changed and reviewed, pavements, buses on every single line that they are low floored to allow access to any disabled or handicapped citizen or visitor. Our public officers and Ministries have to see to it that they are accessible. Our post offices, our Central Electricity Board offices and our CWA offices have to be redesigned so that disabled people can have access to them. We cannot have it that

they rely only on the generosity of some. That cannot go on. This is one of the issues. This is the second issue I thought it was important to talk about.

Now, there is also the issue with regard to culture. This Budget, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said, talks a lot about culture, the importance of having an opera, *symphonie*, to create the appreciation in the people to understand music, the lovers of art and music which is excellent. This Government has invested a lot in areas that talk about world heritage sites now. Aapravasi Ghat, excellent! The Government has invested a lot in another world heritage site, Le Morne. But then, again, let us not forget that next year is going to be the bicentenary celebration of the Battle of Grand Port and as such what I would like to do is to congratulate the Minister concerned, because the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources is indeed supported by different committees going to plan Grand Port 2010 between April 2010 and August 2010. During that celebration, it is Mauritius, as a mirror of the maritime history of the Indian Ocean that is going to be reflected and as such there are two personalities who lived a very, very long time ago, in 1154 and 1498. In 1154, Al-Idrisi is the iconic figure who first drew a scientifically based world map that was subsequently used by Arab sailors and European navigators to explore and travel to the Indian Ocean, including Mauritius. The reason why the Arab navigators managed to come to Mauritius is because they based themselves on this plan, the scientifically based world map which was drawn by Al-Idrisi. Ibn Majid is another iconic figure, known to have visited Mauritius. He helped Vasco Da Gama in his trip to India in 1498 and as such the huge budget for culture that is being given to the Ministry concerned. I hope that investment is done for that project because it is important for a country that is now embracing fully the benefits of the 21st century that we do not forget our history and we do not forget who discovered this island.

The fourth issue which I would like to talk about is the situation with regard to this Budget that talks about SMEs and the will and the wish of this Government through a recent legislation put in place by hon. Minister Gowressoo. The Budget also refers to a lot of works that this Government is going to do for SMEs. Excellent! But they have to remember that SMEs are also those traders who work on the streets, those little traders who work on all the roads of Port Louis. They do not have to be forgotten.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reason why I talk for this Budget is for the following reason. I know that at one point in time, Government was considering moving all the hawkers to Champ de Mars in order to find a place for them to work. That was an interesting initiative. I am not saying that it would have worked, but it was an interesting initiative. Thank God there was an initiative! In

the meantime, the night hawkers, working in Desforges Street in Port Louis, were asked to move in the lateral streets of Desforges Street, pending the construction of a new bridge, Pont de Paris which is being constructed. It will only be ready some time in eight or nine months as from now. There is a double standard that has been used by the Municipal Council of Port Louis. The double standard is as follows: all the other hawkers working in the city of Port Louis have not moved pending the construction of a new place to welcome them. The only people who have been asked to move are those in Desforges Street. Initially, they were told that the bridge will be ready in three months. The bridge is not ready and now they have been asked to move even before the bridge is ready which is not fair. Since this Budget does not contain any provision for the construction of anything at Champ de Mars to welcome those *marchands*, I can only pray, as I had done in 2005 - I had spoken to the Lord Mayor of Port Louis then, hon. Reza Issack, and my suggestion was just like in Malaysia, Singapore or Thailand. In Malaysia, they call it a night market or in Malay they call it '*pasar malam*' - it has nothing to do with Mr Mallam - which is the exact translation of 'night market'. In those countries, in the city centre, you can have a night market that starts operating from 5 o'clock until one in the morning everyday. So, the Municipal Council of Port Louis could work for 24/7 for shopkeepers and shop owners. Let us not forget that those hawkers themselves are not begging for jobs from any Government, but they are begging for you to allow them to work and live. If you can spend all those resources to help private shop owners, why can't you give those resources to those hawkers to start work every single day in the main road of Port Louis from 17 00 hours until one o'clock in the morning? That would mean that they would not have to work during the day and, in any way, in peak traffic, tourists could be brought in from the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA), they could bring in tourists, tour operators could be asked to collaborate, we could have what we call a night market and see to it that Mauritians as well as tourists make it work. I have heard that this idea was indeed canvassed at the level of Government. I have also heard that the Commissioner of Police believes it would not be something safe to implement because of security reasons. But why is it that it was safe to implement it for 24/7 in Port Louis, but not safe when it concerns *marchands ambulants*? This double standard, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, must stop, this double standard must halt. This is only what I pray. I pray that those poor traders who are doing everything to help their families eat everyday and be given the right to live, they be given the God right and their constitutional right to work freely and to earn a living. This is what I pray for. I pray that this Government would consider the matter.

There is one other issue which I would like to canvass. Unfortunately, the hon. Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security is not here. I hope he will pay heed when he hears what I have said with regard to agriculture. The previous MSM/MMM Government and this Government - to which I belong to - have concentrated a lot of efforts on the issue of the sugar sector. It was known that the price of sugar would go down; the guaranteed sugar price would be lost. That is why a lot of plans were implemented in order to alleviate the problems that could crop up because of this drop in the price. Each time we hear of sugar. Everyone in Mauritius drinks tea and to the tea, they make sugar. We don't eat or drink sugar. But the tea sector *semble être le parent pauvre dans les démarches pour pouvoir restructurer l'industrie agricole*. *Dans ces démarches de pouvoir restructurer l'industrie agricole*, it seems as though it is not the cup of tea of certain people. Since 1975, an amendment was brought to section 4 of the Tea Industry Control Act of 1975, such an old piece of legislation that talks about the membership of the Tea Board. The Tea Board, as it is - an amendment was brought in 1997 - has only one representative of the *métayers*, one representative of planters and a representative of the *Chambre d'Agriculture* that is, in fact, himself, someone from the factory producing tea and three other persons. In fact, as it stands, there is a majority of manufacturers of tea on the Tea Board and a minority of *métayers* and planters and cooperative societies. It is my humble request, at a time when we are trying to restructure everything, that this Government has done so much to restructure the way business is done in this country, has done so much to democratise access to business, to democratise access to finance and to help other people not only dream of becoming a business person, but in actual fact, they can do it today through the good work of this Government. I also believe that the tea sector should not be forgotten. There are less and less people in the sector today. Why I talk of the tea sector most importantly is because it concerns our constituency together with hon. Peetumber, the PPS and hon. Mardemootoo. We have all three of us met with the cooperatives that plant tea. Those people have explained to us that there are less and less people who are coming to this industry today and more and more leaving that industry and the reason is that their voice is not being heard at the level of the Tea Board. The price that they are receiving for the tea leaves is ridiculously low. At the time when the law says they have to be paid, they receive their money, very often, at the end of the year, *le 30 ou le 31 décembre de chaque année*. And they don't even have time to go to the bank to cash the cheque that they receive. It leaves them to spend the New Year without a penny *en main*. This Tea Industry Control Act must be reviewed at all costs. This is what I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security to do. I hope that he would convince the

hon. Minister of Finance to come up with something in the Finance Act with regard to that, even though, no mention is made about it in the Budget Speech.

Another issue I would like to talk about is the small power producers that are referred to in the Budget. I would honestly like to see home owners in this country. When we talk about *Maurice Ile Durable*, about an island where everyone is conscious about the environment and the necessity to use low energy bulbs, my question is that we cannot expect a society that has been used for 30 or 40 years to what we normally use to change just like that simply because *on a prêché* the gospel to them, that we have to change, otherwise, we are all going to drown. We can't expect a society to change like that. What we can do and we must do is to encourage, not only by giving bulbs to people, but to show the people that there is an incentive and a financial benefit in change. How do we show them that there is a financial benefit in change by, at least, encouraging new materials that are environmentally friendly to be used in the construction industry. For instance, one should encourage the manufacture of solar panels in Mauritius. One should have the facilities and even subsidies from Government to encourage manufacturers to get into that business. What we should do is to show the people of Mauritius that it is financially viable and to their advantage to go green. That is the only way the people will change. If there is no financial benefit, I am of the opinion that they will not change.

I would like to end on the following last point. We have come up with a new legislation to the Competition Act which is an excellent piece of legislation if it works and if it is made to work. But we have, at the same time, forgotten the Fair Trading Act which has simply and purely been repealed. A particular section of that Act says that everyone who has an exclusive licence that would in turn make him be a monopoly would be void. Exclusive licences to represent one make, for instance, if exclusively one company is to represent BMW, under the Fair Trading Act that would be illegal. But that Act would also say that, for instance, if one company would represent the make Adidas or Puma, it would be illegal. But, unfortunately, with the coming into operation of the Competition Act, that particular section of the Fair Trading Act, the whole law was repealed. Today, we cannot even contemplate parallel imports. I would hope that this Government would consider the issue of parallel imports. That would be to the benefit of consumers at large and would go in the same spirit of what this Budget represents.

I would like to conclude by, once again, saying congratulations to the hon. vice-Prime Minister for his excellent Budget, for his subtle and bold moves at the same time that have helped us avoid the difficulties that other countries have had to face at the time of the global financial crisis. I would like to thank every single

Minister of this Government for the support that they have shown to me as well as my two other colleagues of the constituency. Today, I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports for this huge project that he is bringing to our constituency near the region of Souillac/Rivière des Anguilles. There is going to be a national stadium and for that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(5.00 p.m.)

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have reached nearly one week after the presentation of the Budget and there have been speeches here and comments there in the House from the Government and Opposition sides. The country has also taken note of the reaction of the different sectors of the economy, people of Mauritius and the *forces vives* as well. Before coming to Parliament this morning, I was reading a book, “Untold Stories” of one of my late friends, Sir Satcam Boolell and I was asking myself whether it was good for the population to know what the Minister of Finance has not said to them in his Budget.

Before coming to that, my good friend, hon. Shakeel Mohamed was very good to intervene in such an atmosphere. He mentioned the word ‘backdrop’. The Budget was presented and it is good also for us, Members of the Parliament, who have been here for a very, very long time, especially if I have to comment from period 2005, what was happening here and outside. We were in Government, we were working and we took over Government from people of the Labour Party, certain of my friends who were “Ministers” from 1995 to 2000 – they even forgot that they were Ministers when they talk of the project which has not been implemented and they forget that they were in Government for a period of time, at least five years while mentioning and taking us at task why we have not implemented same. I take for example the Rose Belle market. My good friend, hon. Dr. Boolell from constituency No. 11 was Minister of the Government and nothing was done from 1995 to 2000.

If I go for period 2000/05, what was not said here in Parliament? When we were in Government, we were bringing changes. We were also engaged in a process of reform following the heritage we have had from the Labour Government. We also had our *squelette*; we had the backdrop of 1999, the Kaya problem, the *émeutes* and so on.

But coming to reform, one of the first things which was started by the then Minister of Agriculture in the MSM/MMM Government was the reform of the Sugar Industry. What was said then, here, in Parliament by the then Members of the Labour party. We were engaged in a reform to protect the sugar barons, not to mention what was said outside by the Labour party. This is what happened, here, in Parliament and outside. When we brought the reform in education, people still remember - hon. Bachoo was in Government with us – the formidable reform, what was said here by the very few Members of the Labour Party who were here in

Parliament and outside, that we were doing the reform for a certain category of people, while we were engaged in a reform to help and give a good education to people in the different poor areas.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who can forget the whole MCB/NPF affair? I call it “saga”. Mr Appasamy is still loitering in UK with Rs800 m. They were going to close the MCB as stated by certain Members of Parliament of the Labour party. We were being taken to task why we were not agreeable to lay on the Table the N’Tan Report and they had a copy, it was published in ‘*Le Mauricien*’ newspaper. They said: “Once we come to power, we will table the N’Tan Report”. So, they were engaged in a campaign of demagogy. That was part of the game they had to play and we were governing the country without any *émeute*, we were also facing the effect of international problems when factories were closing down, it was not the responsibility of our Government because there was an international problem, and in these factories, there were people who were living because of their money and we were catering - the then Minister of Labour was discussing with workers to find alternative employment. The Labour party, as usual, was creating its own type of demagogy and then came the general election.

M. le président, aujourd’hui, j’entends encore raisonner ce slogan de l’Alliance sociale qui était très répandu au cours de la dernière campagne -

“ *Nous pou change zot la vie dans 100 jours.* ”

People believe in that and what type of propaganda they were engaged in! They won the election, we accepted the verdict of the electorate and they have started to work. But today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *après 1,825 jours, peuvent-ils utiliser encore ce terme ‘nous pou change zot la vie’?* We all know what is happening outside. We do not pretend to have the monopoly of dealing with people. We are MP’s; we have to be honest. ‘Putting People First’, granted they have given free transport to old people and to school children. Who are making money? The big bus operators! Go and see!

(*Interruptions*)

M. le président, *c’est tout cela que je voudrais faire ressortir « Untold Stories ».* *Qu’est-ce que le petit peuple attendait de ce budget ? Même pour la bourse moyenne, vous allez et vous demandez à quelqu’un qui travaille à la banque, il vous dira que les gens attendaient avec impatience quelque chose sur le problème d’intérêt.* They were deducting all their interests on investment, on housing loans, on whatever other loans and interest on savings. The small planters

are suffering; they have been cursed outside. The small planters, people living in rural areas had invested, in the good old days when sugar was getting a good price, they had invested millions of rupees in banks and then using interest money they sent their children for higher education, they used it to build houses for their children and today the price of sugar has gone down. They have been living on that money and today they tax that money at source!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *l'Alliance sociale* canvassed on "*nous pou change ou la vie*". People are suffering today. I won't go on the food items. I won't go and compare as was done by one Member of the House. I am looking for the different prices which the hon. Minister of Finance mentioned in his constituency during the electoral campaign. The candidates were comparing the prices of the foodstuffs and going from house to house saying '*bizin changement*'. The Minister of Finance, hon. Ms Deerpalsing and hon. Duval – I will try to find this tract, as they call it - went from house to house, making false promises to the people and, apart from that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was the communal campaign which they did. We cannot forget it! The people of Mauritius have not forgotten and will not forget what was being done, what type of communal campaign was being done in the rural regions against the then Prime Minister, now Leader of the Opposition. We accepted, as I said, the verdict of the electorate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what the Minister of Finance has not said to the nation; to the people of Mauritius! I have got the tract. He said: '*augmentation des prix, gouvernement pé fané*'. They start with '*pain maison*' and they end up with water rates. He said –

'Toutes ces augmentations affectent surtout les couches sociales les plus fragiles, les chômeurs, les retraités, les veuves, gouvernement dominier, bizin changement. Circonscription No. 18: votez l'Alliance sociale.'

It is not a fake one.

There are also the prices. I won't go and compare the price of corned beef. I still remember once, during Budget time, I came with one packet of *fromage* Kraft and *gros pois* Rocket. People, on the other side, were just laughing at me. I still remember.

(Interruptions)

What I have done in my life, hon. Bundhoo cannot do it! I am here for 26 years; he should try to have a second mandate and then he can start talking to me.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I am here since twenty-six years. The hon. Member should come with a second mandate and then talk to me.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I am on my feet, please! We have been having very decent debates. Address the Chair and you will have all the latitude which you have been given already. I would like this type of behaviour not to repeat itself.

Mr Bhagwan: You have to tell them to secure him a ticket and then he can start talking to me!

The Deputy speaker: I would like this not to recur, please! We have been having such a nice time. Please, let us continue! The hon. Member has been given latitude to speak, but please be nice! Thank you.

Mr Bhagwan: I am trying to be nice, surely I cannot be nicer. With certain people, I cannot be nicer. This has been their campaign. When I came in Parliament and brought this *boîte de fromage*, I still remember hon. Dulull went in a supermarket, bought one which was on sale and came here with the price. We all know the saga of *gros pois*, what happened when the STC bought these items from Madagascar.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I come back to what the hon. Minister of Finance has said to the population. Today, it is a very lucky day for us. Even the President of Transparency International has said that this Government has not said anything about corruption, about the *dilapidation des fonds publics, corruption et autres. J'allais commencer par Air Mauritius et voilà il y a la banque de Maurice. Nous avons tous été témoins de ce qui se passe actuellement au niveau de la banque de Maurice.* In Parliament, the Minister of Finance has been pressurised, not only by us, but by backbenchers of the Government, no one less than the Chief Whip of Government confirming what is happening which we have raised since months here: *tamassa* at the Bank of Mauritius by a previous Labour party Minister, not less than a former Minister of Finance. We all know in what circumstances he had to resign. What is happening at the Bank of Mauritius? Corruption, *dilapidation des fonds!* What we heard from the Minister is a Fact Finding Committee on what is happening at the Bank of Mauritius. It should not have been a Fact Finding

Committee, but a Commission of Inquiry presided by a Judge if the Government is serious because it is an institution. What we are asking is a Commission of Inquiry presided by a retired Judge to come and inquire on what has been happening since the present Governor has assumed duty. How much money has been spent here and there and also as far as recoupment and other things are concerned? We will follow what will be happening in the weeks to come.

(Interruptions)

At Air Mauritius – at the time we are debating the Budget - a very important public institution which was the pride of Mauritius over the years, we have a Managing Director who is on contract on a monthly basis. Do you realise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? What respect will he have from his employees? The Government side has the cheek to refer to *squelette*. We all know about the billions of rupees of hedging saga. What about this? It is us, the taxpayers' money, the travelling passengers who have to bear the costs and pay for these hedging losses, the students of Mauritius who are going overseas. The Minister of Finance has not informed the House about this.

The STC, Sir, is another *la caverne* Ali Baba. Again there, millions and millions of hedging losses and Minister Gowressoo says it is normal that the consumers pay Rs3 per litre. The Minister of Finance has not said anything about this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will bear with me. Is it the role of the STC to sponsor horse racing in India with the consumers' money? This is the *bilan*. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *c'est incroyable!* Two persons, who are my friends, close to the Prime Minister, one Senior Adviser in Ports matters, the other one, we all know, in cinema industry, are concerned with the Boskalis affair. The Boskalis issue was raised here by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the Senior Adviser of the Prime Minister – I won't mention names - had to resign. The Chairperson of the Mauritius Ports Authority had to leave. The case is in court *et il y va de l'honneur de l'île* Maurice. International firms being engaged in giving bribes to personalities very close to the Prime Minister.

Recently, we have had cases in the press. Regarding the Mauritius Film Development Corporation, there have been corruption and malpractices. Concerning the Tobacco Board, the Chairperson had to resign following cases from the ICAC. What about the MBC, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? My good friend, hon. Jhugroo and myself, week after week, have been asking Parliamentary Questions to the Prime Minister, on several issues, on malpractices at the MBC/TV

and finally came the ‘Pepsi Sega Hungama’ saga. The Director of the MBC had to leave. Today, we know who is there. The consumers are paying hundreds of rupees; millions are being perceived and you know what the MBC has become, what is the propaganda, *film muet* for us, Members of the Opposition.

These days, we are electing new Mayors. We have been in local authorities as well. *J’ai fait mon apprentissage au niveau de l’administration régionale pour arriver où j’en suis, M. le président. J’ai honte de la ville où j’habite.* Malpractices, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! Councillors involved in fraudulent affairs! We won’t talk about the *scandale à la municipalité de Quatre Bornes*. D’ont forget ‘Madame Cabat’! Three or four had to resign even in Port Louis. Two had the cheek to become Mayors; fortunately, they have not been able to do so, as they are ‘*sous caution*’. The one at Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, begging for air tickets, and he says: “I am very proud”. There is a friend of mine who has received the *citoyenneté d’honneur de la ville*, and he is going to return his *médaille*. I won’t mention his name.

The Minister of Finance did not say this. Untold stories! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the population has the right to know. Alright, billions of rupees here and there; stadiums here and there, but this is public money; this is our money; we are paying taxes. In our salary slip, it is ‘PAYE’ right from the start. Whether you like it or not, you have to pay. But these people are taking money in their pockets without working. I think that the population has the right to know from the Minister of Finance what his plan is to redress the financial situation, not only in the Ministries following the Director of Audit’s report. According to the Director of Audit’s report, Sir, not only millions but billions are being wasted; there is mismanagement of the Ministries, of the projects; late completion and bad planning. I will not go into procurement and the involvement of certain people. But, the people have the right to know, and Budget time is also the time for Members of Parliament to query the Minister. He has not said anything. This is what the people are asking outside. The poor people are having problems even to buy *un paquet de biscuits*, notwithstanding corned beef or cheese. Some people are unable to give cheese and milk to their children.

(Interruptions)

They are laughing, but they don’t know that this is happening here in Mauritius. The misery that people are having in towns and villages! This is not demagoguery; it is so even in my constituency. The population is being asked to *serre les reins*, to save, while, on the other side, we know what has happened at the STC and Air Mauritius; the wastage in parastatal bodies, the public companies where the

political appointees are like maharajas. The casino of Mauritius has become a dumping ground for political agents. Even foreigners are refusing to invest in our casino. The political appointees are being given increase in salaries and allowances, because they have been agents here and there for such people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you ask me to qualify what is the state of the population these days, the Minister of Finance has talked about croissance, la grande majorité de la population a bénéficié de la croissance, de la pauvreté, de l'endettement et du surendettement. Ce sont les conséquences logiques de la politique économique du gouvernement. Je ne vais pas blâmer le ministre des finances seulement, comme certains le font. Je vais dire le Premier ministre et son gouvernement. M. le président, 'Putting People First'. That is the situation today and, in a few months, the people of Mauritius will have the opportunity to deliver their judgement.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member should try to get a ticket! He is talking! *Ou pé faire pétition dans numéro 13 pou vine candidat.* The hon. Member thinks that I don't know! *Ale faire pétition, après ou causer!*

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: *Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the situation, whether they like it or not; this is the truth, and I challenge that Member to secure his ticket and then come and talk to me. He is weeping outside! I know.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to comment on the tourism sector. Le ministre du tourisme a donné l'impression qu'il a beaucoup fait, beaucoup planté; il a fait peindre les handrails. Je voudrais dire, M. le président, qu'il y a beaucoup de 'faire semblant' dans tout cela. Le ministre du tourisme est intelligent. Il a bénéficié des acquis de ce que nous avons fait. Il a su gérer certains. Il a pris quelques bonnes décisions; je ne peux pas le dire. Mais, aujourd'hui, la situation n'est pas aussi florissante. Il y a pas mal de problèmes qui se pointent à l'horizon.

When there is an increase in tourist arrivals - we know that the Minister has some fans on Facebook, on radio - *un certain Ian*, who changes his name week after week, says: *'Ministre pé casse paké'*. If he is doing a good job, we commend him. But when arrivals fall down, *on met cela sur le dos du economic turndown. La crise a bon dos, comme on dit.* Then, we do not hear these people on Facebook. In fact, Sir, many of the Minister's choices and policies have been proved wrong. The recent one is the rebranding. Who is talking about "Mauritius a pleasure" these

days? We make jokes on '*c'est un plaisir*'. Rs40 m. to Rs50 m! Go and think! You will see that, over the weeks and months, nobody will talk about this rebranding. It is our money; it's not the Minister's money! Although I say that the Minister may have taken some good decisions globally, *il n'a pas mal fait, si vous me demandez mon avis sur certaines petites choses, peut-être je vais lui dire 'F'*. Le branding exercise is a flop, Sir. He no longer speaks about a two million tourists' target. Nobody talks about this two million tourists' target. We would have hoped to have two million tourists, but we never hear about this these days. 'F' for *fizette!* I won't say 'F' for fake cameras in Roche Bois. The report on the sector strategy plan, Sir, took two years! Rs20 m. have been paid to a British firm, and this has been put to lay or sleep in a drawer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Tourism is one of the most important sectors in Mauritius. Fundamental issues are still remaining unattended and I hope that the hon. Minister gives us some explanations. On the standard of services, if we go to hotels, we also receive complaints. The standard of services has gone down, not only in small hotels, but the big hotels as well. Training is neglected, and now, *pire encore, M. le président, l'École Hôtelière de Rose Hill*, which was the pride of Mauritius, has become the *quartier général* of the PMSD.

You have the right to hire it for one or two activities, but you cannot use *l'École Hôtelière*, which has a name – we have students there. It is an institution for training in the Tourism Sector. You cannot have *manger, boire, 'tamassa', réunion et congrès* every week. Even the people who are having their courses at that centre are having problems; they cannot concentrate. All sorts of political agents are coming in and out and their courses are disturbed. We also could have applied, but it is an institution, we cannot go and do politics there. You go at the Octave Wiehe and hire it for a Sunday or les *Salles des Fêtes du Plaza*, but do not go at the *l'École Hôtelière de Rose Hill* and make it become a *quartier général* of the party!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going further to say that not enough school leavers are being trained each year in our hotel training institutions, when we all know that there is a need. This mismatch will impact on the service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, going through a report that I have taken cognizance of, there is a shift in the tourism demand and travel patterns, as a consequence of the impact of green house gas emissions and long haul tourist destinations. Mauritius is very far and we have not heard the hon. Minister talk about that. I am not being nasty. The hon. Minister has taken some good initiatives, but there are still problems. Do not come and say to the population that everything is alright,

that tourism is bringing plenty of money, everything is going fine, when this is not so! The hon. Minister has built a small empire around him. We have the Tourism Authority where there is no transparency in recruitment. This Authority is doing the job of the RDA, the job of the Ministry of Environment, the works of Public Infrastructure, painting the walls of stadiums. I think this is the job of the Ministry of Environment. You have the *cahier des charges* and the responsibility of the Ministry. You cannot do things which you are not supposed to do.

As far as recruitment is concerned, Sir, even people on the Government side are not happy. Recruitments are being made without advertisement, without any transparency. We have another one, Discovery Mauritius; again, les *petits copains* at the head, and another one, Events Mauritius. The three satellites: Events Mauritius, Discovery Mauritius and Tourism Authority. The House has to know what have been the *bilan* of Events Mauritius. You come and tell me that for Divali they have put lights - with Lyon. This is one item. Who are the people who have been recruited, how many people, how much salary they are earning? What have been their activities? Not only putting lights for Divali! It is good. But how much has this cost this country? The hon. Minister must come and tell us. How much the sponsor and the country have spent on this Divali lighting - which was a good initiative?

M. le président, j'aurais une question parlementaire bientôt pour le ministre de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'île Plate par les nominés politiques. Ils gèrent this islet comme leurs biens personnels. What is being constructed at Ile Plate is against all environmental norms. We had a study on the Islet Management Plan. What can we do or not there? I will not talk about the state of the islets - l'état d'insalubrité – de ce qui se fait par les mauriciens eux-mêmes et les touristes. Tout cela tombe sous la responsabilité du ministre du tourisme. Il est important que le ministre vienne nous dire what are the projects which are being carried out at Ile Plate under his responsibility.

M. le président, beaucoup d'effets d'annonce et de 'faire semblant'. Je ne suis pas méchant, mais il ne faut pas dire que tout est correct au niveau du secteur du tourisme. Il y a des problèmes économiques; il y a le nombre de touristes qui baisse et finalement it is *taxpayers' money*. On ne peut pas gérer ces trois institutions comme notre bien personnel, utiliser l'École Hôtelière comme une base politique.

M. le président, je prends the last item which concerns sport. Fortunately, the hon. Prime Minister a fait un remaniement. Fortunately, for the country! Nous avons un pilote à bord de ce ministère, not because he is doing well or he is trying

to do his utmost, but he has had a very bad heritage from hon. Minister Tang Wah Hing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we left Government, Mauritius won the gold medal in football in the Indian Ocean Island Games. *Le sport favori* – everybody in Mauritius likes football. We still remember the gold medal we won at the Indian Ocean Islands Games. We did our best – *l'intérêt national, l'honneur de l'île Maurice!* After 2005 election, the Government put up a Ministerial Committee to revamp football. A Ministerial Committee was instituted in October 2005 with three Ministers. I will not go on the long list of things that have not been done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will not mention the names – you have Ministers David, Valayden and Tang Wah Hing. You know the reasons. We lost in the Indian Ocean Islands Games against Mayotte - *'médaille feraye nous pas ine gagner'*! I still remember the Parliamentary Question I put with regard to Ashok Chundensing, the harm which has been caused to football - *notre honneur au niveau international. Jamais le sport à l'île Maurice n'avait pris une telle régression pendant la période du ministre Tang Wah Hing.* I will not go into all the Parliamentary Questions here.

Now, we have hon. Minister Ritoo. He is trying to do his best, but, unfortunately, I have to tell him some facts. He is not replying to my Parliamentary Question on what he is planning to do. He is the Minister and he must take decisions. *M. le président, ce que nous avons vécu en Egypte est une honte.*

(Interruptions)

L'île Maurice fut invitée en Egypte et nous n'avions pas de maillots ni de vêtements. *Il fallait utiliser ce que les Egyptiens nous donnaient; nous fûmes battus à plate couture, insultés dans la presse internationale.* The hon. Minister has to assume his responsibility. I know Mr Vincent Rogers. I know what is being done at the *différentes écoles de foot*, which are being revamped by the hon. Minister, but, I think, Mauritius needs a Marshall Plan to revamp our football. This is our honour. *Les Jeux des Iles sont derrière la porte.* We had a DTN, it left – we now have a new one. What guarantee we have that the DTN will stay? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our problem is that the sports are managed by the federation. We can't put the blame on the Minister. The federation also should assume its responsibility. The Ministry remains the Ministry. It is Mauritius which is playing. It is not the MFA or other federation. It is us and from now on we will have another *médaille feraye des Jeux des Iles*. So, at least, for this we trust the Minister for the few months that are left. Nobody can predict the future. I would ask the

Minister to see to it that the action plan which he has initiated be implemented. I had a Parliamentary Question regarding same. I trust the people he has put there - Mr Vincent Rogers, the national trainer, Mr Patel. But the federation also should assume its responsibility.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have been waiting for a new Sports Act or an amended Sports Act. We are nearly at the eve of the general election and we have not received any amendment. I still remember hon. Shakeel Mohamed intervened on that when we were talking about Ashok Chundensing. If the federation is not doing its job, the Minister should have the power, in the interest of the nation, to act. This is what we are asking. And we are investing millions!

Another item on sports matter which I consider proper to make a few comments on - I have been talking about it since 1963 - is the Mauritius Sports Council. The Mauritius Sports Council *est complètement dépassé*. *D'autant plus qu'il y a une politique à la tête de Mauritius Sports Council*. I consider that it is not a political appointee, a political nominee at the head of a sports organisation. The Mauritius Sports Council should be advisory, it should advise the Ministry. Now, it is asked to manage. I won't go into the recruitment made at the Mauritius Sports Council. The way it is managed, the way the Chairperson who is a political appointee has to choose his cell phone, *li pa dakor ek sa modele-là, li pa dakor ek sa lot model-là*. He has even asked a car for sports. He could have been the same before, but the Minister should see to it that the Mauritius Sports Council behaves properly, be managed properly and if he has time, to come with amendments, with legislation in the interest, again, of the sports community because we have invested billions and we are spending more for sports infrastructure. The Mauritius Sports Council can't be responsible for all the infrastructure.

Avant de terminer, M. le président, je voudrais dire un mot sur quelque chose qui est lié au sport, c'est le parcours de santé. Je suis content que le ministre de l'environnement est présent à la Chambre, j'en ai parlé. Cela me tient beaucoup à cœur. Tout le monde aime marcher. On a investi des millions dans les parcours de santé. Je prends l'exemple du Dauguet, Montagne des Signaux, Gymkhana, Camp Thorel et d'autres encore qui sont en station. Il faut encourager plusieurs parcours de santé et aussi pour les athlètes. Mais, allez voir l'état du Dauguet, M. le président. Je dis que c'est une mauvaise décision du gouvernement. C'est mon opinion personnelle. On avait fait Le Dauguet, c'est un endroit privilégié. Allez voir à Port Louis pendant dix minutes, M. le président. Il semblerait que vous êtes en Europe, M. le président. Vous n'allez pas croire, c'est un domaine. Allez voir combien de gens marchent au *Signal Mountain* tous les jours. Je peux dire à la Chambre, aujourd'hui, que si la *Signal Mountain* avait été réhabilitée lorsque

j'étais ministre, il y avait deux personnes qui m'avaient approché, Sir Satcam Boolell et Monsieur Ahmad Jeewah. Monsieur Jeewah était le député de Port Louis et je suis sûr que si Sir Satcam Boolell était encore vivant, il aurait écrit dans le « *Mauritius Times* » critiquant le gouvernement. C'est sûr, M. le président! Mais ce n'est pas possible! C'est inacceptable! C'est honteux! Et j'ai soulevé cette question à l'ajournement. J'ai posé des questions parlementaires. J'ai demandé au ministre d'aller voir en compagnie de ses officiers. C'est l'argent du public. Comment se fait-il que le Gymkhana est maintenu par le *Special Mobile Force* ?

Je ne suis pas satisfait de la maintenance de la municipalité de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill. Il y a eu un accident de voitures et tout est dans un état de délabrement. A Quatre Bornes, c'est mieux que Rose Hill et le ministre du tourisme a fait planter des arbustes tout le long. Au moins les gens peuvent venir marcher dans un endroit sain et pas où il y a la pollution, les poubelles sont cassées, c'est dangereux, ce n'est pas maintenu et il y a des moustiques. On parlait du combat contre le chikungunya. C'était mon dernier point, M. le président. Je fais un appel au ministre. Il ne reste pas beaucoup de mois, il n'y a que quelques mois. *We must try to redress the situation.*

M. le président, c'est le dernier budget de ce gouvernement. Le ministre des finances est un ami de longue date. Nous avons joué au football ensemble. S'il était là, j'aurais dit la même chose. Il l'avait dit hier. Il a été ministre des finances sous deux Premier ministres. Il a été élu en 1991 dans la circonscription numéro 18, il est devenu ministre des finances. Nous savons tous ce qui est arrivé en 1995. Il a été candidat au numéro 8, nous savons les résultats. Il a traversé le désert, il est redevenu ministre des finances. Il est maintenant à Quatre Bornes. Je lui aurais dit que la situation n'est pas bonne à Quatre Bornes.

(Interruptions)

Je sais, M. le président. La population souffre. Je ne dis pas cela personnellement. Je côtoie beaucoup de gens à Quatre Bornes. Je connais le pouls de la population parce que la population, pendant ces cinq dernières années, sous ce gouvernement et le ministre des finances, a beaucoup souffert, la bourse moyenne, les entrepreneurs. M. le président, tout le monde doit payer la taxe. Je dis tout le monde! Nous avons passé la *MRA Bill*, mais aujourd'hui la MRA est devenue comme un Gestapo. Je l'ai dit, je rencontre beaucoup de professionnels à Quatre Bornes. Ils doivent payer la taxe, ils acceptent mais la MRA est comme un Gestapo. Pendant mon absence, on a téléphoné pour demander à Madame Bhagwan si vraiment ma fille était à l'université. J'ai même pris un homme de loi

pour harceler ces gens-là. Ils n'ont pas le droit. C'est un Gestapo. A Quatre Bornes, si vous demandez à ces professionnels dont les familles ont investi, ceux qui aujourd'hui sont devenus médecins, aujourd'hui il y a Gestapo après eux et ils habitent à Quatre Bornes. *Ti dir zot pou sanz zot la vie. I know that these are bad days for the Minister of Finance.* J'espère que l'île Maurice, ceux qui vont être là, y compris moi-même, nous sommes entre les mains de l'électorat. Moi, je prie Dieu, j'ai été député, je suis là depuis plus d'un quart d'un siècle. Je connais ma circonscription. Je dis merci à mon électorat, je souhaite que je sois ici. L'année prochaine, à la même période, nous aurons un nouveau gouvernement, sûrement pour analyser. Le budget va rester le budget. A ce moment, nous dirons que c'est un vrai changement.

Merci, M. le président.

(5.49 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Mr J. F. Chaumière): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me, at the very outset, congratulate the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for this Budget which will remain a landmark as it aligns the fiscal year with the calendar year, thus breaking away from a tradition which was reminiscent of the colonial days.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget aims at placing people, especially the poor and the underprivileged, at the centre of development against the backdrop of global economic recovery. It is a Budget that is fair and responsible, and the Minister of Finance has been able to reconcile the expectations of the population, the workers as well as the business community. Everybody has his share of the cake and the Minister of Finance has been able to reconcile, once again, the economic exigencies to our social objectives.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened with much interest to the interventions of hon. Members of the Opposition. Unfortunately, the orator who just preceded me, has left. As has been the case for the past years, I am very much disappointed with their comments, because they are not simply convincing at all.

I will take two points, the first one concerns corruption although it was not my intention to take this point, but as hon. Bhagwan has raised this matter, has made it a live issue, so, let us talk about corruption, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. You know what the difference is between the former Prime Minister and our leader, hon. Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. If you want to know what the difference is, you just think about the Economic Crime Office. Just remember that because a hon. Member - I say hon. Member – had been invited at the quarters of the Police to give a statement, legislation has been rushed in this august Assembly just to dismantle the Economic Crime Office. Don't you think that there is something fishy on the dismantling of the Economic Crime Office? Our Prime Minister has been very clear about it. Whatever might be the consequences, our hon. Prime Minister will never interfere in the course of justice, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. He will not interfere in our institutions and it is worth saying it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Furthermore, what is more a Member of this Parliament being condemned by the courts in Mauritius, here and abroad, and standing as a candidate in a by-election!

(Interruptions)

Yes, a potential Prime Minister as being presented by the MMM, someone who has been condemned in constituency No. 8 and the same argument that has been used by hon. Bhagwan has been used in No. 8. And this is the result, hon. Pravind Jugnauth is in this august Assembly. Who has dared to listen to them and to believe to what they have said? *75% menti, 25% vrai!* I can conceive that our friends from the Opposition are finding some difficulties in identifying any weaknesses in this Budget, but, as usual, they are not making any concrete proposals or suggesting alternative measures. I'll tell you why, simply because one cannot be more *royaliste que le roi*. The Opposition has the right to oppose, this is one of the roles of the Opposition, I must say. But the majority of the trade unions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, workers, representatives of the *forces vives* and NGOs acclaim most of the measures proposed by the Minister of Finance in the most positive and satisfactory terms. By the way, hon. Bhagwan did speak about Transparency International, the Mauritius ranking. Let me give you the ranking! When we left in the year 2000, Mauritius was 37th, in 2005 Mauritius was 51st and in 2008 Mauritius was 31st. It is only this year that it is 42nd.

Some people are branding the Budget as being *budget dominère*, by our friends, when we come with bold and courageous measures. And now that we attempt to share, as far as possible – because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the demands are unlimited, but the means are always limited - equitably the national income following economic recovery among the most vulnerable and the working class, the Budget is being criticised as a '*budget électoraliste*'. Which is which, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Let us be serious! Even if we are economically little more comfortable than a few months, the situation calls still for serious actions and less rhetorics or, at least, constructive criticisms on the part of our colleagues. *Mais surtout pas de la démagogie!*

The 2010 national Budget has come up with concrete and practical measures in order to better the quality of life of each and every citizen. It fully and ably addresses the three main priorities of the Government like the hon. vice-Prime Minister said, namely in shaping recovery to accelerate job creation while maintaining employment, in consolidating social protection and progress to embed inclusive growth and in sustaining a green Mauritius in order to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Most of the economic and social indicators, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, have shown that this Government was always right in coming up with enabling and bold measures in time for successive budgets since we took office in 2005. We have been able not only to address the serious and catastrophic economic situation we

had inherited, but we have also been able to mitigate the impact of the world economic and financial crisis with some success.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people tend to forget that we have been going through a major economic and financial crisis which has turned out to become a job crisis. Let us not forget how many jobs have been lost in countries which are our traditional markets! 650,000 jobs being lost per month in the United States, 26 million jobs being lost in China during the crisis, 10 million jobs being lost in India and more in the European Union! Like I say, when the crisis was at its peak in these places, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has managed to come out relatively unscathed. It is simply, certainly, thanks to these bold, pragmatic and timely measures initiated by this Government, under the able leadership of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. The national Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, provides comfort not only to the business community, but to the population at large and to the small people in general.

As a caring Government, in order to protect the population, and particularly the vulnerable, the Budget has proposed a series of social measures. For example, just to mention a few, namely -

- developing national programmes on housing, women empowerment, sports & others through the National Empowerment Foundation;
- increase of the monthly income ceiling for full payment of SC/HSC examination fees from Rs7,500 to Rs8,500;
- extension of social aid to beneficiaries of basic invalidity and widows pensions and child allowance in respect of children whose parents are recipients of social aid and increase of old age pensions;
- refund - this is very important - I have got friends and parents whose wards are disabled and, now, we are refunding the taxi fares for university students with disabilities. This had never been done before, and this has been done by this Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir;
- expansion of the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme to ensure that all pre-primary age children from poor families attend school. We are talking about reform in education. Do you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that 15% of children in Mauritius don't attend pre-primary schools? 15% is a lot! What have they done for these people? It is not 15% only. It has been there, and we are attending this problem.

The Minister of Finance must be congratulated for not forgetting all those who are struggling to have a house of their own. Through this Budget, we wish to fulfil the dreams of those still unfortunate ones by strengthening our social housing programme in line with our objective of providing *'un toit pour chaque famille'*. In this regard, the Budget is providing for the setting up of a low-cost housing programme on 1,000 *arpents* of land on 20 sites, out of the 2,000 *arpents* that the Prime Minister has been able to secure from the MSPA. The income threshold for Government sponsored loans at the MHC has been increased from Rs8,500 to Rs10,000, thus increasing the number of beneficiaries. The upper limit for the Sites and Services Scheme has also been increased from Rs12,000 to Rs16,000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget rightly provides for spending and investing in vital sectors that also symbolise our Welfare State, namely education, health and social security. These are core sectors on which depends the future of Mauritius through an educated, healthy and socially secured population.

Thanks to the subsequent Budgets presented by my colleague, Dr. the hon. Sithanen, we have successfully mitigated the impact of not only the catastrophic economic situation we inherited in 2005, but also of the triple shocks as well as of the recent world economic and financial crisis. On top of that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have not only been able to maintain and sustain the Welfare State conceptualised by the Father of the nation, but we have further strengthened the concept of the Welfare State so that the most vulnerable and the most deserving get the maximum benefits.

These are very fundamental ideals of the Labour party to which my friend, hon. Nando Bodha, was referring. Even during the worst economic and financial scenario, this Government will never do away with the Welfare State. We shall never sacrifice the very ideals of the Welfare State under any condition. As a caring Government, we shall always strive to further consolidate the Welfare State by providing adequate social protection, free social security, free education and free health services to our citizens.

Our social achievements are many, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Hon. Bhagwan was talking about propaganda. I don't have to give him lessons of propaganda. He has got a Ph.D. in that. Is free bus transport for over 120,000 senior citizens propaganda? Is it propaganda or is it not? Is free bus transport for some 280,000 students propaganda or is it not? Is restoring universal old-age pension propaganda or is it not? I remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my old father coming to me and showing me a piece of paper sent by the Ministry of Social Security, saying that if you don't give this and that information, you may be jailed,

you may go to prison. And when we came back to power, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we restored universal old-age pension and, this, thanks to our Prime Minister and our Minister of Finance. Is full payment of SC and HSC examination fees for some 9,000 students from families with modest income propaganda or is it not? Doubling the subsidy on flour and cooking gas, while maintaining subsidy on rice! *En passant*, this reminds me of 1982, when the then Government took a decision to remove subsidies on our staple food, namely rice and flour. Look at this contrast! Look at the difference! This is the Labour Social Alliance Government, and this is the party of the people, for the people, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Is giving financial support to help pig breeders recover from the impact of the swine fever epidemic propaganda? What about the low-cost housing scheme? What about granting 4,400 fishermen shares in the Fishermen Investment Trust? Is this propaganda? Is providing Rs1 billion to support small planters for derocking, irrigation and land preparation propaganda? Do you think that people out there will believe them?

These are practical examples of what we understand by 'Putting People First', Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. 'Putting People First' is not merely a slogan of the present Government, but it rather reflects our sincere commitment to the ideals and goals of the Labour party and the *Alliance sociale*. Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have every reason to be proud, particularly whenever Mauritius is cited in international forums for its remarkable achievements. It is not for nothing that Mauritius is among a very few countries in the African continent placed among the High Human Development Countries in the 2009 UNDP Human Development Report, and is given a honourable ranking in the Human Development Index. It is a known fact that the best way to protect our people, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to provide them with jobs.

Contrary to what is happening worldwide, be it in the USA, in Europe or in emerging countries like China and India, we, in Mauritius, are not only protecting jobs, but also creating jobs. For the year 2008 alone, we have been able to create more than 19,500 jobs, much more than the previous Government, much more than what they created during the five years when the international economic situation was relatively better than what it is today; like the Prime Minister said: "the sun was shining, there was no wind, there was no cyclone, and the sea was calm"; whereas the unemployment rate has been continuously going down since we assumed office. The rate which was 9.6% has now reached the rate of less than 8%. During the past 4½ years, we have been able to reverse the rising trend and I have noted that some Members of the Opposition have, in their interventions, repeated what they have said in their observations last year regarding the new labour laws, that the new labour laws were contributing to job losses. I will

reiterate my comments on the observations made for the benefit of my colleagues on the other side of the House and, in particular, to hon. Bodha.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, job losses during the period 2001 to 2005 - just for the sake of information - were as follows –

2001	-	8,788
2002	-	7,957
2003	-	14,663
2004	-	16,100
2005	-	10,085

These bring a total of more than 57,500 workers who were laid off in the EPZ sector alone during the years 2001 to 2005 *et ce qui a fait dire au ministre de l'industrie de l'époque, que nous sommes en train de perdre des emplois à une vitesse vertigineuse. Puisque cela leur donnait le vertige à cette époque, je pense qu'il est temps maintenant de rétablir les faits. Nous avons créé plus d'emplois qu'ils n'en ont créés en quatre ans et demi. Mais, je dois dire, que dans le secteur manufacturier, par exemple, le gouvernement d'alors a perdu 57,500 travailleurs rien que dans le secteur de l'EPZ. Do you know why? Because they had made the wrong choices as regards the third country fabric derogation, and they know it.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, contrary to those years, there were no immediate protection for laid-off workers. Today, if ever there are workers under a similar situation - that is, they are laid off - they are better protected under the new labour law, in particular, under the Employment Rights Act. Hon. Bodha mentioned about the Workfare Programme which is under the Employment Rights Act and which has the merit of ensuring a means of immediate subsistence, a maximum of Rs10,095 and a minimum of Rs3,000 for a maximum period of 12 months to all laid-off workers. It did not exist before. Unlike the situation prevailing under the previous law - the Labour Act - where, unfortunately, when an enterprise, a textile factory is closing down, the receiver manager will try to realise the assets and will pay *les créanciers* according to their ranks. In the former legislation, workers were on the tenth rank. Now, we have amended this legislation; we have come with a new law where the workers are third in the rank. Is this not working for the poor people, for the workers? As I said, many workers did not receive any compensation because when you pay the bank, the rent, left, right and centre, there is no more money left to pay the workers. Before the two ERAs (Employment Relation Act

and Employment Rights Act) were proclaimed, I remember at two of these firms: Job Textile and Palmira, the poor workers did not have any money. Until now, we don't really know what to do with them. But, on the other hand, the Workfare Programme now guarantees any worker who is redundant, a Transition Unemployment Benefit. This programme, in fact, maintains a contact between the laid-off worker and my Ministry until he is placed in a job, re-trained or re-skilled through the IVTB or is assisted through the SEHDA to set up a small business of his own.

The Workfare Programme also ensures payment of the laid-off workers' contribution to the NPF on his behalf for a maximum of twelve months. This is indeed a revolutionary scheme which has also been commended by the ILO.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the coming into operation of the new labour legislation in February this year, some 1,700 laid-off workers have been admitted to the Workfare Programme and an amount of Rs43 m. has been paid to the workers as a Transition Unemployment Benefit. Had there not been the Workfare Programme, these laid-off workers would have to wait until their cases were determined by the Industrial Court and even then there would have been no guarantee of any payment, especially in cases of liquidation.

Let me reassure the House that, contrary to what has been said by the Members of the Opposition, the new labour legislation gives better protection to workers against termination of employment and in no way facilitates firing. Even in disciplinary cases, employers still have the obligation to give the worker a proper hearing. Besides, all cases of unjustified termination of employment are duly investigated by my Ministry. All of those cases which come at my Ministry are investigated and bona fide cases are lodged before the Industrial Court before adjudication.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many comments have been made regarding the role of the National Pay Council. The hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has explained in relation to the grant of salary compensation which has been announced in the Budget 2010. As Members are aware, as from the year 2007, the National Pay Council meets in May to make recommendations to Government on the quantum of salary compensation to be paid to the workers. Let me tell you that the NPC functions in all independence! As the hon. vice-Prime Minister has explained, for those exceptional circumstances arising out of the transitional period which is required to coincide the financial year with the calendar year, Government has to come with a policy decision regarding the payment of salary compensation

to workers. This does not, in any way, undermine the existence of the National Pay Council.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, furthermore, this Budget provides for massive investment in public infrastructure without forgetting to give the necessary *encadrement* to other as important sectors as fisheries, housing, construction, SMEs, tourism and ICT, just to mention a few.

I am happy to note that the hon. Minister of Finance has given due consideration in this Budget to the SMEs as well by providing additional measures. The SME sector, according to the Minister of Finance, has been the main source of employment creation during the crisis.

As the House is aware, Government, since it took office in 2005, has attached high priority to the development of SMEs, which now amounts to around 100,000 enterprises and employs some 45% of the workforce. We believe that SMEs are socially and economically important because they are one of the main driving forces behind economic growth. I must say that they are indeed playing a major role in the recovery of employment levels, as well as in addressing unemployment problems and poverty alleviation objectives.

In order to boost up this sector, the Government has, over the years, continuously been taking an array of budgetary, institutional and legal measures. I have to point out that in the last Budget, particularly in the context of the international economic crisis and also with a view not only to creating jobs, but also to saving and preserving employment, a series of measures were announced and are presently being implemented with regard to giving SMEs all the support that they need.

The SMEs sector is called upon to play a major role, in generating employment opportunities for thousands of people, in the economy. In my view, it will also be a major avenue to absorb new entrants on the labour market and thus open new vistas for the entrepreneurial class. Our efforts to developing a culture of entrepreneurship is slowly, but steadily gaining grounds among our population, particularly among women.

I wish to take this opportunity to also congratulate the efforts of such SMEs development institutions such as the National Women Entrepreneurs Council, AREU, DBM, Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable groups, Enterprise Mauritius amongst others and last, but not least, the SEHDA to be known in future as SMEDA for its accomplishment so far.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to take some time to talk on something which is very close to my heart, which is the development of arts and culture. I take this opportunity to pay homage to those people who have been devoting their time for the development and the advancement of arts and culture in Mauritius. I will always remember Mr Philippe Oh San. You know, we were some kids in the suburbs of Curepipe and in the suburbs of Rose Hill who, every Saturday, used to be in the Centre Culturel Charles Baudelaire which was something quite vivid. I remember the Director of MASA, Gérard Louis, for example. I remember some friends like Clifford Coosnapa, Armand Ladinaff who is now responsible for Mary Ward choir and some other friends. We came from background where normally people like us don't talk about this kind of music or art or even about arts and culture. I really believe that we have to pay homage to people like Philippe Oh San and I will do it today.

The vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, in his Budget Speech, quoted US Secretary of State, Senator Hilary Clinton who was speaking in Nairobi in August this year. Mrs Clinton said that Mauritians have benefited from Government reforms which, I quote: 'unlock human potential'. I wish to expand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on this idea of unlocking human potential. Before going deeper into this idea, I would like to focus for a moment on the very word 'unlock'. We have seen, in this Budget Speech and in all those presented by this Government since it came to power four and a half years ago, many doors being unlocked for the population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it began with the very concept of democratisation of the economy and empowerment which are among the various programmes devised by our Government to help the Mauritian population unlock its own potential. It unlocked the possibility for them to do business with ease, to become their own boss and to create small and medium enterprises. It unlocked the possibility for planters, labourers and artisans to become shareholders of the cane industry, an industry which had remained, for years, without reach of the people, which for decades had constituted its very core. It has unlocked the possibility for the former workers from this industry to own land and to recycle into new jobs. It has unlocked the possibility for women to train in fields ranging from manufacturing to agro industry and set up their own businesses. This Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is now going even further in this unlocking process. Indeed, as the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, himself, said in his speech, it is going to, I quote -

“Break new ground, while intensifying efforts to consolidate the traditional and emerging economic pillars, so as to open more business opportunities and further stimulate job creation.”

And breaking new ground and unlocking human potential we are, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, through this fresh, re-invigorating process of developing the creative arts industry!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is unheard of in this country. Other than to listen to local music on the radio occasionally and seeing them perform when we attend official functions, which Government has encouraged the arts industry as much as we have? It began in 2007 with the de-taxation of musical instruments and other related equipment. The aim being to encourage those who are making a name for themselves on the local, regional and even international fronts, through events such as cultural festivals. Now, this Government is going to unlock the potential of these artists, but also that of budding artists. What the Government is proposing to do is its own version of El Sistema which is a programme of social action for music, began in Latin America and which has spread even to the United States. The idea is to help children and young people from poor backgrounds and particularly those who demonstrate a liking and aptitude for music to acquire the necessary musical knowledge and skills which will propel them to break out of the cycle of poverty.

This is our new ground, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a ground that has already been broken in other countries of the world and which will in ours too. Other than this innovation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for those who are establishing themselves in the Performing and Creative Arts Industry, the Government is proposing to support artists in undertaking journeys abroad to benefit from international events and attend courses and other workshops overseas. Grants and scholarships ranging from Rs50,000 to Rs200,000 have been earmarked for this purpose.

Moreover, Government is proposing to use money from the national lottery to cater for these needs. But, every artist needs a stage or a performing space and structure and this too we are providing, Mr Deputy Speaker, through the rehabilitation of the Anjalay Coopen Stadium for concerts and the subsidisation of such concerts for broader public attendance.

Talking about the Mauritius Symphony Orchestra, of course, the setting-up of such a national symphony orchestra will give added value to our Tourism Industry and make Mauritius *un haut lieu de culture*. But, one must look further than that. The creation of a Mauritius Symphony Orchestra is all the more

commendable. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not only does it enhance the cultural profile of our country but of its citizens who are going to be called upon to become part of this orchestra. The creation of this symphony orchestra will be the stimulus for our young musicians not only to believe in their talent but practice and make it perfect and unlock their potential of becoming the pride of our nation for the Mauritius Symphony Orchestra. Just imagine the small child from an area seen as a pocket of poverty playing on his small drum or pipe and dreaming of one day playing at the Plaza in his country's national orchestra and making a very decent living out of it. This child's dream is what this Government is proposing to make come true; it is this potential that we are working towards unlocking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The successive Budgets presented by this Government over the years under the leadership of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam have given me enough reasons to be optimistic, unlike hon. Bhagwan. Our achievements speak for themselves. Slowly but steadily, we have been able to overcome all the challenges and constraints on which we had absolutely no control. Yet, thanks to the bold and courageous reforms as well as the necessary measures taken, coupled with the support, contribution and comprehension of the population, our country and our people are better off today than they were 5 years ago. The 'feel good factor' is very much present among the population.

I thank you for your attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(6.34 p.m.)

Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although this Budget contains numerous items on which I would have been keen to discuss, I would like, from the outset, to say that I plan to lay emphasis in my speech on two main fields – the SME sector and the arts and culture policy of this Government.

Small and Medium Enterprises, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for me and for most of the people outside, l'espoir est déçu, M. le président. Coup de bluff, répétitions de mesures annoncées en 2005, 2006, 2007 et 2008, les mêmes mesures que l'on retrouve année après année, qui restent au stade de promesses, donc de réalisations jamais tenues. Le ministre des finances a laissé tomber les petits et moyens entrepreneurs. Ils sont maintenant dans la panade, menés en bateau pendant des années de mandat où on leur avait promis un boost, un revamping de leur secteur. Ils ont attendu, ils attendent encore. D'ailleurs, l'honorable Chaumière a eu une phrase révélatrice, il a lui-même justement tout à l'heure admis que 'the endeavours and progress are slow in this sector'.

The Small and Medium Enterprises of this country have been clearly and simply let down by this Government. The statement, for me, does not even measure the seriousness of the situation. It is a particularly sad statement for me to make especially when we know that the boosting of the SMEs and the revamping of this sector was one of the *cheval de bataille* de l'Alliance sociale during the campaign for the general election. I have the proof with me, I still kept it after so many years, this programme that you sent and brought to the people to show what you wanted to do for the SMEs. So much did you promise! But it is definitely sad to see that while in your Electoral Manifesto you said that you would put '*les citoyens au centre du développement*' and you would '*promouvoir l'empowerment à travers l'entreprenariat et les petites et moyennes entreprises*', the promotion of SMEs was brandished as a weapon of democratisation. So little has been done in terms of comprehensive framework to help them progress in this ruthless and competitive world!

Pour moi, le ministre des finances a simplement abusé de la bonne foi et de la crédibilité des petits et moyens entrepreneurs dans le changement annoncé, M. le président. Cette duplicité a perduré, les petits et moyens entrepreneurs y ont cru, s'accrochant à chaque branche factice. In the Government programme presented at the beginning of the mandate, again SMEs were presented and given the assurance that they would be taken along as full participants in the development of

the economy. Budget after budget, hon. Dr. Sithanen promised them to improve their lot. Budget after budget, we have seen that it is, in fact, to the big companies that he gives most of the favours. The Additional Stimulus Package is a typical example where big companies get the bread and the SMEs get the crumbs. In truth, the Minister of Finance does not really want to help the SMEs in this country because of the sum earmarked for the Small and Medium Enterprises under the MASMED, the Minister of Finance readily mixes the issue. To justify himself, he says that it was very difficult to say where the definition of SMEs start. You would remember he was talking about S,M,L. That was at the time before the SMEDA Act was passed in this House. *Au fait, il avait mis la charrue avant les bœufs sans définir correctement les SMEs, il met des fonds mal adaptés qui sont pourtant censés les aider avec des résultats désastreux que l'on connaît.* In a parliamentary question from hon. Jugnauth, hon. Dr. Sithanen informed the House that out of 9 SMEs which had applied for ASP, only 3 had benefitted to the tune of Rs22.5 m. and that not even from the MASMED Fund, but from other funds, while the MASMED was supposed to be made for the SMEs also. What is this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we know that hundreds of millions of rupees are disbursed to big companies?

Another proof that the Minister does not really want to help the SMEs is that financial year after financial year, in those last 4 years, representatives of the SMEs have submitted recommendations to the Minister of Finance, but these recommendations which are indeed crucial for the SMEs have gone unheeded. True enough, they have been put on paper in the Budget Speech, but the most important ones have remained confined there. Again, here is another technique that we have noticed that hon. Dr. Sithanen readily adopts for the SMEs' representatives to keep quiet at budget time especially. He introduces measures based on their recommendations which are concordant with their aspirations.

Mais de concret, de solide, de durable, rien ne se fait, M. le président. Encore de faux espoirs! Encore un exercice de communication aiguisée destinée à faire taire les plus récalcitrants pour un moment. Heureusement, de tout temps l'opposition que nous représentons, a toujours tenu à dire la vérité au peuple. Et cette vérité, M. le président, c'est que l'honorable Rama Sithanen a voulu berner la communauté des petits entrepreneurs. Il a essayé de les amadouer avec des formules mielleuses qui n'ont, en elles-mêmes, aucune profondeur car elles ne sont pas accompagnées d'actions concrètes précises, ciblées, ordonnées.

Du moins en ce qui concerne les mesures qui pourraient réellement changer la dure et précaire réalité des PME. Et je persiste à dire, M. le président, que *the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority Act*, récemment présenté

dans cette Chambre, ne viendra pas révolutionner la spirale infernale dans laquelle se trouve ce secteur. Au contraire, avec certaines provisions suspectes que j'avais mentionnées, que le ministre de tutelle n'a malheureusement même pas daigné éclaircir ou rectifier, la situation risque d'empirer. Moi je ne demandais que cela, une explication qui prouverait que j'avais tort et que la loi existante était réellement en faveur des PME. Après tout c'est l'amélioration de la situation des petits et moyens entrepreneurs qui compte. Mais non, rien!

Comme pour prouver que j'ai raison de dire qu'il existe des problèmes de fonds auxquels l'on ne s'attaque pas et qui risquent à la longue d'asphyxier les petites et moyennes entreprises de ce pays, avec les problèmes de *marketing*, et d'accès au financement qui existent toujours. Le risque que la situation ne se détériore davantage est réel. Le pire, M. le président, c'est que le Grand Argentier sait pertinemment que seul le strict minimum a été fait pour venir en aide à ce secteur.

Officiellement, il est le premier à reconnaître le potentiel immense des PME à devenir des moteurs de l'économie mauricienne. Il a dit lui-même dans son discours au paragraphe 120 que le secteur des petites et moyennes entreprises a été à l'origine de la principale source de création d'emplois durant les temps de crise. Pourtant, face au potentiel réel de ce secteur, il ne fait pas grand' chose. Au mieux, il applique des remèdes de surface pour traiter un mal, qui ne cesse de gagner en profondeur.

Or, le ministre ne peut ignorer le fait que sans un encadrement adéquat, les PME ne peuvent progresser. L'honorable Sithanen croit-il vraiment en la capacité des PME à révolutionner l'économie de ce pays? La réponse, j'en ai peur, est non M. le président. Car si tant de choses essentielles sont encore à faire, nul n'est dupe de croire que si elles n'ont pas été réalisées en quatre ans, elles peuvent l'être en six mois.

Il faut admettre que faciliter l'obtention des permis d'opération en trois jours, une mesure annoncée en juin 2006, avait généré un engouement auprès des petites gens qui aspiraient à créer leurs propres entreprises. Mais les problèmes qui se sont ensuivis ont vite fait de les faire déchanter.

Of the 11,000 SMEs that hon. Sithanen boasts of, never have we been informed of how many amongst them have sustained activity or how many have closed down. Just in case the hon. Minister would assume that we are criticising aimlessly, here are some facts admitted by himself.

Of the nine low-cost industrial estates announced in 2006, only one is in operation in 2009. Of the promised five SMEs tourist villages, none of them has been opened as yet. We are now being announced that two will be opened next year. What about the joint SME/Custom Committee, that was to be set up to “crack down the undervaluation of imports competing unfairly with local manufacturers” announced in May last and before that in 2008 and before that in 2007? What about improving SMEs access to credit, especially with commercial banks? All those measures are still awaited for.

Encore une fois, M. le président, les petits et moyens entrepreneurs ont été leurrés, abusés et c’est déplorable. Seulement cette fois, leurs yeux se sont ouverts. Le président des petits et moyens entrepreneurs de l’île Maurice, Monsieur Amar Deepalsing, a, lui-même, dit: « le gouvernement ne veut pas nous écouter ».

Et pour combler le tout, M. le président, la cerise sur le gâteau au goût amer auquel ont eu droit les petits et moyens entrepreneurs de ce pays, la SEHDA. Dans ce budget, le Grand Argentier ne réalise même pas que la SEHDA n’existe plus maintenant. Il s’intéresse tellement aux PME qu’il a oublié que la *SEHDA Act* est maintenant abrogée et que désormais c’est de la SMEDA donc qu’il faut parler. Un lapsus peut-être, mais ô combien révélateur, M. le président!

I fear that after more than four years of this Government in power,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Can we have some order, please!

Mrs Martin: ...that hon. Sithanen has taken the reins of the Ministry of Finance, the entrepreneurs have all the reason to say that it has been a flop, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let down all the more so that hon. Sithanen had given them hope. Hope that a new day had come for them, a new era had begun that would help them emerge as one of the most innovative and creative sectors, creators of employment and significant contribution to GDP growth. The sad truth is none of this has happened, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I heard someone say that the law has not been proclaimed yet, but when we pass a law, it is to be proclaimed. When the law has been passed....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! The hon. Member will keep his comment for when he will speak.

Mrs Martin: When the law has been passed, we have to move away from the former law.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, keep quiet!

Mrs Martin: Coming now to arts and culture, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have three key words: preservation, consolidation and promotion. We are here not only to criticise, but we are here also to say when good things are being done. Government is indeed demonstrating good will to move to an arts and culture industry. This is a very good measure, one to be applauded. It is high time for our artistic potential to be recognised and encouraged to the full. It is also time to stop implicitly depreciating this field which has been - and we have to admit it - stigmatised for quite a long time.

I can still remember a musician saying to me: «*Quand dimoune demande moi qui travaille mo faire, mo dire mo musicien. Zotte guette moi et zotte dire moi: 'à part ça qui travail ou fer?'*» As if music was not enough of a job to acquire respect!

Arts and culture in Mauritius has an undeniable potential to leap to international level, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Some of our *fiils du sol* have already done it. Hon. Dr. Bunwaree mentioned Stephane Bongarçon. I could also mention so many more: Eric Trition, Meera Mohun, Sandip Bhimjee, Anna Patten, Mario Ramsamy, Eric Carter, Véronique Zuël-Bungaroo and others, who, in all their own fields of artistic expression, have made and are still making Mauritius proud. They and all others who will follow after them deserve to be supported by Government and by the country as a whole.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bundhoo, the hon. Member is speaking of good musicians!

Mrs Martin: I still remember one Budget Speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where hon. Sithanen had removed taxes on headphones and guitar strings as a measure to help artists. You would remember that. Thank goodness in this Budget he has moved or so it seems, far from this narrow perspective of the artistic world. Now, some more serious issues are laid on the table such as the creation of an Art Industry. No doubt under the impulsion of the substantive Minister and the Minister of Tourism who, I am sure, must have acted as eye-openers for him.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot help, but approve the rehabilitation of Plaza as an Opera House, of the rehabilitation of the Port Louis Theatre, of the Cathedral Saint Louis, of the creation of a Cultural and Artistic Boulevard and of the opportunities given to artists to have international exposure. We acknowledge that in the field of preservation of natural and cultural heritage, positive works have been accomplished. It is a real pride for the Mauritian nation to have two sites on UNESCO's World Heritage list.

If the project has been brought to fruition by this Government, its Members must also concede that it was the former MSM/MMM Government that initiated it. And we all rejoice, as a true nation, that we live in a country fortunate enough to have witnessed two crucial moments in history, symbolised by the Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne Mountain being named on the World Heritage list. Yet, so much remains to be done. On our way to a creative hub, the preservation of our memory also has a place.

M. le président, je dirai là qu'il est triste de voir que les documents d'archives ne sont toujours pas préservés de la décrépitude, et que la construction d'un bâtiment pour abriter les archives, la bibliothèque nationale, *la galerie d'art nationale* qui ont été aussi dans le manifeste électoral et qui ont été annoncés depuis 2005, n'est toujours pas d'actualité. Comme ne l'est pas encore une rationalisation des lois sur les droits d'auteurs et la propriété intellectuelle. Ce sont des choses auxquelles il faudrait aussi s'attaquer pour s'assurer que la politique en matière d'industrie artistique soit compréhensive. Il faudrait également que des techniques, notamment celles du théâtre, de la danse et du chant s'étendent à toutes les écoles secondaires du pays. Encourager une compétition saine qui peut mener vers une bourse d'études dans le domaine d'art choisi peut stimuler un vivier de nos jeunes artistes et les encourager à poursuivre des études poussées, afin d'accroître leurs talents pour la plus grande fierté du pays. Tout cela est parfaitement envisageable, M. le président. Car, pour que l'industrie de l'art prenne réellement forme, il ne faut pas cantonner cette expression à des personnes qui ne sont pas académiquement douées, ou simplement comme mentionné au paragraphe 270 du discours du budget, aux enfants des régions défavorisées. Il faut que l'expression artistique soit ouverte à tous, sans discrimination. A ceux qui veulent en faire un métier, donnez l'occasion de pratiquer à un niveau plus élevé et plus assidu. Pour ceux qui désirent simplement en faire un passe-temps, que la chance leur soit aussi donnée de le faire. Pour ceux qui veulent connaître les métiers d'art, que la chance leur soit également donnée de le faire, parce que s'il y a des artistes, des *performers*, il faut aussi qu'il y ait des spectateurs. C'est pour cela, je pense fermement, que les établissements scolaires, M. le président, peuvent constituer

une base solide, couplée d'une première étape de sélection pour dénicher les artistes de talent. On pourrait également construire des écoles nationales du même acabit que le conservatoire, mais dans d'autres domaines de l'art. Pour bâtir une industrie, M. le président, la recette est simple et, en même temps, un peu complexe. Le réflexe doit être la construction d'infrastructures de base appropriées qui peuvent favoriser son essor.

But our cultural richness does not stop there. Ancestral languages, historical buildings, cultural centres, our diversified cultural practices have to be taken on board at par level. We all know, *et il est inutile de se voiler la face*, that this is not the case currently, and that this situation has to change.

It is time for a new dimension to be given to our understanding and tolerance of all cultures of our land, and I was glad to hear the Minister of Culture speak of the setting-up of more speaking unions and the construction of the Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre. Although, I must say that I have seen nowhere in the budgetary estimates, any provisions made for the creation of the new speaking unions, as mentioned by hon. Dr. Bunwaree. I do hope that someone, perhaps from the Government side, can come later on and explain to us how those unions will be created if no funds have been allocated for them in the current Budget.

As we talk of branding our arts industry, as we talk of encouraging creativity under all its forms, we have to acknowledge that the Creole language has an undeniable role to play in this picture. Lately, much progress has been done. A dictionary published; regularly, Mauritian authors also publish in Creole, and many of our local songs and plays are staged in this language. It is my sincere hope that there comes a day, where this language, which is spoken by 99.9% of the population, is given its true place in our Mauritian society. Perhaps, one day, we would be even able to - *et c'est permis de rêver* - express ourselves freely in Creole in this Parliament. That would ensure that our language is given the place of respect and dignity, as any mother tongue deserves.

Before I end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to say a few words on my constituency. For three and a half years, our constituency has been likened to the poor parent of development. Perhaps because Constituency No. 17 has only elected Members of the Opposition as its representatives; I hope not. But, we must recognise that Government is catching up during the past months or so. And, again, is it because elections are nearing, or is it because there is a new will from Government? I put the question. I do not know the answer. But I would fail in my duty if I do not ask this Government to pay attention to some ongoing problems.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is always a concern to bring up problems of one's constituency, because we do so in a hope that a solution will be found to them. But, it is also a privilege for which I am grateful. Therefore, I will go over some areas - I will not be able to cover my whole constituency, as you can guess - where actions can be taken, should the Government so wish, in the short, medium or long terms.

I take Dubreuil, one rural area of my constituency, secluded by distance and lack of job opportunity. The inhabitants are suffering because the transport cost to Curepipe, the main town, is so expensive. If you just go to Curepipe, it costs Rs20; you come back, it will cost you Rs40. And nobody wants to employ them, because they will have to pay the travelling expenses. It is also hard, therefore, for taxis operating there, as they have to charge customers high fees; those customers who do not have the capacity to pay. This area, therefore, has a high rate of unemployment, with all the social evils that this entails. Decentralisation in businesses could be of help there. I have heard hon. Dr. Sithaneni say that he would bring jobs home to women, for example. This could be one part solution.

In Midlands, one of the rainiest regions in the country, lack of drains is a major problem. Even though much has been done, it is still flood prone in some areas, as we have witnessed during the heavy rainfall. I appeal to the Minister of NDU to assess the situation and bring the relevant remedy.

As for 16^{ème} Mille, aside from the main road, so many side roads, where inhabitants dwell, are left either untarred or in bad condition. It is hardly *un plaisir* for inhabitants who live there. Even cars, taxis refuse to go there, to the adjoining residences of Anoska and Mon Bois, because of the state of the roads. The derelict physical environment, the social problems such as alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, which prevail there, need urgent address.

In Cité Malherbes, so long have they waited for their football ground, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - that was even before I was elected - that they no longer have hope that this is going to be done any time soon. I would ask the substantive Minister to prove them wrong in this instance and expedite the matter because people cannot wait so much to obtain a football ground. People cannot wait and the job cannot be done in a piecemeal manner this way.

Drains at La Rue Couvent and other areas such as La Brasserie, Abbé de la Caille, amongst others, have to be given special attention as they are also flood prone. But the attention should not be given in a superficial manner, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would give you one example. At La Brasserie, drains are being constructed, but, then, with the recent rains, the drains which had been constructed

had to be broken up again because they overflowed. Therefore, the plan that had been made was not appropriate. The idea that they wanted to put drains in order to help the people so that their houses would not be flooded was not effective. I think it is a waste of public funds to do it that way. More reflection should be given when they intend to construct drains so as to avoid wastage of public funds.

As for the NHDC at Cité Atlee, urgent attention needs to be given to the state of the complex. I would be grateful – I am sorry the hon. Minister of Finance is not here – if the upgrading measures announced in the Budget in May last could take a concrete shape, at least, early next year.

As for other areas, such as Les Casernes and Camp Caval, I would be grateful if the regular water shortages experienced in those regions could be sorted out because every time I call the CWA, they have some story or another to tell. We are in 2009. You would certainly agree with me that no one should be deprived of running tap water for most of the day, especially not in a region like Curepipe.

As for the town centre, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it would be appreciated if more police surveillance could be exerted there, especially during market/fair days and at the time where youngsters go and come from school so as to prevent any mishappenings.

The list, as I said, is only indicative, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I will end there. But allow me to add, that we, on the MSM side, have been talking to the people. We have engaged on a journey across the island before this Budget and we have had the opportunity not only to propose our ideas, but also to listen to people's ideals of the Mauritian society. For we believe in listening to the people and providing them with a society where not only a few will benefit, *une société visionnaire et moderne où chaque mauricien pourra vivre dans la dignité et la sécurité. C'est l'objectif de Pravind Jugnauth et de toute son équipe, M. le président.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can tell you that this Budget is not at all what the Mauritian citizens expect. They expected for the equilibrium to be re-established between the allocation of a piece of the *gâteau national* to the rich and what was to be given to the middle class and the poorer sections of society.

Encore une fois, M. le président, l'honorable Dr. Sithanen les a laissés sur leur faim. Ce ne sont pas les 3,5% de compensation salariale qui viendront régler le problème. A nouveau, la longue attente de cette population a été déçue, M. le

président. La pauvreté s'accroît, les PME s'essoufflent, la population est une population résignée, voire pire, désabusée. Mais avec le MSM, elle ne le sera pas, M. le président, car nous croyons fermement en l'avenir de ce pays et en le potentiel de ce peuple formidable qu'est le peuple mauricien.

Nous représentons dans ce parlement et au-dehors la vraie voix du peuple, celle qui veut retrouver un dynamisme que rien ne pourra arrêter, celle qui veut vivre sous un nouveau soleil et aspire à un nouvel espoir.

Merci, M. le président.

(7.04 p.m.)

Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me start with a visual analogy. Everybody reckons that July 2005 was a very, very difficult beginning. It was as if the Government was walking along a path at night and the night was pitch-dark, it was surrounded by a thick fog. But, fortunately, for all of us, there was a powerful flashlight and that flashlight helped us to cut through the darkness of the night and the fog. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that powerful flashlight helped us to create a very narrow and clear space in front of us. Slowly, steadily, the Government paved its way and the journey started and we never looked back since we started in July 2005. We managed to make Mauritius one of the strongest performing economies in the Southern Africa.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the pitch-darkness and the fog that I am talking about was the lost half decade, 2000 to 2005. The pitch-darkness that I am talking about was the dead end that the Government of 2000 to 2005 created for us. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the pitch-darkness that I am talking about was the bottomless pit that they left for us in 2005. Not to add, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the marasmic economic growth of only 2%, not to talk of the economic bankruptcy that we had to face. And, of course, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they get very fidgety when we talk about the different skeletons of different shapes and sizes that they judiciously kept in the cupboards. And the flashlight that I am talking about, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was the ingenuity, the modern mindset and the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister. He showed us the direction. The clear space that I am referring to in my analogy is 'now', the 'now' which is very, very tangible, the 'now' that we can see, and the 'now' that we can feel. And the 'now' is a resilient, strong economy, ready to embark with confidence to meet the challenges of the 21st century and globalisation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in all humility, we are in a momentous process of change, blazing a trail towards a very secure future for all Mauritians where national unity and reconciliation is a major preoccupation for this Government. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have confounded the predictions of the Prophet of Doom. We had many external shocks; we have buffeted all the shocks to make better the lives of all our fellow brethren: creating 40,000 jobs, shifting more resources to the Welfare State, providing more funding for the poverty alleviation programmes and creating more opportunities for SMEs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot claim to have realised everything we wish to achieve, but no one can question this Government about the sincerity of purpose: to deal with very root causes of unemployment, inflation, managing resources that we have in terms of social benefits, law and order and social injustice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have a very long way to go before we attain the goal of a very prosperous nation, but what is more important for this Government is that we do things with responsibility and sincerity. It is our firm belief that support and help to the downtrodden and the marginals of our society are readily made available.

With this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have safeguarded the well-being of the poor and that we do it not for political reasons, but for more altruistic reasons, and this is the deepening engagement of this Government. Nobody should feel left out. And we continue to build a very harmonious society and a very genuine Mauritian community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government does not believe in rhetoric, hypothesis and high morals, it does not believe in sloganeering. What we believe in is action and action that makes a difference in the lives of the average Mauritians.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me respond to what the hon. Leader of the Opposition had said a couple of days back. He talked of ‘payback time and the time has come.’ If payback time means consideration and compassion to the underprivileged, treating workers with dignity, fairness and respect, if payback time means considering the needs of workers and providing solutions, if payback time means creating a very win-win partnership with the people out there and the Government, then I would say very clearly and loudly, so be it. The payback time is here and it is the Government which is going to honour the payback time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the problem with the Opposition is that they think that the coin has only one side, that life is linear, it is a straight line. Unfortunately or fortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is always two sides of the coin. If one side of the coin is payback time, the other side is kickback time. And kickback time for whom? Definitely, kickback time is for the Opposition! We know what this kickback time means, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir: “*Donner de retour en arrière; rendre un coup de pied.*” This is what this Budget is for the Opposition. This is my point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that payback time is for the community and the kickback time is for the Opposition. *Le compte est bon!* This payback time, Mr

Deputy Speaker, Sir, is not a mana from heaven. This payback time has been diligently worked out by this Government and that reminds me of what was said by Peter Drucker, the guru of modern management. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to quote him –

“In management, challenge for the 21st century, one cannot manage change, one can only be ahead of it.”

And he continues, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir -

“In a period of upheavals, such as the one we are living in, change is the norm. To be sure, it is painful and risky and, above all, it requires a great deal of really hard work.”

He ends by telling -

“But unless it is seen as a task of the organisation to lead change, the organisation will not survive.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has one leader, one policy, one direction and one team. We took very painful, difficult and risky decisions. We have not just managed change, but to be ahead of change and, of course, the early harvest was there. We also managed to revive, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this sclerotic economy between 2000 and 2005.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in such turbulent times, it is not very easy to be Minister of Finance, more so if you happen to be an economist. In the words of John Maynard Keynes, father of Modern Economics, I quote –

“The Economist must be aloof and incorruptible, yet sometimes as near the earth as a politician.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has managed to balance this interplay between a good economist and a responsible politician and hats off to him. We salute him. At one time, he was one of the most misunderstood men and today “affluence of respect” is coming to him.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, throughout his Budget, he has proved four things and he has proved it to the utter dismay of his adversaries that good economics is not a zero sum game; good economics is not taking from Paul to pay Peter; good economics is not popular economics, especially in the short run; good economics is about creating wealth for the nation. And he has done it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,

with lots of intellectual consistency. He showed to us that if our policy is well-intentioned, this can only produce positive gains for the nation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I, again, disagree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition when he referred to massive external debt entering a dangerous zone. I think, this is irrational pessimism and I would tell you why. We all agree that debt poses a burdensome problem for all of us. We all agree that the consequence of debt can be dramatic, but let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the debt to GDP ratio for 2009 is 50.5% and for 2010, it is 50.4%. According to international standards, a debt to GDP ratio, even up to 75%, no doubt it is high, but it is still manageable. That is why, to classify our national debt to GDP ratio of 50% as massive external debt entering a dangerous zone is pure invention on the part of the Leader of the Opposition and, of course, irrational pessimism.

Our debt to GDP ratio, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is borrowing. It is not over borrowing and, of course, not excessive. It is not odious if we compare to countries like Iraq and Nigeria. We are never shackled by debts. If we have a debt of 50.5%, this is something which is balanced and, of course, manageable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as the other side of the debt is concerned, all countries take a debt. They take debts so that the streets are not filled with potholes, so that they have street lighting and because they don't want their hospitals to run out of oxygen. They take debts not to sacrifice their different services right from education, health and social. But our debt that we are talking of, that is, 50.5%, is meant to put in for infrastructural purpose and to prepare Mauritius for the difficult times that might come. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is neither going for debt forgiveness nor debt restructuring and debt default. I don't understand this irrational on the part of the Leader of the Opposition because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for sure, this Government knows what business we were in and, of course, what business we are not in.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the world, in the best of circumstances, is marked by intense competition, uncertainty and instability and this is confirmed in the words of FMI, I quote –

“The economic outlook for Mauritius as for the global economy is subject to unusually high degree of uncertainty”.

I have never seen any remark from the Opposition side regarding such statement coming from the IMF. This is a constant reminder that as a developing nation or an emerging economy, the real backdrop of this Budget is uncertainty

and added to it, advanced countries, through international organisations like the IMF, World Bank and WTO, with all the conditionalities, can sometimes make our life more difficult.

We know about the Washington consensus of IMF. If things do not work out, they talk of Washington consensus plus, but we should never forget that IMF is located on the 19th street. The World Bank is located on the 18th street and the US Treasury is located on the 15th street and these people are interconnected and interrelated. They are nicknamed as club of the rich where the old boy rules and we know who is the old boy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when I am referring to the IMF, we have ourselves received the treatment or should I say we have received the shock therapy of IMF in the 80's in the form of structural adjustment loan and the successive devaluation that we had.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what I want to emphasise is that it is always the advanced countries that will shape the agenda; it is always the advanced economies that will set the agenda; it is always the advanced economies that will determine the outcome. Our future prospect is not in Doha, not in Cancun, not in Uruguay and not in Hong Kong. As I said last time, in the ASP it lies in our own backyard and it means that it all depends on what type of decisions we are going to take. It all depends on how much faith we have in South-South dialogue. It all depends on how much we believe in regional trade; it all depends on how we are going to harness technology and on how we are going to align ourselves to the global trade. There is conventional wisdom, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we should stick to what we are best at and for Mauritius, at one time, it was growing sugar cane. But this Government did not follow this conventional wisdom. We devised all our homemade strategies, our own policies and programmes which were not shared and which were, in fact, vehemently disagreed by the hon. Members of the Opposition and, today, we are proud that we have buffeted all the shocks that we have known. Be it the galloping price of fuel, be it the increasing prices of the commodities, be it the unfavourable terms of trade as far as sugar and textile sectors are concerned, this is all to show that we have withstood the global hostile environment with success.

We all know the central elements of our reform, giving an outward looking orientation to our economy and we know what the hon. Members of the Opposition said, that we are *ultra libéralistes*, we have re-structured our institution to eliminate red tapism and to facilitate the ease to do business. They said that foreigners will come and invade our country. We have brought about very healthy

and resourceful legislation to attract much needed capital and technology. They asked questions as to how much money we are putting in the Jin Fei project. We have collaborated with the private sector because we know that is where the job is. They said we have the beck and call of the private sector. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has promoted development, growth, stability, equity and social justice and people term it as the Mauritian miracle. In short, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know the tremendous difficulty we had since we started in 2005. We are trying very hard to manage globalisation; we are trying very hard to make globalisation work for us.

What we are expecting today from the hon. Members of the Opposition - this was highlighted by my colleague, the Minister of Industry - is not just critics, not counter arguments that are minor and superficial, not to play for the gallery, not to go for populism; what we are asking them are their alternative views of this Budget. They should tell us what are their political and market reforms if they happen to take over the Government; they should tell us, in very concrete terms, what their reform agenda to meet the challenges of globalisation is. We are asking them what is their monetary and fiscal policy, what is their long-term thinking and their policy. In fact, what we are asking is: what is the model of development that they are going to bring to Mauritius? We are telling them to outsmart us, but they should not feed us with hypothesis formulae and slogans. Whatever proposals that the hon. Members should come with, they should not forget the backdrop that I have mentioned of uncertainty. I am asking a question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir: who can say with certainty when will be the comprehensive world economic recovery? I am asking: who can say with certainty the exact timing of the exit strategy of the ASP? Who can say, for sure, that there will never be a double deep recession? Who can say that the protectionist tendency by developed countries will be a thing of the past? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the answer will be "it depends" and "it depends" means "we don't know". "It depends" means improbability. "It depends" means impreciseness. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our \$9 billion economy which is growing by 2.7% this year, coming down from 5% over the last three years, will definitely depend on the economic rebound; what is going to happen in United States; what is going to happen in UK, what will happen in the Euro zones and definitely what is going to happen in China and India. If we are very unsure and if we are very uncertain about our future, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is very much aware of the challenges facing us. The challenges which are facing us are how to keep a balance between growth and inflation; how we can continue with our fiscal consolidation; how we are going to strengthen our ability to compete with the emerging market.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the challenge is how we are going to collaborate with the private sector to create more job opportunities. The challenge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is how we are going to put our public debt on a downward path bearing in mind that our Central Government debt is now Rs118.2 billion. The challenge is how we are going to continue protecting the vulnerable sectors of our economy mainly textile and tourism. The challenge is how we are going to keep a balance policy interest and, above all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how are we going to protect the poor; those who are homeless; those who are jobless; those who are deprived so that they don't go into hopelessness and helplessness. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these, I believe, are the formidable challenges that are going to emerge in the near future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have charted a very different growth since we started in July 2005 and this Budget, once again, reaffirms the need to continue on the path of reform that we have undertaken with more responsibility. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will agree with me that reform cannot happen without political will; reform cannot happen without leadership; reform cannot happen without sincere commitment; reform cannot happen if you don't have a mindset of modernity. As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government does not believe in rhetorics and sloganeering. There is something very, very explicit and implicit in our approach and I am saying it a second time, we believe in one leader, one policy and one direction and this is our strength, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are not surprised at all when the IMF delegation was in Mauritius, he writes and I quote, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir -

“Our reform has not only helped cushion the economy from the impact of the crisis, but it has also better positioned Mauritius to benefit from an upturn in the world economy’.

I am asking this question to myself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why the hon. Members in the Opposition choose to be selectively blind. They choose to be selectively amnesic when good things have been written by international organisations. What I mean is when I refer to the comments of the FMI, we can face the wrath of the ongoing global financial crisis from a position of strength. Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget of 2010 is being presented from a position of strength. This position of strength is not a gift from developed countries. It is not from donor international agencies. It is a homemade remedy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that will prioritise the three main pillars of future development: shaping recovery, consolidating social progress and sustaining the green economy. *L'état d'urgence économique*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has been replaced by the creation of 40,000 jobs. *L'état d'urgence économique*, Mr Deputy

Speaker, Sir, has enabled to plummet the inflation rate. *L'état d'urgence économique* has been replaced with investment, the yearly average amounts to Rs8 billion. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *l'état d'urgence économique* of the Opposition has been replaced by a Budget deficit of 4.5% compared to what it was in 2005, that is, 8.1%. In short, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have weathered this *état d'urgence économique*. But this Budget cannot be seen in isolation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and, here, I am talking about the Additional Stimulus Package and the transitional Budget of 2008/2009. They have helped us in a very tremendous way to reduce unemployment. They have helped us in a tremendous way to ease the burden of Mauritians, in particular, the vulnerable groups. They have helped us to assist the private sector in facing the crisis and for capacity building.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we talk of development, for sure, it means economic growth; for sure, it means taming macroeconomic fundamentals; for sure, it means industrialisation and technological advances. But these are very narrow views of development and we have seen what has happened in India, shining India. What we are concerned with, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is real development which means providing continued access to education, health and social benefits. Real development means to continue providing very basic amenities in terms of water, electricity and shelter. Real development means providing decent jobs to our people. Real development means eliminating the economic and social deprivations. Real development means building up a very tolerant society, a humanistic society where the underprivileged are looked up and treated with honour and dignity. This is one of the main thrusts of this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

We are very fortunate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that growth has started earlier than expected. We are very fortunate that 2010 will be the year of recovery. We are very fortunate that the \$9 billion economy is growing by 2.7% and it will continue to follow an upward trend, that is, 4.5%. We are very fortunate that the confidence is back. The sugar sector which suffered a negative growth is braced to achieve a positive growth in spite of the decrease in price by 36%. We are very fortunate that the textile and clothing sector which shrank by 8.5% will grow by 4% this year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are very confident that the ICT and the BPO sectors are going to contribute 5.8% to our GDP growth. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the icing on the cake will be the Jin Fei projects and the new Satellite City of Highlands. Government has achieved a sound macroeconomic management. Job creation and human development is here. Social programmes to protect the vulnerable and the marginal are here for appreciation. Not surprisingly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is standing amongst the 48 Sub-Saharan countries and is

leading in terms of infrastructure. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our economic growth has helped us to lay very variable economic foundations, be it in terms of health, education, energy, infrastructure or nation strategies. However, it is critical that our current optimism does not morph into complacency. We have not been spared by the effect of the global meltdown, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and we should not think that recession was a tsunami that came, did its damage and passed by. We need to remain alert. We have not yet crossed the Rubicon, and we need to continue unlocking the mysteries of globalisation.

We are very much confident that our economic growth is going to return to the pre-crisis level of 5% within the two years to come. But, as we go along this trajectory, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us not forget a well-known Chinese idiom –

“The past should never be forgotten since we can always learn from it.”

We can also learn from progress made by other countries like India, China, Brazil and the South East Asian Tigers, but we need to pursue our own very distinctive development path rather than copy any model. Maximum self-reliance must be the key note to our renewed development effort. We should not lose track of our vision, we should not lose track of a people centred development. That should be self-reliant, equitable, participatory and sustainable.

Let me conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by congratulating, once again, our Prime Minister, the vice-Prime Minister and all the team of Ministers for this very enlightening, brilliant and delightful Budget. *C'est du plaisir*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

Thank you.

At 7.43 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.54 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr R. Issack (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): M. le président, nous parlons d'une crise, et d'une crise sans précédent. Nous nous référons à la crise qui a secoué le monde, surtout l'année dernière. C'était une crise financière sans précédent et nous avons pu, malgré tout, à Maurice, surfer sur la crête de cette crise, qui était pourtant sans précédent. Mais, la véritable crise, celle qui a secoué le pays, c'est le lourd héritage que nous a légué le précédent gouvernement. On ne parle pas de cette crise-là et, pourtant, c'était la pire de toutes les crises. A entendre nos amis de l'opposition qui nous feraient accroire que ce gouvernement ne fait rien de bon, ne fait que commettre des

bêtises, des bévues, on croirait que rien ne va dans ce pays; on croirait que tout va à l'envers. Le budget présenté par l'honorable ministre des finances, Dr. Rama Sithanen, est un budget préparé méticuleusement. C'est un budget travaillé, calculé, réfléchi, parce qu'un budget brasse toutes les sphères, tous les secteurs d'un pays. Evidemment, cela influe sur la nation, la société, le collectif, la famille, et l'individu. Ce budget qui touche toute la nation est, en lui-même, un plan d'action; c'est tout un programme; c'est préparer l'avenir; c'est un budget à long terme. Ce budget est aussi une philosophie.

Il y a quelques années de cela, le président de la République de l'Inde, le Dr. Abdul Kalam, était à Maurice et, s'adressant aux Mauriciens, au gouvernement du pays, avait parlé - cette sommité mondiale de la science - des *gifts of nature* qui nous inondent - l'air, la mer, l'eau, et il a aussi fait mention du soleil - et que c'était de là qu'il fallait puiser toute l'énergie dont nous avons besoin. Aujourd'hui, ce budget *is also a green Budget*. C'est un budget écologique, un budget qui nous ramène vers la nature. La sérénité de la nature se trouve dans la sérénité de l'homme, et la sérénité de l'homme se trouve dans celle de la nature. C'est un budget qui nous rapproche de la terre, de l'eau, de l'air. Donc, c'est un budget philosophique et intelligent. L'île Maurice Durable - nous voyons en filigrane la philosophie du Premier ministre, qui veut faire de l'île Maurice un pays écologique, où l'on respecte la nature, où l'on respecte tout ce qui est vert. Le Premier ministre veut que chaque Mauricien prenne conscience de l'importance de l'écologie. Dans ce budget, nous voyons en filigrane le Premier ministre.

Ce budget qui est tout un programme veut *promote environmental awareness*. Nos institutions, nos bâtiments doivent être *eco-friendly*. Notre planification doit être *eco-friendly*. C'est un budget de l'environnement - qu'il met beaucoup d'emphase sur l'environnement, sur la salubrité et sur le salubre.

Il y a beaucoup de dangers. Nous sommes menacés par la nature. Il y a *the global warming* qui est une menace pour toute la planète. Il y a la pollution, le changement climatique qui déboussole complètement le quotidien de l'homme. Il y a l'érosion, la déforestation. Alors, nous avons à prendre conscience, et ce budget non seulement nous fait prendre conscience de la situation qui pourrait s'avérer éventuellement apocalyptique, mais, en même temps, nous ramène un peu vers la réalité et nous propose des solutions pour que nous puissions préserver nos acquis, pour que nous puissions rendre l'île Maurice verte.

Ce gouvernement est un gouvernement généreux, philanthropique. Nous offrons, tout le temps, tout à tout le monde. On n'oublie aucune section de la population. On n'oublie aucun secteur du pays. Ce budget veut financer

intelligemment et pédagogiquement différents projets, et, d'ailleurs, il y a un programme pour qu'un maximum de familles puissent avoir une chauffe-eau solaire. Et maintenant on revient pour qu'au moins 50,000 familles puissent, elles aussi, obtenir leur chauffe-eau solaire. Déjà 300,000 maisons ont pu obtenir des *energy saving lamps*. Donc, le gouvernement applique différentes mesures, toute une artillerie. On veut que tous les Mauriciens respectent l'environnement, économisent de l'énergie afin que le pays lui-même en bénéficie; d'autres mesures sont aussi annoncées. Les autobus qui polluent trop notre atmosphère seront remplacés dans les trois ans à venir - il y a à peu près 600 autobus.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are also going to replace street lighting with energy saving lamps and we are coming with composting on an industrial scale. A peu près 900,000 tonnes d'ordures - Municipal waste - vont être utilisées comme compostes. Tout ce qui concerne l'environnement, les plages, les berges des rivières seront embellies et, en même temps, we want to have indoor air quality. Et ce qui est intéressant également, c'est le nouveau concept écologique pour les villages. Donc, nous allons dans une direction nouvelle. Nous sommes pour des villages verts, des villages écologiques. Ce qui est aussi important c'est l'eau. On ne peut pas vivre sans eau et, là aussi, le gouvernement pense à l'avenir avec les développements infrastructurels. Avec les mégas projets qui arrivent, il va nous falloir avoir l'eau, la capter et aussi la préserver. Pour ce faire, un budget de R 10 milliards est prévu. Dans le sud du pays we are going to have a new dam à Rivière des Anguilles au coût de plus de R 2 milliards. En effet, dans le sud, the whole network for water distribution is being looked after au coût de R 850 million. L'eau, c'est aussi la mer. On va exploiter la mer parce que c'est une ressource pour les Mauriciens. Nous vivons dans une île et nous devons exploiter comme il faut toutes les ressources que nous avons à notre disposition et, de la mer, naîtront l'aquaculture, the desalination of water, bottling, pharmaceutical products, et, évidemment, l'eau de mer sera également utilisée pour le air conditioning. Ce budget nous ramène non seulement vers la terre, mais aussi vers notre passé. Malheureusement, je ne vois pas notre ami, l'honorable Mahen Jhugroo. Pas plus tard qu'hier, il nous a rappelé dans le corridor de l'assemblée nationale, comment ses parents et nos parents aussi se sont escrimés dans les champs pour qu'ils puissent avoir une bonne éducation. Beaucoup parmi nous savent comment on a dû travailler la terre, comment on a dû vivre dans la nature pour faire vivre nos enfants - ces enfants que nous sommes aujourd'hui. Nombreux d'entre nous savent les sacrifices que nos parents ont eu à consentir pour que nous puissions évoluer, pour que nous puissions progresser, pour que le pays se développe. Avec ce budget, il y a un retour vers la terre et un retour intelligemment calculé. Ce retour va se faire à travers la pédagogie, à travers les enfants et nos étudiants. Les

professeurs, les institutions scolaires, les parents, évidemment leurs enfants aussi seront impliqués. C'est une initiative fort louable. Et là, on aura des *endemic gardens* dans les écoles. Les enfants seront emmenés dans la nature. Ils vont se promener dans la nature - voilà le ministre responsable de l'environnement qui arrive. Donc, il a certainement une énorme contribution dans tous ces projets. Et puis il y a une campagne, the '*Tree Planting Campaign*'. Il faut planter. Chaque Mauricien doit apprendre à planter parce que chaque plante a une valeur inestimable. D'ailleurs, il a été dit dans le livre sacré: 'Celui qui plante un arbre, il sera béni tout le temps par cet arbre même quand les oiseaux vont se nourrir sur cet arbre et, qui plus est, même si un voleur arrive à goûter les fruits de cet arbre'. Voilà l'écologie, voilà les plantes. Voilà ce que ce gouvernement est en train d'inculquer aux jeunes, à tout le monde, à tous les Mauriciens: l'importance de retourner vers le sol. Il va falloir également embellir, donner une couleur verte à l'île Maurice. Chaque coin de l'île Maurice doit être embelli et enjolivé.

(Interruptions)

L'essentiel c'est de planter, que ce soit des palmistes ou des goyaviers. Et hier, je crois que c'est l'honorable Dr. James Burty David qui nous rappelait que jadis dans les cours il y avait des plantes, des arbres fruitiers et de simples choses qui illuminaient notre vie et qui donnaient de la saveur à notre existence: goyaves de Chine, bilimbi, carambole. Tout cela se perd.

(Interruptions)

Bibas, pommes zako et tout.

Vous voyez, c'est un budget réjouissant, un budget qui a de la saveur, un budget phytothérapeutique. Voilà où nous ramène toute la philosophie qu'englobe ce budget. Nous allons planter, nous allons embellir, nous allons respirer de l'air frais, il y aura de la chlorophylle, il y aura de l'oxygène. Donc, c'est un budget qui veut vivifier cette existence.

(Interruptions)

Hier, en parlant de ce que nos parents étaient, l'honorable membre flattait, sans le savoir, le budget du gouvernement. Mais ce qui est intéressant aussi de noter dans ce budget, c'est qu'après l'agriculture, nous passons à la véritable culture, la grande culture: la musique, la peinture, les artistes, on ne les a pas oubliés. Nous allons donner une considération particulière aux artistes. Et ce matin, tout à fait par hasard, je rencontre un monsieur qui me dit qu'il est musicien. Il me dit que c'est le seul pays au monde où il a entendu un Premier ministre dire:

ici on vous donne de l'argent pour développer vos cultures, on vous paie pour que vous viviez pleinement vos cultures, on vous donne tout ce dont vous avez besoin. C'est pourquoi au début j'ai fait référence à la générosité, à la philanthropie du gouvernement. C'est un gouvernement qui ne cesse de donner, qui ne cesse d'offrir dans différents domaines.

(Interruptions)

Et mon collègue me dit que c'est un gouvernement qui sait aussi donner des coups de pied. Donc, le gouvernement injecte beaucoup d'argent..... Je suis ivre de bonheur en lisant ce budget.

(Interruptions)

We want to promote excellence in arts and culture, including support to our national artists. Et voilà un budget qui va donner de l'espace à nos artistes, voilà un budget qui va apporter une bouffée d'oxygène à nos artistes. Nous aurons bientôt un parcours culturel, on aura notre *cultural and artistic* boulevard, des galeries d'arts, des studios pour la sculpture, le dessin, la peinture et surtout l'occasion sera donnée aux artistes pour qu'ils s'améliorent et aussi pour qu'ils puissent vendre leurs produits. Et là, la culture sera utilisée également pour combattre la pauvreté. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'il y aura aussi un orchestre symphonique et de la musique.

(Interruptions)

Je sais que mon ami, l'honorable Jean Claude Barbier, qui est compositeur, musicien, va certainement en bénéficier. Voilà un budget qui nourrit également les membres de l'opposition, qui fait plaisir.

(Interruptions)

Puisqu'on parle de la musique, citons Beethoven... 'la musique adoucit les mœurs'... qui avait dit -

« La musique vaut toutes les philosophies du monde. »

Mais Charles Baudelaire est allé jusqu'à dire:

« La musique creuse le ciel. »

Terminons sur une bonne note de musique en envoyant valser sous les pluies populaires tous les démagogues de l'opposition.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: I think we badly needed that speech.

(9.17 p.m.)

The Minister of Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter (Mr S. Tang Wah Hing): Mr Speaker, Sir, the extensive and invaluable content of this Budget, is a genuine reflection of the high ideals of this Government which has made Mauritius an example to be followed by developing countries worldwide.

Since 2005, in order to relieve this country from an “*état d’urgence économique*”, both the Prime Minister and the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment have spared no efforts to take bold measures and to consistently follow an economic and social policy which responds to the aspirations of our population.

They need to be congratulated for their vision and determination which have spared the country from serious problems which have affected even highly industrialised countries during the recent recession last year.

The path followed by Mauritius has been the subject of favourable comments by Fraser Forum in its issue on 09 November 2009. I quote -

“Francophone developing countries can follow the example of Mauritius, which has experienced relative economic and political development since its independence in 1968. As mentioned above, Mauritius has one of the freest economies in the world, having a higher economic rating than industrialised countries.”

And I quote again –

“This high level of economic freedom has allowed Mauritius to grow much faster than other developing nations while also enjoying political freedom.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget is a balanced one aiming at a sustainable future with particular stress on women’s empowerment, SMEs, green Mauritius, housing, health, education, culture, sports, etc. All sectors of the economy have been given precious attention that they rightly deserve. It is a serious Budget in consonance with and a follow-up of the previous budgets. In short, an exercise in continuity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, we should join together to congratulate the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment *pour son formidable travail accompli non seulement durant ce présent budget mais également pour ses autres précédents budgets.*

Despite the fact that everyone was awaiting an electorally biased Budget, yet, he remained firm in his resolve and kept the long-term interest of the country in view, rather than try to look for short-term gains by presenting a populist Budget. I gather that the temptation may have been there, but this is where the difference lies between a responsible Minister and somebody who is out for cheap political gains.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last time when addressing the House, I highlighted the fact that a major economic storm was looming ahead and that we had to brace ourselves to face it. Six months later, we can now safely look back and say that we have weathered the storm.

The bold measures announced and the Additional Stimulus Package have achieved their purpose and the Mauritian population can breathe a sigh of relief. However, this should not be interpreted as if there were no storm. In fact, the storm came and was more severe than expected. Measures have been taken by world leaders and it is expected that they would tame the excesses of the unregulated financial markets and help the world economy to come out of this economic blizzard unscathed.

This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been widely accepted by the population. On the very next day, one of the well-known dailies published on its front page - "*Travail accompli*".

Mr Speaker, Sir, on my part, I have gone through the press, but could not find any one of the terms such as "*budget populiste*" or "*budget électoraliste*". This, in itself, is an indication of the long way we have travelled since 2005. Moreover, the tone adopted by the hon. Leader of the Opposition is also indicative that the Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment has not treaded along the lines of cheap political gains.

This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, rests on three main pillars. The policies outlined are meant to shape the recovery of the economy, to consolidate social progress and to sustain Green Mauritius. It is no secret for any Mauritian that one of the main problems which is crippling the country is the road congestion problem. Day by day, the problem is worsening and getting more complex. It is also the cause of many other accessory problems. Road rage, fatal accidents, lateness at work, low productivity, etc. are not alien to road congestion. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget makes provision for more than Rs20 billion to address the problem and to modernise our road infrastructure.

On the other hand, Mr Speaker, Sir, no effort has been spared to create a Green Mauritius. The protection of the environment and the long-term survival of humanity are based on the concept of sustainable development. What is sustainable development? In fact, in order to live, we consume what nature offers. Every action impacts on the planet's ecosystems. This is of little concern as long as human use of resources does not exceed what the earth can renew. But are we taking more? The answer is a clear "Yes".

Today, it takes more than one year and two months for the earth to regenerate what we use in a single year. If we maintain this overshoot, we would soon be liquidating the planet's ecological resources. Mauritius is not protected from this situation.

Until this Government came in office, no sustained effort had been made to protect our environment. This Government came up with the *Maurice Ile Durable* (MID) Project and in this Budget a sizeable amount has been voted to build an eco-friendly infrastructure to promote the Green Mauritius concept.

The list is very long, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I would like to mention only a few such as the extension of the public sewerage system to connect around 32,000 households at an estimated Rs6.6 billion; setting up of an Energy Efficiency Management Office; extension of the Solar Water Heater Programme and implementation of the new concept of eco-village. Mr Speaker, Sir, these measures, it is expected, would usher our country into a new phase of development where the environment would be at the centre of our preoccupations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last time, when I intervened on the Budget, I drew attention to a number of projects and achievements of my Ministry even though it was still very young. I informed the hon. Members how we were battling on different fronts at the same time in spite of limited resources.

Today, I would like to take the opportunity to inform the House of the tremendous work which has been achieved by the various units of my Ministry. These units have been annexed to my Ministry in September 2008, but have a long standing history of achievements. Thus, for the period July 2005 to date the Consumer Protection Unit has -

- effected 22,739 checks on trade premises;
- established 572 contraventions;
- recorded and investigated 4,955 complaints, and

- delivered 423 talks in schools, social welfare centres, community centres and women's centres.

I must also add the following: the World Consumer Rights Day is celebrated on 15 March every year and the opportunity is used to sensitise the population on the theme approved by Consumer International, an umbrella organisation for consumer protection.

Opérations Coup de poing are carried out on an *ad hoc* basis to create awareness among traders. Another purpose of the exercise is to act as a deterrent for other traders. This exercise also provides comfort to the public who is reassured that its interests are being protected.

Booklets, pamphlets and posters promoting consumer education and consumer rights have been published on various topics and a consumer charter has been prepared.

Since May this year, the services of the Consumer Protection Unit (CPU) have been both regionalised and decentralised in order to bring our services closer to the targeted population and to create, at the same time, a more focused approach in terms of checks, complaints handling, etc.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Maximum Recommended Retail Price (MRRP) mechanism has been created and since September 2007 the price of milk is determined by the use of this mechanism. This is a more flexible approach closer to the free market mechanism. This mechanism is giving satisfactory results.

Since December 2008, a dipstick exercise is carried out on a monthly basis at all petrol filling stations on the day of the APM Certification Committee meeting. This exercise has eased the problem of artificial shortage of fuel on the market on that particular day caused by the uncertainty in the movement of prices of petroleum products.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have on various occasions, drawn attention that consumer protection is at the heart of every action of a Government. This is an undeniable fact. However, this protection of the consumer may take different forms or may be carried out in different ways, under different schemes and in different Ministries that do so while promoting their own mandate. But the ultimate end is the protection of the rights of consumers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry's main objective, on the other hand, is not only to promote, but to enhance the protection of the consumer by providing an

adequate legal framework responsive to the requirements of a constantly evolving market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, however, in spite of all our efforts, there is still a new situation that arises. There is a new scheme devised by some traders to defraud the consumer. The House would certainly be aware that quite recently we have encountered few situations where some traders have tried to use unfair and illegal means to ensnare the consumers. Fortunately, we have been able to intervene at the opportune time and, in most cases, the problem has been resolved and legal action initiated against the defaulters. These defaults range from trying to put for sale goods which had expired, fish products with misleading labels and tampering with the expiry date of that product meant for the ultimate customer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, recently another mischief has come to light; this has to do with the importation and sale of second-hand cars and reconditioned cars on the market. Our inquiry has revealed that the majority of imported second-hand cars have fake *odometers* readings. Action has already been taken to address these problems administratively and legally and in the coming months new regulations would be in force to regularise the market and create the required legal parameters to prevent the buyers from being the victim of fraudster and those seeking easy money.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one further issue deserves to be mentioned even though it might seem insignificant. Since some time back, ACIM has drawn the attention of my Ministry to the effect that animals purchased in the context of *Eid ul Adha* celebrations are not sold by weight, but in a customary manner, this is “*sur pattes*”.

According to our inquiry, this practice has been existed for decades, but it was also found to be detrimental to the buyer. I have the pleasure to inform the House that this problem will soon be solved and regulations are being prepared to normalise this activity as well.

In the context of our various activities, we have noted one major weakness. In fact, our current legislation in the field of consumer protection is not in line with the new business environment. This deserves immediate attention and there is need to completely overhaul the existing legal framework and to come up with a modern and updated one that would assist in effectively protecting the rights of the consumers, but, at the same time, promoting business facilitation. This exercise is well under way and soon a new legal landscape will prevail for consumer protection. In so doing, we want to provide our officers and other institutions with the tools to combat abuses from fraudulent traders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is another pillar of my Ministry's action plan which is a sustained national education campaign using a multi pronged approach whereby various media support would be used to educate the consumer. At the level of my Ministry, we have come to the conclusion that consumer education should be in continuous activity. There are so many changes taking place and so many products coming on the market that constantly the consumer must be informed, educated and even warned in respect of those products and changes. We consider that one of the best ways of achieving our purpose is to have our own tool where we could, at our discretion, decide on those specific aspects where the consumer should be educated.

Thus, Mr Speaker, Sir, a magazine modelled on the English magazine "Which?" or the French magazine "*Que Choisir?*" will be published soon. The Editorial Board is working very hard so that the first issue could be out around mid-December. Thereafter the magazine would become a regular feature of the Ministry and would be published on a quarterly basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for many years consumers in this country have complained about the opacity that exists in the determination of the price of goods. They continuously argue that there is profiteering on the part of traders and that the latter apply abusive margins on the goods they sell on the Mauritian market. This type of complaint became more pressing and common during the economic downturn, while the price of goods and other commodities on the world market were going down, yet, in Mauritius, there was price stickiness and Government had to intervene vigorously to convince traders to pass on the fall in price to the population.

This situation may once more arise in the future, but we want to be proactive and put in place a mechanism that would eliminate the information asymmetry between traders and consumers. We believe that this could be achieved by the setting-up of a Price Observatory which would constantly monitor the price of goods from source to destination. Mr Speaker, Sir, work in this respect has reached an advance stage and a delegation comprising officials of Government, the private sector and the NGOs for consumer protection have even proceeded to Reunion Island to understand the mechanism in place there.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the price fixing and import controls, the Ministry would continue to exercise control on the market and to ensure that suppliers and traders do comply with the regulation in force. In addition, my Ministry will also try, to the extent possible, to scan the market for unsafe products which could represent health and safety hazards, and, with the assistance and collaboration of

the stakeholders, legislate wherever possible to exercise control over the import of such products.

I am also pleased to inform the House that very soon a new Regulation governing the importation of a list of electrical and safety appliances would come into force. This Regulation would assist a minimising risk to which the buyer is presently subjected due to the absence of such regulation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the field of citizen charter, my Ministry will work with the other Ministries and Departments to prescribe and implement customised citizen charters outlining the minimum public service guarantee to which they commit themselves. The service level provided will be displayed on large posters which would be affixed in the conspicuous manner at all places where customers service is provided. Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition, with the collaboration of the Ministries and Departments concerned, a booklet would be published outlining the level of services promised and the mechanism in place for escalation of a complaint in case there is dissatisfaction with the quality and the level of service obtained.

My Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, will also work with private sector organisation in order to extend the concept of citizen charters to private sector organisation on a purely voluntary basis. In the beginning, only those organisations that provide direct customer service will be targeted. Ultimately, all institutions will be encouraged to adopt a service charter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a further matter that I hold particularly at heart is the adoption of a consumer policy for every market regulator. A regulator is, by nature, an institution that exists to counter balance the absence of competition in the market. We consider that by adopting a consumer policy, as is the case elsewhere in the world, the regulator would be in a better position to protect the consumers.

My Ministry will thus work with, at least, two market regulators so that they could come up with a consumer policy which will be the heart of the decision-making process, be it in the field of price, tariff fixing or similar issues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some other efforts are being taken by my Ministry to protect the consumers and to ensure that they get value for money in all their transactions. In addition, with the implementation of the citizen charter, we would like to ensure that the public services live up to the expectations of the population and do not pay lip service to their obligation.

Before I conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to quote Ben Okri, the Nigerian poet and novelist who says, I quote -

“The worst realities of our age are manufactured realities. It is, therefore, our task, as creative participants in the universe, to re-dream our world. The fact of possessing imagination means that everything can be re-dreamed. Each reality can have it.»

Avant de terminer, M. le président, je veux simplement dire que de ce côté de la Chambre, nous sommes une équipe très soudée.

Merci beaucoup.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

Mr Bachoo rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday 25 November 2009 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Bachoo rose and seconded.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED ON ADJOURNMENT

PAILLES – CAPTAIN ELVIS/JACKARIA STREETS - SCAVENGING SERVICES - STREET LIGHTING

Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): M. le président, merci, malgré l'heure tardive, de me permettre d'être le porte-parole des habitants de ma circonscription. Soyez sans crainte, je serais très brève!

I am raising an issue which is of a major concern because I feel that the Black River District Council is not assuming its responsibilities fully towards the inhabitants of my constituency, namely the region of Pailles. The residents of Captain Elvis and Jackaria Streets, by the side of St. Vincent Paul Church have made various requests to the Black River District Council, through their village councillors for placing street lighting and regarding the regular scavenging services. Furthermore, they have requested for a cleaning-up campaign in the region, but in vain. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, all their requests have, up to now, remained unanswered.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling some pictures showing how bare lands have been transformed into dumping ground and bush land. At a time where insecurity is a major concern, there are fears that some major crimes may occur in that region. People are asking themselves when the authorities concerned will decide to take action. Are they waiting for the Sodnac incident where a university student was raped on bare land or the case of late Nadine Dantier to occur again before taking action?

Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope that by raising this issue here, this may help the residents, at last, *à trouver la lumière au bout du tunnel*.

Merci, M. le président.

The Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, one should not over-dramatise and recall the case of Dantier. In fact, if we have to recall, the case of Dantier occurred under the last Government. I would like to say that I sought information from the District Council. I am told that there is scavenging service twice a week, in fact, every Wednesday and every Thursday.

In fact, in July this year, 28 complaints were recorded and the reason is very simple. There has been a change in scavenging companies at that time – a transitional period - and since July there has been no complaint.

As regards the street lighting, I am informed that there has been no complaint so far, but I'll certainly see to it that there are more bulbs and more lighting, if need be.

Concerning the bare land, as I said, I'll certainly look into it, but the scavenging service is now on a regular basis.

At 9.45 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 25 November 2009 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY - PROCEEDINGS – LIVE BROADCAST

(No. B/1182) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a Select Committee on the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly on radio and television, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: I would like to inform the House that the hon. Prime Minister has already given notice of a motion regarding the setting up of a Select Committee to make recommendations as it deems fit for the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House and matters ancillary thereto.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY - BACKBENCHER MEMBER - BODYGUARD

(No. B/1183) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if any hon. backbencher Member of the National Assembly is presently being provided with the services of an official bodyguard and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the reasons therefor and since when, and
- (b) if the hon. Member was provided with the same facilities in the past and over which period.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that no VIPSU personnel is presently attached to any backbencher Member of the National Assembly.

However, following a complaint reported by the hon. Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière, and taking into consideration the nature of the threats made against his person, the services of a police officer from the Transport

Guardroom have been temporarily provided to him with effect from 15 September 2009.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made by the hon. Prime Minister to PQ No. B/557 on 23 May 2006.

POLICE OFFICERS - POST OF SERGEANTS - EXAMINATIONS

(No. B/1184) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Police Officers who sat for the promotional examinations for the post of Sergeants, since January 2009 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that promotion in the Police Force falls under the purview of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission (DFSC) and is governed by Regulation 19 of the DFSC Regulations as well as Standing Order No. 16 (Promotion) of the Police Force.

According to Standing Order No. 16, all Police Corporals, Woman Police Corporals, Constables and Woman Police Constables who will have completed five years' service in a substantive capacity on the closing date for the submission of applications may apply to sit for the competitive examination to the rank of Police Sergeant.

At the request of DFSC, a note is published in the Routine Orders of the Police Force inviting members of the Force to submit their applications to the Police Headquarters through the officer-in-charge of their respective Division or Branch.

The Commissioner of Police then transmits all such applications to the DFSC. The final decision as to who will be permitted to sit for the competitive examinations rests with DFSC; and the names of the candidates who have been allowed permission to sit for such examinations are published in the Routine Orders of the Police Force.

The DFSC conducts competitive examinations for promotion to the rank of Police Sergeant/Woman Police Sergeant, whenever the necessity therefore arises and upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of Police.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 5,945 Police Officers, comprising -

- 345 Police Corporals
- 19 Woman Police Corporals
- 5,274 Police Constables
- 307 Woman Police Constables

were allowed by the DFSC to sit for the examination.

I wish to point out that sitting and passing the examination is not the only aspect of the exercise. The Commissioner of Police has then to go through the whole list to check whether any Police Officer, who has passed the examination, is not under suspension or has not committed any serious offence in the meantime, or has not shown gross negligence in the exercise of his or her duty.

This verification exercise will be shortly completed.

POLICE STATIONS – POLICE OFFICERS – THREE SHIFTS

(No. B/1185) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Police Officers and Sergeants posted in each police station for the three shifts.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that each police station is under the charge of an Inspector of Police or Sub-Inspector of Police. As for Police Sergeants, they are in charge of shift duties, with a number of Police Officers under their supervision.

According to the Commissioner of Police, 3,408 officers of all ranks are posted in the 91 police stations/posts in Mauritius, including Rodrigues and Agalega. In each police station, 3 to 4 officers are employed on day/office duties and the remaining police strength is detailed to work on three 8-hour shifts.

I am tabling the details of police personnel posted to police stations/posts and working on shift.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that recently the hours of duty for personnel working on 8-hour shifts has been reviewed to adapt to the considerable increase in socio-economic activities, which has impacted on traditional policing methodology. According to the circular dated 26 September 2009 issued by the Commissioner of Police, new hours of duty have been established for the three 8-hour shifts, which now start at 0630 hours instead of 0730 hours.

I am also given to understand that the Police is adequately staffed to operate the three 8-hour shifts system effectively.

PEREYBÈRE – MR A. S. - DEATH

(No. B/1186) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the death of one Mr A. S., by drowning, which occurred at Pereybère, on Monday 02 November 2009 at about 8.00 a.m., on the occasion of the Ganga Asnan festival, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SPEED CAMERAS - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/1187) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the speed cameras, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the date of introduction thereof, indicating the -

- (a) number of vehicles booked, since their coming into operation, and
- (b) amount of money collected as at to date.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that speed cameras came into operation with the enactment of the Road Traffic (Photographic Enforcement Device) Regulations on 29 December 2008.

Since the introduction of the three speed cameras at a cost of Rs6,988,713 a total of 26,156 drivers have been booked up to 18 November 2009 for exceeding speed limit.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed that, as at 31 October 2009, 19,903 contraveners have settled their fixed fine of Rs2,000, thus representing an amount of Rs39,806,000 collected by the District Court Cashiers.

POLICE CELLS/DETENTION CENTRES – DETAINEES - DEATH

(No. B/1188) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the detainees in police custody, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of cases of death and suicide recorded since June 2009 to date, and
- (b) measures Government proposes to take to reinforce their safety.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since June 2009 to date one case of death by suicide of detainee in police custody has been recorded.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed that whenever a person is detained in police cells/detention centres, the contents of Standing Order 120 of the Mauritius Police Force relating to the Safe Custody of Prisoners are strictly complied with. Besides, instructions contained in Circular No. 22/2005 issued by the Commissioner of Police on 16 September 2005 relating to Security of Prisoners are also followed. According to this circular, police sentry is to be maintained over any person detained in a police cell, on a 24-hour basis.

In addition, to further improve surveillance and security of detainees, the three Detention Centres at Moka, Line Barracks and Vacoas have been equipped with CCTV surveillance systems. Each Detention Centre has its own control room which operates on a 24-hour basis.

PERSONS MISSING – JANUARY 2006-NOVEMBER 2009

(No. B/1189) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs

whether, in regard to the persons reported missing since January 2006 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, indicating in each case, where matters stand as to the inquiries.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2006 to date, 3,771 persons were reported missing. Out of these -

- 3,605 persons were traced out and found safe, and
- 67 persons were found dead.

Police has conducted enquiries in all the cases of death and the status of the cases is as follows -

- 22 cases were filed as no foul play was suspected;
- in 7 cases judicial enquiry has been completed;
- 6 cases are pending judicial enquiry;
- 6 cases are pending, advice from the Director of Public Prosecutions;
- 26 cases are pending enquiry, and
- 99 persons are still missing and the cases are still under investigation.

COUNCIL OF LEGAL EDUCATION OF MAURITIUS – BARRISTERS & OTHER LEGAL PROFESSIONS - EXAMINATIONS

(No. B/1190) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the examinations for Barristers and other legal professions held by the Council of Legal Education of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to the number of candidates who sat therefor, in each case, since 2005 to date, on a yearly basis, indicating the percentage pass rate for each year.

(To be replied by the Attorney General)

(Withdrawn)

FOREIGN NATIONALS – RESIDENCE PERMITS

(No. B/1191) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to

the foreign nationals, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Passport and Immigration Office, information as to the number thereof who are not holders of a residence permit and who are still present on the Mauritian territory after the expiry of their residence permit.

Reply: Residence permits are issued to foreigners who either -

- (i) hold work permits issued by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment;
- (ii) are investors, self-employed non-citizens and professionals registered with the Board of Investment;
- (iii) retired non-citizens registered with the Board of Investment and who transfer to Mauritius an amount of 40,000 US Dollars annually;
- (iv) hold residential property under the Integrated Resort Scheme under the Real Estate Development Scheme;
- (v) are undergoing full-time studies or training in recognised educational or training institutions, and
- (vi) are visitors on long stay exceeding six months.

I am informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that as at 20 November 2009, there were 986 foreigners in Mauritius whose residence permit had expired and are still in Mauritius. Most of them are expatriate workers whose work and residence permits have expired.

Out of this number, 758 are awaiting repatriation to their respective country of origin pending availability of flights or completion by their employers of necessary administrative arrangements. A number of 224 persons have necessary clearance to work in Mauritius and their employers are in the process of renewing their work permits. Residence permits will be issued to them by the Passport and Immigration Office once their work permits will be issued by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment. There are four persons who have been reported missing and are being looked for by the Passport and Immigration Office.

I would like to point out that the Passport and Immigration Office has a Tracking Team that makes site visits to factories or companies where the foreign workers are employed and also gather information in the field on missing foreigners. Since January to date the Tracking Team has arrested and repatriated 313 expatriates to their country of origin. Most of them were reported missing as they had left their dormitories for unknown places after expiry of their work and residence permits.

The Passport and Immigration Office together with the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment is following the situation with the companies employing the expatriates.

DRUG TRAFFICKERS – ASSETS - FORFEITURE

(No. B/1192) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to cases of drug trafficking being presently dealt with by the Commissioner for Drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Office of the Drug Commission, information as to the number thereof, indicating the number of cases in which the assets of the drug traffickers have been forfeited.

Reply: In reply to Parliamentary Questions B/1093 and B/811 at our sittings on 12 August 2008 and 14 July 2009, respectively, Dr. the hon. Prime Minister outlined the procedures for dealing with the forfeiture of assets of drug traffickers.

I am informed by the Commissioner, Drug Assets Forfeiture, that since his appointment in December 2005, 1,573 cases have been referred to him by the Director of Public Prosecutions for enquiry. As at to date, enquiry in 1,059 cases have been completed and appropriate recommendations have been made to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I am also informed that, in July 2008, the Supreme Court made an order for forfeiture of assets in one case and a sum of Rs112,500.97 was forfeited. There are currently 7 cases before the Supreme Court. In addition, the Commissioner, Drug Assets Forfeiture, has recommended forfeiture of assets in 19 other cases.

We are continuously reviewing the legal framework regarding the recovery of drug assets. The Finance Act 2009 amended the Dangerous Drugs Act to enable the Commissioner to have access to deposits and accounts in non-bank deposit taking institutions. Prior to this amendment, access to these accounts could only be obtained through a court order.

Furthermore, I am informed that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment, the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions, the ICAC, the FIU, the State Law Office and the Office of the Drug Commissioner are currently working on an integrated and enhanced asset recovery legislation. In this regard, a draft legislation has been prepared and it is being studied by the various stakeholders.

**UNITED NATIONS SUB COMMITTEE ON PREVENTION OF
TORTURE - PRISON OFFICERS - INQUIRY**

(No. B/1193) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Prison Officers who were interdicted following the visit of the United Nations Sub Committee on Prevention of Torture, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to if the case against the Prison Officers has been struck out and, if so -

- (a) when;
- (b) if any inquiry has been carried out at departmental level, and
- (c) if the officers are still on interdiction and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that during its visit to Mauritius, between the 08 and 18 October 2007, the UN Sub-Committee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment reported on some allegations of ill-treatment meted out to detainees at the Phoenix prison.

Following those observations made by the Sub-Committee, on 18 October 2007, the Commissioner of Prisons requested the Commissioner of Police to carry out an in-depth inquiry into the alleged cases of ill-treatment of detainees at the Phoenix prison.

On the basis of the police inquiry, on 24 October 2007, three Prison Officers were arrested and a provisional charge of “Torture by Public Official” in breach of section 78(1) (a) of the Criminal Code, was lodged against them before the District Court of Curepipe. On 29 October 2007, two other Prison Officers were arrested for the same offence and they also appeared before the District Court of Curepipe. They were all released on bail.

The three Prison Officers were interdicted from the exercise of the powers and functions of their Office with effect from 24 October 2007 and the two others as from 01 November 2007.

I am further informed that on 26 February 2009, the cases were called pro-forma and the Magistrate of the District Court of Curepipe struck out the provisional complaints on the ground that the police inquiries had not been completed in these cases.

On 26 March 2009, police inquiries in all the cases were completed and the case file was forwarded on the same day to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice. The matter is still under consideration at the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that no inquiry at departmental level has been carried out in view of the fact that there is already a police inquiry into these cases.

As regards part (c) of the question, the five Prison Officers are still under interdiction as the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions in these cases is being awaited.

NIGHT CLUBS AND DISCOTHEQUES – MINORS – ACCESS

(No. B/1194) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the night clubs and discothèques, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of minors who have been allowed entry thereinto, despite the prohibition therefor, since January 2006 to date, indicating the measures taken to prevent the minors from being allowed access thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 2006 to date, there has been only one such case involving 45 minor students having access in night clubs.

Section 16 of the Child Protection Act makes it an offence for any person who causes or allows a minor to have access to premises in respect of which a licence has been issued for the sale of liquor, rum or compounded spirits for consumption on the premises, other than a restaurant or a hotel.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that the *Brigade des Mineurs*, the Police Family Protection Unit, CID, ADSU and local police carry out checks over night clubs during the course of regular patrols, to ensure that they are operating within the legal framework. Surprise checks are also carried out near night clubs by ERS, Regular Police, DSU, CID and ADSU.

As preventive measures, the police organises awareness campaigns throughout the island in schools, colleges, youth clubs and youth centres in order to sensitise the youth, parents and community on the problem of minors having access to night clubs. The *Brigade des Mineurs* also keep watch and vigilance near

night clubs, and whenever information or complaints are received to the effect that minors are allowed access in night clubs, the information is verified and surprise checks are carried out.

JARDIN DE LA COMPAGNIE & RUISSEAU DU POUCE – POLICE PATROLS

(No. B/1195) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the police patrols effected at night, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof effected, in the vicinity of the *Jardin de la Compagnie* and of the *Ruisseau du Pouce*, over the past six months, indicating -

- (a) the number of arrests effected, if any, and
- (b) if during the night of Friday 06 November 2009, between 1900 hours and midnight, any police patrol was effected and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

TEC – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/1196) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the post of Executive Director of the Tertiary Education Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission, information as to –

- (a) the names of the applicants, indicating their respective qualifications, research experience, distinctions and merits;
- (b) if one Dr. P. M. has been appointed as such, despite allegations of conflict of interest having been made against him, which has been the subject of an inquiry by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, and
- (c) if no other candidates were best suited for the post.

Reply: (The Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources): I am laying on the Table of the National Assembly the list of candidates who applied for the post of Executive Director, Tertiary Education Commission.

Dr. P. Mohadeb was appointed Executive Director, TEC as the offer made to Dr. R. Watkins, the first candidate on the short list did not materialise in view of exaggerated proposals made in respect of privileges and benefits. Consequently, the Selection Panel recommended that Dr. Mohadeb, the second candidate on the short list be offered appointment as Executive Director, TEC.

Due to various allegations made against Dr. Mohadeb, the TEC Board decided to set up an Independent Committee of Enquiry to look into the allegations. Accordingly, a 2-man Committee chaired by Prof V. P. Torul and consisting of Mr G. Gopee, Director, Management Audit Bureau (MAB) conducted an enquiry into the allegations and submitted their report on 15 October 2009. According to the findings of the Committee of Enquiry, the allegations made were unfounded. Consequently, TEC Board, at its meeting of 26 October 2009, recommended the appointment of Dr. P. Mohadeb as Executive Director of TEC.

In respect of part (b), the House may wish to be informed that my Ministry has not been formally informed by ICAC that it has been conducting an inquiry on allegations made against Dr. Mohadeb nor the stage it has reached.

Regarding part (c), the Selection Panel found only two candidates best suited for the post of Executive Director, TEC in order of priority as follows -

- (i) Dr. R. Watkins, and
- (ii) Dr. P. Mohadeb

and there were no other candidates on the short list.

The House may wish to be informed that they were the only ones to hold experience with regard to the management of the tertiary education sector.

MOUNT ORY - CREMATION GROUND – ACCESS ROAD

(No. B/1222) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if Government will consider the advisability of asphaltting the access road to the Mount Ory cremation ground as a temporary facility while awaiting decision to provide for an alternative cremation site and relative facilities to the inhabitants of the adjoining localities.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the access road is on a private land. We shall negotiate with the owner and seek his agreement to clean the access and to spread crusher run until a permanent solution is found.

CHAMOUNY VILLAGE – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/1223) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the football ground at the Chamouny village, he will state if Government will consider the upgrading thereof by –

- (a) installing lighting facilities;
- (b) renovating or erecting new seats, and
- (c) effecting fencing works around the football ground.

Reply: I am informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that maintenance works are presently being undertaken at Mare Tabac, Plaine Magnien, Surinam and Souillac football grounds. However, upgrading works at the Chamouny football ground will be considered at a later stage.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that fencing works at the football ground were carried out in 1994 by the National Development Unit.

LOCAL CINEMATOGRAPHIC PRODUCTIONS – PROMOTION

(No. B/1224) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Industry, Science and Research whether he will state his Ministry's policy in regard to the promotion and sustainability of local cinematographic productions.

Reply: I thank the hon. Member for her PQ as it gives me the opportunity, as Minister responsible for the Mauritius Film Development Corporation, to indicate to this House and the public at large, the policy of my Ministry with regard to the promotion and sustainability of the cinematographic productions.

MFDC was set up in 1986 to achieve the following objectives –

- (i) producing films;
- (ii) providing support to the development of a local film industry;
- (iii) promoting Mauritius as a film shooting destination, and
- (iv) capacity building.

Mauritius, with its exotic environment and its rich socio-cultural and biodiversity, talented and creative workforce and strategic location is an ideal location for the development of a local film industry.

Government has, since its mandate, adopted a new economic model to consolidate, expand and diversify the economic base of the country. In this context, Government has embarked on promoting development of new growth poles to enhance economic flexibility and buoyancy for sustainable growth.

The Mauritian film industry is one of the economic sectors that has been identified as having growth potential.

Across the world, the entertainment industry has contributed significantly towards socio-economic development. In the USA, it has emerged as the largest export industry. It offers tremendous employment opportunities in a wide range of activities such as directing, script-writing, dialogue writing, cinematography, lyrics and music, costume designing, art directing, choreography and so forth. In particular, opportunities are provided to small entrepreneurs in film servicing areas such as, hotel and catering, transport, make-up and hairstyle, sound and light, lab processing, graphic animation, amongst others.

Recognising the potential of this industry to boost our economic sectors and promote the development of new activities, Government has announced, in its Programme 2005-2010, the introduction of a new legislation on the cinema industry to encourage the emergence of a Mauritian film industry.

A first draft of this Bill has already been prepared and is being finalised with relevant stakeholders. The new legislation aims to overcome existing constraints and provide for a more conducive policy environment for creating, promoting and developing a film and film servicing industry in Mauritius through *inter alia*, capacity building, international collaborative initiatives and the development of a film culture in Mauritius.

The recent Budget presented by the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance brings continuity to our efforts to promote and sustain the film sector. Rs10 m. have been provided for the development of Mauritius as a location for film-making, dubbing and cartoon production. Also, the hosting of film festivals in Mauritius will no doubt enhance the reputation of Mauritius in the international film industry and, at the same time, contribute towards maintaining and enriching a film culture in Mauritius.

I want to assure the House and the hon. Member that every effort will be made towards the development of a modern, dynamic and vibrant film-making sector.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF CUREPIPE – PREMISES – RENTING

(No. B/1225) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the renting of the premises of the Municipal Council of Curepipe to social organisations, particularly the old-age groups, for the holding of activities such as balls and dancing parties, since January 2006 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to the –

- (a) number thereof, indicating their respective location, and
- (b) number of requests received, on a yearly basis, indicating the number thereof which have been acceded to.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipality of Curepipe that five municipal centres are being put at the disposal of social organisations and senior citizens free of charge for holding of activities such as balls and dancing parties. The locations of the five Municipal Centres are as follows –

- (i) Jaynarain Roy Multi-Purpose Complex, at Charles Regnaud Street, Eau Coulée;
- (ii) Dame Rosina Henrisson Multi-Purpose Complex, at Les Casernes, Curepipe;
- (iii) Residence Joachim Multi-Purpose Complex, at Cité Joachim, Forest Side;
- (iv) Malherbes Municipal Centre, at Résidence Malherbes A, Curepipe, and
- (v) Mangalkhan Municipal Centre, at Residence Mangalkhan, Floreal

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the number of requests received on a yearly basis varies from 40 to 50 and same are entertained as far as possible depending on the availability of the municipal centres.

LA BRASSERIE – DRAIN WORKS

(No. B/1226) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the drains at La Brasserie, he will state if any recent drain

works have been carried out, following the heavy rainfalls during the first week of November this year, and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Reply (The Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands): I am informed by the Municipality of Curepipe that drain works at La Brasserie will be completed by the end of this month.

CITÉ LA CURE – WATER & ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

(No. B/1227) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the twenty families living at Cité La Cure, behind the NHDC Housing Estate, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board and the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand as to their connection for water and electricity supply.

Reply: My Ministry has written to the Ministry of Housing and Lands to enquire about the status of the twenty (20) families in question. Once this issue is resolved, the needful will be done.

ORNAMENTAL FISHES & DOMESTIC BIRDS – IMPORTATION - BAN

(No. B/1228) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to ornamental fishes and domestic birds, he will state the varieties thereof which have been banned from importation, over the past five years, indicating the reasons therefor.

Reply: I am informed, in regard to ornamental fishes, that the importation of three species has been banned as follows -

- (i) catfish species as from 2006 as the species can easily breed in the wild and disturb the riverine ecosystem through predation and species displacement.
- (ii) the “koi” species as from March this year following the ban imposed by the European Communities in view of shortcomings in the production chain of the ornamental fish in Malaysia which may cause the spread of infections and diseases to other fishes, and
- (iii) eels species as from September this year in order to protect the local species of eels given that imported eels are invasive and may predate on certain species found in our rivers.

With regard to importation of domestic birds, there has been no ban on any variety during the past 5 years except for a temporary ban in 2003 when restriction was imposed on psittacine birds in the context of the spread of Avian Flu throughout Asia, Europe and Africa.

“SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME” – PUBLIC AWARENESS

(No. B/1229) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the “Shaken Baby Syndrome” he will state the steps taken by his Ministry to create public awareness in relation thereto.

Reply: With regard to the “Shaken Baby Syndrome”, a multisectoral approach is adopted and a series of measures have been initiated by my Ministry and other stakeholders to create public awareness thereon. These measures include

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- (i) Continuous Medical and Nursing Education sessions for all doctors, nurses and medical social workers;
- (ii) Training, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources to pre-primary school teachers by Paediatricians, and

- (iii) Sensitisation campaigns by the Child Development Unit in collaboration with the National Children's Council to educate parents on risks that children may encounter when battered.

I wish to thank the hon. Member for having put this question. Indeed I acknowledge that the "Shaken Baby Syndrome" is not well-known to the public as it is a rare occurrence. This Syndrome can be caused by -

- (a) shaking violently the baby in anger, and
 (b) innocently tossing the baby in a playful manner.

A Technical Committee, chaired by the Director Health Services and comprising all Consultants (Paediatrician), the Principal Medical Social Worker and the Principal Health Information, Education and Communication Officer has been set up for the prevention and education of all those involved in the caring of children including baby-sitters and kindergarten carers. Appropriate posters and pamphlets and media campaigns will be designed by the Committee.

LE BOUCHON PUBLIC BEACH – UPGRADING WORKS

(No. B/1230) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he has received any complaint in relation to the authorisation given by the Beach Authority for certain works to be undertaken at the beach of Le Bouchon, and, if so, will he state if Government proposes to take actions in regard thereto.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that no complaint whatsoever has been received in respect of the authorisation granted by the Beach Authority for certain upgrading works at Le Bouchon public beach.

HARRY LATOUR FOOTBALL GROUND – STANDS AND LIGHTING FACILITIES

(No. B/1231) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Harry Latour football ground in Mahebourg, he will state the -

- (a) measures taken to improve the sitting arrangements of the spectators, and
 (b) time frame to have lighting facilities installed thereat.

Reply: I am informed that the stands at Harry Latour Stadium were pulled down in 2004 because they were in a deplorable state and did not conform to security requirements. A first cost estimate for the construction of new stands was submitted by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Public Infrastructure Division) in 2005 and a second one in 2007. However, the project was kept in abeyance due to unavailability of funds. An amount of Rs15 m. has now been earmarked for this project in our budget estimates for year 2012. The drawings submitted by the MPI have already been approved by my Ministry.

As regards lighting facilities, I have been informed that the stadium is already provided with such facilities. In fact, a contract for the repairs and upgrading of electrical installations was awarded to Magnet Energise Ltd in October 2007. The works were completed in April 2008 and the testing and commissioning was successfully carried out in May 2008.

WIND FARM & HYDROPOWER PROJECTS - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/1232) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the implementation of the wind farm project at Bigara, the hydropower projects at the La Nicolière and the Midlands Dams, the grid code to enable the small power producers to integrate the power and the generation system and the replacement of the traffic lights with LED signals, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The status of the projects mentioned by the hon. Member is as follows -

(i) Bigara Wind Park

CRISIL Risk and Infrastructure Solutions Ltd of India, the Transaction Advisor appointed for the implementation of the project on a BOO Scheme under Public Private Partnership Act is presently carrying out the feasibility study. The report will be available by the end of this month. Based on preliminary assessment of wind data, Curepipe Point, South of Bigara, has been identified as a most suitable site for the setting up of a wind farm of 25 MW.

(ii) Hydro power project at Nicolière and the Midlands Dam

The construction of Nicolière hydro power project of capacity 375 KW is ongoing and the plant will be commissioned in February

2010. As regards the hydro power plant at Midlands Dam, the procurement process is ongoing.

(iii) Grid Code

Under the UNDP technical assistance, the consultancy firm, EA Energy Analyses, has already prepared a grid code based on international practice but customised to our local context. The code comprises technical criteria and requirements for standardised procedures for small power producers, with renewable energy installations less than 50 KW, for interconnection with the CEB's network. The Consultant is now preparing the feed-in-tariff and the financial support scheme and is expected to submit his report by the end of this month. As announced in the Budget Speech, the feed-in tariff and any financial support scheme would be implemented early next year.

(iv) Traffic Lights with LED signals

The contract for the supply and installation of Light Emission Diode for traffic lights has been awarded by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping on 31 August 2009 with a deadline for delivery by 31 January 2010. The replacement works will last for one year. The cost amounting to about Rs13 m. will be met by the Maurice Ile Durable Fund.

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS - COMPACT FLUORESCENT LAMPS

(No. B/1233) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the project for the replacement of conventional lighting in public buildings, schools and hospitals by economic compact fluorescent lighting systems, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: Electrical works including lighting in Government buildings are carried out by the Energy Services Division of my Ministry.

Most Government buildings are provided with fluorescent tube fittings, which are already low energy consuming.

This year, the Maurice Ile Durable Fund financed the replacement of 3,200 conventional lamps by Compact Fluorescent Lamps in Government buildings. 2,145 such lamps have already been replaced and the exercise will be completed by mid December.

150 lamps have been replaced at the Government Centre and Treasury building. With a view to reducing the electricity consumption of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, the Energy Services Division has installed more efficient lighting systems in offices occupied by the Ministry at IVTB building.

In the case of new Government buildings and new electrical installations, the Energy Services Division is using T5 fluorescent tubes, which are also energy efficient.

SOLAR WATER HEATER PROJECT

(No. B/1234) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether he will state if the Solar Water Heater Project will be extended.

Reply: As announced by my colleague the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, a provision of Rs 250 m. is being made in the 2010 Budget for the second phase of the Solar Water Heater Scheme, under which a grant of Rs 5,000 will be made to each household for the purchase of a solar water heater.

The new programme will be open to registered suppliers who meet the set standards. I wish to inform the House that the Mauritius Standards Bureau will be prescribing the standards for solar water heaters shortly.

The criteria for eligibility to the grant will also be reviewed.

Accordingly, the guidelines and procedures for the Scheme are being prepared by my Ministry and will be made public in January 2010.

BUS OPERATORS - GRANT

(No. B/1235) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the allocation of grants in respect of the Bus Modernisation Programme to enable the bus operators renew their fleet, at no extra

cost, with new generation of environmentally friendly buses, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: With a view to enabling bus companies and other bus operators to acquire modern buses, Government decided to grant a financial support to them for the purposes of acquiring new generation buses which are -

- (i) environmentally friendly with reduced emissions;
- (ii) more comfortable, and
- (iii) with low floors to speed and facilitate boarding,
especially for the elderly and handicapped.

It was decided that the subsidy would be financed by a grant from MID Fund and the proceeds from an increase in road tax and it is expected that gradually the fleet would be renewed.

The services of a consultant were sought to prepare the specifications of the buses best suited to the local conditions, to finalise the relevant tender documents, evaluate tenders, advise on training needs and capacity building for the maintenance of the buses and also advise on any structural adjustments, if necessary, amongst others. The consultancy services contract has been awarded to Transit Resource Centre.

Draft specifications have been submitted by the consultant. Another mission will be fielded to Mauritius to gather information in order to complete the exercise. A Technical Committee at the level of my Ministry is closely following up the matter.

Once the specifications would have been determined and prices of the buses known, the quantum of the grant would be worked out and bus operators would be requested to purchase buses strictly according to these specifications.

ALFRED GELLÉ STREET, CITÉ MARTIAL – LANE - TARRING

(No. B/1236) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware of the bad state of the lane, found adjacent to the residence of one Mr M. R. N., at J 40, Alfred Gellé Street, Cité Martial, Port Louis, and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if it will consider -

- (a) cleaning same and remove the wastes found thereat;
- (b) reinstating and tarring same, and
- (c) installing street lanterns thereat.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipality of Port Louis that the lane found adjacent to the residence of MR M.R.N. at J 40, Alfred Gellée Street, Cité Martial and situated between two blocks of the housing estates is actually untarred.

I am further informed that the wastes from the housing blocks within the housing estates are collected on a regular basis.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the lane will be tarred at the beginning of the next financial year.

As far as part (c) of the question is concerned, I am informed that one street lantern will be fixed along the lane in a fortnight due to the fact that no electric pole is available thereat. Arrangement is being made for the putting up of an electric pole, in the first instance.

LA MARIE TREATMENT PLANT - TREATMENT PLANT SUPERINTENDENT

(No. B/1238) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the La Marie Treatment Plant, he will state if a Treatment Plant Superintendent is in post thereat and, if so, since when and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the CA that a Technical Officer is presently replacing the substantive holder of the post of Treatment Plant Superintendent at La Marie.

I am also informing that the substantive holder of the post of Treatment Plant Superintendent, who was in post at La Marie Treatment Plant up to 25 November 2007, has been assigned the duties of officer-in-charge of the Stores Section since 26 November 2007 following the retirement of the Superintendent Purchasing and Supply.

Presently, CWA is in the process of recruiting a Manager Procurement and Supply. Consequently, the officer-in-charge stores will revert to his substantive post of Treatment Plant Superintendent.

CHILDREN - CONTESTS - ORGANISATION

(No. B/1239) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, she is aware of any beauty or other contests organised for children and, if so, will she state the measures taken by her Ministry to protect these children.

Reply: I have been informed that a private organisation namely, the Golden Light Ltd, is proposing to hold a competition for the election of a "*Mini Princesse et Prince de Maurice*" among children aged between 7 to 10 years. According to the organisers, this competition is meant to enable children to demonstrate their skills and talents.

My Ministry is investigating into the organisation of this event and enquiring on the credentials and intent of the organisers. Pending the determination of the inquiry, I have requested the suspension of the event.

I wish to inform the House that I have also requested the Ombudsperson for Children to initiate any action as appropriate at her end.

Section 13 (2) of the Child Protection Act 1994 stipulates that –

“Any person who in an advertisement exploits a child by using him in such a way as is likely to cause him or any child watching him reactions which are contrary to morality or detrimental to psychological development shall be deemed to expose a child to harm”.

I wish to reassure the House that any contest involving children which is in breach with the provisions of the Child Protection Act and the Convention on the Rights of the Child will not be allowed.

CWA – SHIFT SYSTEM

(No. B/1240) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the shift system implemented by the Central Water Authority since April 2009, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to if Technical Assistants, Treatment Plant Operators and other Officers have made any complaint in regard thereto and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken, if any.

Reply: I am informed by the CWA that the Technical Assistants posted at La Marie and La Nicolière Treatment Plants have made complaints regarding the new shift system introduced by the CWA.

Following discussions management of CWA had with them, the Technical Assistants of La Marie Treatment Plant agreed to work according to the new shift system, but have made a request for an allowance to be paid to them. The request is being considered by the CWA.

With regard to the Technical Assistants of La Nicolière Treatment Plant, I am informed that their complaint was lodged at the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment. Following a meeting convened by the above Ministry between the CWA and the Technical Assistants, the shift system has been slightly amended and the Technical Assistants have agreed to work according to the new amended hours of work.

L'ESCALIER BRANCH ROAD, QUARTIER MILITAIRE - UPGRADING

(No. B/1241) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the l'Escalier Branch Road at l'Espérance, Quartier Militaire, he will state if Government will consider the advisability for the enlarging and upgrading thereof, in view of its being an important link road between l'Espérance, Camp Thorel and Nouvelle Découverte.

Reply (The Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping): The Nouvelle Découverte Road (B99) commonly known as L'Escalier Branch Road is a link road of 10.9 kms between Nouvelle Découverte and L'Esperance.

The volume of traffic does not warrant enlargement of the road at present. However, consideration will be given to improve the existing road during the next financial year.

CHEMIN LE POUCE, ST. PIERRE – HEALTH TRACK

(No. B/1242) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the project for the setting up of a health track near chemin Le Pouce, St Pierre, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed that the proposed site near Chemin Le Pouce, St Pierre is not suitable for the setting up of a health track for the following reasons -

- (i) the existing track is narrow and is frequently being used as an access road up to the mountain by the inhabitants of the locality, tourists, officers of the Forestry Division, planters and farmers;
- (ii) a health track on this site would be easily damaged by vehicles using this access and also constitute a real danger for the users, and
- (iii) there is no space available for parking purposes over there.