



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION
TUESDAY 27 JULY 2010**

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THE CABINET**(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)**

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	<i>Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications</i>
Dr. the Hon. Ahmed Rashid Beebeejaun, GCSK, FRCP	<i>Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities</i>
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	<i>Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment</i>
Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	<i>Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development</i>
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo	<i>Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping</i>
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell	<i>Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade</i>
Dr. the Hon. Abu Twalib Kasenally, FRCS	<i>Minister of Housing and Lands</i>
Hon. Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo, GOSK	<i>Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare</i>
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha	<i>Minister of Tourism and Leisure</i>
Dr. the Hon. Vasant Kumar Bunwaree	<i>Minister of Education and Human Resources</i>
Hon. Satya Veryash Faugoo	<i>Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security</i>
Hon. Showkutally Soodhun	<i>Minister of Industry and Commerce</i>
Hon. Devanand Virahsawmy, GOSK	<i>Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development</i>
Dr. the Hon. Rajeshwar Jeetah	<i>Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology</i>
Hon. Satyaprakash Ritoo	<i>Minister of Youth and Sports</i>
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	<i>Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions</i>
Hon. Louis Hervé Aimée	<i>Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands</i>
Hon. Mrs Santi Bai Hanoomanjee	<i>Minister of Health and Quality of Life</i>
Hon. Mookhesswur Choonee	<i>Minister of Arts and Culture</i>
Hon. Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum	<i>Minister of Information and Communication Technology</i>
Hon. Louis Joseph Von-Mally, GOSK	<i>Minister of Fisheries and Rodrigues</i>
Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	<i>Minister of Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms</i>
Hon Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed	<i>Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment</i>
Hon Yatindra Nath Varma	<i>Attorney General</i>
Hon John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	<i>Minister of Business, Enterprise, Cooperatives and Consumer Protection</i>

*Members**Members*

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

<i>Mr Speaker</i>	Purryag, Hon. Rajkeswur, GCSK, GOSK
<i>Deputy Speaker</i>	Roopun, Hon. Prithvirajsing
<i>Deputy Chairman of Committees</i>	Hossen, Hon. Abdullah Hafeez
<i>Clerk of the National Assembly</i>	Dowlutta, Mr R. Ranjit
<i>Deputy Clerk</i>	Lotun, Mrs B. Safeena
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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 9 of 2010

Sitting of Tuesday 27 July 2010

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT**FAKEEMEEAH, HON. CEHL MOHAMAD – POLICE CUSTODY**

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have been informed by the Police that the hon. Fakeemeeah Cehl Mohamad has been arrested on a criminal charge of abducting child today and is presently in Police custody. I am laying a copy of the correspondence from the Police on the Table.

PAPERS LAID

The Ag. Prime Minister: Sir, the Papers have been laid on the Table –

A. Office of Mr Speaker –

Correspondence from the Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime), Central Criminal Investigation Department – Arrest - Honourable Cehl Mohamad Fakeemeeah (In original).

B. Prime Minister's Office –

The Annual Reports of the Prime Minister's Relief and Support Fund for the years ended 30 June 2008 and 30 June 2009.

C. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

- (a) The Digest of Business Activity Statistics for the Financial Year 2008-2009.
- (b) The Digest of Industrial Statistics 2008.
- (c) Mauritius in Figures 2009.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

CEB – BLACKOUT – 18 JULY 2010

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Ag. Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the blackout which occurred on Sunday 18 July last, across the country, and with a view to avoiding any future risk of a shortfall in electricity supply, he will -

- (a) state where matters stand concerning the -
 - (i) CT power project;
 - (ii) Gamma Covanta project;
 - (iii) invitation for a Request for Expression of Interest in 2009 for the setting-up of a 100 MW power plant on a Build Operate Own scheme, based on any technology, and
- (b) obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to where matters stand in relation to the purchase of four additional 15 MW engines, indicating the estimated cost and tendering procedures followed.

The Ag. Prime Minister (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that the blackout which occurred at about 14.45 hours on Sunday 18 July 2010 was caused by a through wall bushing failure at Dumas substation and was in no way related to a shortfall in generation capacity of the CEB. In fact, on Sundays, demand for electricity is generally much lower than on other days of the week.

As a result of the fault at Dumas substation, the protection system isolated the line between Dumas and St Louis substations. Given that the line was carrying a major part of the transmitted power at that time, this resulted in a drop in frequency on the grid. This triggered a cascade effect of lines and generator tripping of the whole system, except for Fort George, which kept supplying part of Port Louis, that is, the Caudan area, through a dedicated 22 KV line.

The House may wish to note that before the blackout, electricity demand was about 200 MW and this was supplied as follows -

Fort George - 44.3 MW

CTBV	-	30.0 MW
CTDS	-	29.1 MW
CTSAV	-	58.5 MW
Beau Champ	-	18.8 MW
FUEL	-	11.5 MW

Mr Speaker, Sir, restoration of supply started at 15.00 hours and was completed within one hour at 16.00 hours. The restoration process was carried out solely by putting on grid CEB production units, namely the gas turbines at Nicolay, St Louis and Champagne power stations.

Because of the nature of the technology used by Independent Power Producers', these units only came back on the grid after 18.00 hours on Sunday.

As regards remedial action being taken, a Contingency Plan has already been put in place by the Central Electricity Board pending the replacement of all through bushings, which represents a potential threat of breakdown. The House may wish to note that these bushings were installed between 2000 and 2005.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, the capacity expansion plan for the period 2006-2013 included a coal fired plant at Pointe aux Caves. This site was chosen by the Consultant K&M Engineering of USA in 2002 as the best potential site for a coal fired power station. The CEB signed the Power Purchase Agreement with CT Power in December 2008, subject – and I repeat, subject - to the EIA licence being obtained.

However, the EIA licence is still under examination by the EIA Committee, which had to hire the services of a Consultant to advise on the EIA application.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the report of the Consultant appointed by the Ministry of Environment was examined by the EIA Committee on Friday 03 July 2009. The promoter was required to carry out further studies on the socio-economic assessment, Traffic Impact Assessment, risk assessment on blasting works at sea, new outfall to be supplemented by marine surveys and hydro dynamic modelling to assess the impacts of proposed structures at sea. The additional reports were submitted in June 2010 and opened by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development for public comments on 21 July 2010. The application is still being processed at the level of the Ministry of Environment.

Besides the issue of EIA licence, one private landowner, namely, Camp Fouquereaux Ltd, has objected to the grant of way leave for the transmission lines from the power plant to La

Chaumière substation. The matter is before the Supreme Court and the next hearing of the case is scheduled on 16 October 2010.

For the EIA licence, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development will expedite matters. As regards the way leave for transmission lines, CEB's legal adviser would move for an early hearing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the Gamma Covanta Waste to Energy project, negotiations with CEB on the Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement has not yet been concluded. In addition, the following agreements have to be signed –

- (i) a Waste Supply Agreement between the Ministry of Local Government and the promoter, and
- (ii) a Project Implementation Agreement between my Ministry and the promoter to guarantee all payment obligations of the Ministry of Local Government, CEB and MID Fund.

A negotiating panel chaired by a representative of the Attorney General's Office and comprising representatives of the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and my Ministry has been set up to negotiate the Project Implementation Agreement. However, discussions have been put on hold at the request of the promoter since December last. I am advised that discussions will resume soon.

On 13 December 2007, the grant of the EIA licence was challenged and the matter is still under consideration at the Environment Appeal Tribunal. I am informed that the proceedings at the level of the Tribunal are ongoing and the next hearing is scheduled for 09 August 2010.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the third part, an Expression of Interest for the setting up of a 100MW power plant on a Build, Own, Operate scheme based on any technology was launched on 04 February 2009.

By the closing date of 20 February 2009, 25 applications were received out of which ten were from local promoters. The proposed technologies ranged from coal, bagasse, heavy fuel oil, wind and solar.

Given the range of technologies proposed by the potential bidders and especially the complexity of matching the technologies proposed with the profile of electricity demand in the country, the International Finance Corporation advised that a pre-feasibility study be carried out.

For that purpose, a power sector expert was appointed by my Ministry to conduct the pre-feasibility study. The expert submitted his final report in February 2010. The Consultant has established that the least cost technology for base load plant to meet future demand is the pulverised coal plant option.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the current planning strategy of the CEB, there is no risk of any power shortage up to 2016. This takes into account current ongoing projects at Fort Victoria Power Station as well as the CT Power Project.

Mr Speaker Sir, regarding part (b) of the question, on the Fort Victoria Extension, following the Mott MacDonald report of 2005, the proposal for the installation of 4x15 MW diesel engines at Fort Victoria was approved by the CEB in August 2009. Mott McDonald estimated the re-development project at Euro 90.8 m. (around MUR 4.3 billion). This estimate is based on the prices quoted during recent tendering exercise for Fort Victoria Re-development Phase I Project and current market price levels.

The four new engines are expected to be commissioned in late 2011/early 2012. This will help the CEB to meet the anticipated peak power demand in subsequent years. With the commissioning of these new engines, the old Mirrlees at the Fort Victoria power station and Pielstick engines at the St Louis power station will be decommissioned as they have already exceeded their economic life.

As regards tender procedures, Mr Speaker, Sir, consultancy services for Fort Victoria Redevelopment Phase II was sought from Mott McDonald for the provision of assistance on the following two (2) assignments -

- Assignment 1: Consultancy for the preparation and launching of tender documents, evaluation of bids, negotiations up to award of contract.
- Assignment 2: Site Supervision (civil and electro-mechanical installation works) during construction phase, performance and acceptance tests during commissioning.

The tender documents for the engineering procurement and construction contract were prepared and issued under the supervision of the Central Procurement Board in January 2010. The tender was floated in April 2010. The closing date for submission of tenders is 28 July 2010. The evaluation will then be carried out by the Central Procurement Board. This exercise

is expected to be completed by the end of August and the contract is expected to be awarded in September. The first two units are expected to be commissioned in December 2011 and the next two in March 2012.

In parallel, a tendering exercise for the financing of the project is in progress. Commercial offers have been received. CEB has requested for Suppliers Credit in the tender. The final decision regarding the financing of the project will be taken in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the Ag. Prime Minister saying that the blackout of last Sunday the 18th was in no way related to a problem of supply and demand for electricity. Can I ask him whether he is aware that in statements that were produced in the press on the following Tuesday, that is, the 20th, the new PRO of the CEB - the political appointee - gave clearly the impression to the contrary, that it was linked to such a problem which it was not, I agree, but he gave the impression that it was and that, therefore, the CEB was rushing forward with four new engines? Is he aware of that and has the PRO been called to order? Why has not the population been informed?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are suffering from, what I call, newspaper gossip. Newspapers publish whatever they want and they certainly do not publish what they hear and I am assured that at no time the person in question has mentioned about power failures. What he mentioned was that there was tripping at Dumas and the journalist used his fertile imagination and I would caution my friends as we all know this journalist. He uses the information and distorts it and fabricates news and puts it as fact. It is not - and I repeat, it is not - a statement emanating from any member of the CEB, whether he is a *porte-parole* or whatever he is.

Mr Bérenger: I also heard the Ag. Prime Minister say that there is not risk of a supply problem in the future. May I be allowed to remind him that, on 26 May, this is what he said in Parliament here, when replying to the Parliamentary Question, I quote -

“The capacity deficit, would, in the absence of Fort Victoria project be of the order of 11 MW and 30 MW in 2009 and 2010 respectively. The capacity deficit may further deteriorate in view of the ageing of the existing generation park. The coming into operation of the two additional units at Fort Victoria will address the issue of capacity deficit in 2010.”

He already pointed out that we are already in the danger zone, that there was, as he said, capacity deficit. Will the Ag. Prime Minister agree that the situation has deteriorated further and will he agree with me that the real problem at the CEB is base load, that is, supplying electricity without the use of engines that are put to work at peak or semi-peak periods only? Those two engines that are being installed and the four new that are going to be purchased are for semi-load, not base load. Will he agree with me that we have a serious problem as far as base load is concerned and that we will run into trouble if the CT power and Gamma Covanta projects do not go ahead?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the situation has not deteriorated and I maintain it. We have been talking about *la corde raide*, about danger zone and so on for years. It is 15 years. I have been in this Assembly since 1995 and we heard the same questions, the same comments from the hon. Leader of the Opposition at different times. We would have been short if we had not installed these two 15 MW at Fort Victoria, which is operational this year, and if we had not made provision for four 15 MW for next year and the year after in two phases - Phase I : two 15 MW, and Phase II : two 15 MW. This is for semi-base load. Regarding the base load, we have enough base load at the moment and we will have more with the coal power plant. So, I don't see the problem. But, I can assure the House that there will be no shortages.

Mr Bérenger: The Ag. Prime Minister tells us that there is no problem. But there are problems, the CEB purchased the two engines being installed, had to resort to emergency tendering procedures and that cost a lot of extra millions to the country and to the consumers. Will he agree with that? In fact, that is what took place.

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am informed that the engines at Fort Victoria can be used as base load as well as semi-base load. But, that's not the issue. The issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to keep...

(Interruptions)

No, it is not a question of being more expensive! Quite the reverse! It will be cheaper. I will give the hon. Leader of the Opposition the figures when it comes up.

(Interruptions)

Yes, he knows that, as well as I do! The cheapest at the moment, unfortunately, is coal; the next cheapest is oil and after that it is bagasse, wind and solar. We all know that; we keep repeating it, and yet we have every time to hammer it home. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is all about planning. We

can say something today, the emergency can arise, things can change, power demand can increase or decrease. We have to keep adjusting as we go along and we are adjusting not only on the question of power demand, but also on the demand side. We have been working on solar water heater, on CFL lamps. We should not be sceptical about it, we made an effort. We have sold a million CFL lamps and it has minimised the increase in power consumption by 15 MW. I replied to that last year. The figures are there. We must not decry every effort that we do and sort of dismiss it. We should look at it dispassionately. The CFL is a success; the solar water heater has contributed to our effort to save energy. It is not a question of this year or next year, it is a question of the next 10, 15, 20 years of what we should do and we all know that new technologies are coming in - expensive, difficult to master, but we are doing it. So, we must not say that nothing is happening and we are not preparing. We are preparing for the future, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: If I can move on to the CT power, in fact, what the consultant requested was a supplementary EIA, which means that the first EIA was not satisfactory at all - the same thing at the cement factory. A second supplementary EIA was requested. It was put in and it is being subject to public comment. We will see. On 30 May 2009 replying to a PNQ, the Ag. Prime Minister said, concerning the CT power –

“The Prime Minister has asked Professor Joël de Rosnay for his advice on these two projects – that is, CT power and Gamma Covanta.”

And he added –

“For the CT power, we may have objections. I’ll wait for Professor Joël de Rosnay. He has expressed his views and I hope he will come and he will look at it and he will give his advice. I can assure the House that we will go by his advice.”

Can I know from the Ag. Prime Minister whether the advice of Professor Joël de Rosnay has indeed been sought and whether he has given his advice and, if yes, what advice he has put in?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Professor Joël de Rosnay is Adviser to the Prime Minister. He advises the Prime Minister, not the CEB or my Ministry about what to do. We cannot be better than what the state-of-the-art technology is today. We can talk about ten

years from now, about carbon capture, about all these things that we talked last time, but let's come down to earth, Mr Speaker, Sir. The fact, today, is that we are getting the state-of-the-art technology for the next power plant and this will include not only minimising carbon dioxide on burning coal with more efficiency, but also how we dispose of the ash. And the House may wish to note and I'll circulate it ...

(Interruptions)

This is the ash that has been disposed of at the moment.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is no need to get excited.

The Ag. Prime Minister: It is important. It is not only a question of carbon dioxide emission or of climate change, it is also what we do on earth, what we do here. I'll circulate it and the House will know that the ash that is being produced today from 600,000 tonnes of coal that the IPPs are using is being spread around with no control whatsoever.

Mr Bérenger: I have heard the advice of the Ag. Prime Minister. But is there any reason why we are not being told what has been the advice of Professor Joël de Rosnay on these two projects?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I have said that he is the Adviser to the Prime Minister and the advice is to use the state-of-the-art technology, making sure that we have the latest ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: If I can move on to the Gamma Covanta, we have been informed - if I heard him correctly - by the Ag. Prime Minister that, first, the project was put on hold and then, according to his information, it will get going again soon. Can we know why it has been put on hold?

The Ag. Prime Minister: It was on the request of the Gamma Covanta itself, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think they had other projects on line.

Mr Bérenger: Can the Ag. Prime Minister believe that indeed that project is still on and, if yes, what is the amount of Megawatts that it is supposed to produce? Is it the original 20 or has it come down drastically?

The Ag. Prime Minister: It can vary between 20 and a lower figure which has been quoted at seven, depending on the calorific value of the waste, but my impression is that it will be nearer 20 than seven.

Mr Bérenger: I will refer now to the Request for Expression of Interest in setting up the 100 MW power plant on a Build, Own, Operate scheme based on any technology. I heard the hon. Ag. Prime Minister saying that we have received 25 proposals. Can I know the name of the power expert whose services has been used?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I'll communicate it later.

Mr Bérenger: On whose advice was that expert chosen?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already given the information to the House. There was a High-Powered Committee set up at the Prime Minister's Office with different stakeholders to look at future developments in the power sector. The expert is Mr Shahid Hafeez Ahmed from Pakistan.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I have a copy of the final pre-feasibility study prepared by that expert?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Yes, of course.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the Ag. Prime Minister saying that bagasse is part of some proposals. Can we have the details - bagasse with coal, in what proportion and whether that proposal involving bagasse was made by a local promoter?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the previous question, I can confirm that Mr Shahid Hafeez Ahmed...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is so much murmuring.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Shahid Hafeez Ahmed of Pakistan was chosen from a short list obtained from IFC. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Expression of Interest came from different sources, including coal and bagasse. For the information of the House, I think I would better, once and for all, spell out and say what is the state of affairs regarding coal and bagasse. I think it will be fair. Mr Speaker, Sir, it will take about five minutes to go through.

Mr Speaker: But if the hon. Ag. Prime Minister will take five minutes, time will be over. He can circulate whatever information has been sought.

The Ag. Prime Minister: What I have to say is that today we are burning 600,000 tonnes of coal; most of it to supplement the Bagasse/Coal Energy Project. We are using 1.5 million tonnes of bagasse. Unfortunately, we are using most of that coal inefficiently at low bar pressure, at low temperature, compared with what the coal plant at Pointe aux Caves is using.

So, there is a question of efficiency. We are burning more coal, we are burning it in a ratio of 66% to 33%, to 2:1, and if we maximise the use of bagasse again, we are going to need another 300,000 tonnes of coal to burn more efficiently this bagasse. If we want to maximise the efficient use of bagasse for the remaining supply, we will have to use twice the amount of coal on present procedures. So, let's not make any mistake and the coal will be burnt at lower efficiency.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, therefore, some of those 25 proposals involve renewable energy and it is Government's declared policy to use as much renewable energy as possible. Therefore, can I take this opportunity to ask the Ag. Prime Minister why has the regulator still not been set up? Without an independent regulator, there will be no real renewal energy developments. Is Government thinking of setting up, as it exists in India, a renewal energy development agency?

The Ag. Prime Minister: We'll come to that as we go along, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Chairperson of the Utility Regulatory Authority has been designated; we are looking for the other members and we should imminently do it. Having said that, we do not have to wait for a regulator to have...

Mr Speaker: The question is simple.

The Ag. Prime Minister: We do not have to wait. We are going ahead with that.

Mr Speaker: I know that. Time is running out!

The Ag. Prime Minister: We have three wind projects.

Mr Bérenger: On the last question, that is, the purchase – if I heard the Ag. Prime Minister – to the value of some Rs4 billion of four additional new engines, will the Ag. Prime Minister agree that this is a lot of money? It is very, very expensive. Rs4 billion! Will he give the guarantee that unlike last time, the CEB will not resort to emergency tender procedures?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already explained. The tender procedures are ongoing. There will be no emergency. It is well planned and it is on course.

Mr Bérenger: Last time also the tender procedures were normal and then, at the end of the procedure, emergency procedures were resorted to.

Mr Speaker: This time, no.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a completely different matter. It became an emergency because it took so long at different stages in the process. This time it will not.

Mr Speaker: One question from hon. Bhagwan and then we'll go back to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Bhagwan: The Ag. Prime Minister stated that it is all about planning. Can I ask him whether he is satisfied, as Minister responsible for energy, on the way maintenance planning is done in different sectors of the CEB, be it generation, transmission, distribution and even on the poles? I consider that there is a problem of planning and this is one of the causes of failures.

Mr Speaker: The question has been put whether planning is done properly.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the point is well taken. We have been talking about generation all the time. We should look at transmission and distribution as well, and we are.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the recent fault at the Dumas switching station and the Contingency Plan which is being put in place, can the Ag. Prime Minister confirm to the House that the CEB is not in a position right now to guarantee reliability of supply to its consumers? The reason being that we are standing on one leg with regard to three major power stations, that is, the Fort George, the St. Louis and the Belle Vue power station?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I can assure the House that all precautions are being taken, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in one of his answers, the hon. Ag. Prime Minister mentioned about the coal ash that is being disposed of. May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether these ashes that are being disposed of are against the EIA that had been signed by the IPPs because this is very dangerous for our *nappes phréatiques* and, if these are against the EIA, are measures going to be taken?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, having been made aware of the situation existing there, I am sending it to the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development to take proper action.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, after all what we have heard, will not the hon. Ag. Prime Minister agree with me that the best thing to do – and urgently – would be to leave the CT Power Project and the Covanta/Gamma Project behind us and have the Government, the CEB and the

sugar industry put their heads together to see urgently how to produce some 100 MW of additional base load capacity?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the independent power producers, the House will remember that there was a review of the existing PPA's by a consultant proposed by MSPA. I was asked this question by hon. Lesjongard recently. In the end, the MSPA did not agree to the conclusion of the consultant and this has held up matters. But, at some time, when things are back on the discussion table, we'll look into it.

Mr Speaker: Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications. Hon. Mrs. Labelle!

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU HOSPITAL - DETAINEE B. L. – DEATH

(No. 1B/313) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to detainee B. L. who died a few hours after his admission to the Intensive Care Unit of the Jawaharlal Nehru hospital on 14 May 2010, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to –

- (a) when he started complaining of health problems, and
- (b) the treatment which was administered to him prior to his admission to hospital.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that detainee B. L., aged 38 years, was admitted to the Beau Bassin Prison on 17 April 2008. He was treated twice for dental problems on 18 May 2008 and 19 January 2009. From that last date up to 04 May 2010, there were no health complaints from the detainee.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that on 05 May 2010, the detainee complained of breathlessness and pain in the chest region and was admitted to the Beau Bassin Prison hospital ward. He was examined by the Prison Medical Officer who prescribed analgesic tablets, anti-inflammatory suppository and he was discharged the next day, which is 06 May.

On 08 May, the detainee was re-admitted to the prison ward as he was complaining of pain in the right knee following a fall. Anti-inflammatory treatment was prescribed and he was put under observation.

On 09 May, the condition of the detainee was found to be stable.

On 10 May, the Prison Medical Officer referred him for an X-ray at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital to exclude any bone injury. No bone injury was revealed by the X-ray results.

On 11 May, antibiotic was prescribed to him by the Prison Medical Officer as he complained of a burst abscess in his right finger. As he was also complaining of spitting blood, his sputum was sent for laboratory test, I gather, for tuberculosis. The results received on 14 May showed no abnormality.

On 12 May, he was discharged from the Beau Bassin Prison hospital about noon, but was re-admitted in the afternoon at about 16.15 hours complaining of vertigo. Upon the advice of the Prison Medical Officer, he was put under observation once again and vitamins were also prescribed.

On 13 May, the patient complained of general weakness. Upon examination by the Prison Medical Officer no clinical abnormality was found. I gather from this no clinical abnormality, blood pressure, his pulse system/pressure, everything that could be recorded, was recorded as normal. As the visit of the Visiting Medical Specialist was postponed on that day, the Prison Medical Officer referred the detainee to Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital the next day on 14 May.

This, I understand, is because he could not make out what was going on, there was no sign of any severe illness, but he was looking for a diagnosis. At Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, he was diagnosed with a chest infection and intravenous treatment started at 15.00 hours. At 15.30 hours, he was seen by the medical specialist who increased his intravenous fluid.

At 16.25 hours he was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit because of respiratory distress. He was examined by a Chest Specialist who advised to continue the antibiotics and prescribed other treatment as well.

The patient unfortunately collapsed at 19.10 hours on the same day and despite resuscitation measures, he passed away at around 19.40 hours.

On 15 May 2010, a post mortem examination was carried over the body of the late detainee and Police Medical Officer concluded that the death was due to septicaemia.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he has been supplied with information that on 30 April, when the late detainee received the visit of his mother, he was not able to speak, he was breathless, *essoufflé*. So, he was suffering as from 30 April. May I know whether this information has been supplied to the hon. Ag. Prime Minister?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sorry to say that this information was not supplied. What I have here is that he complained of chest pain on 05 May. As far as I understand the beginning of his illness is 05 May as has been communicated to me.

Dr. S. Boolell: Would the hon. Ag. Prime Minister consider upgrading the quality of care at the Beau Bassin Prison, which seems to be consisting ...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, this is a general question.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Ag. Prime Minister has given us a list of treatments that were administered to this detainee, but the fact is that he has been admitted at hospital at 16.25 hours, according to a document which I am going to table and he passed away some minutes after 1900 hours. The document stated that he was admitted with a chest infection. Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we are surprised that this person had this acute infection in some hours, while he has been in treatment. May I know whether the hon. Ag. Prime Minister will have information as to whether the chest infection was detected prior to his admission to the hospital?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I go along with what is being said and I have asked the Ministry of Health to appoint a Consultant to look at the notes and tell us whether the case was properly handled or not. But as for the information given, it seems to me that he spent the best part of his last four days of his life under observation in the Prison Medical Ward.

(No. 1B/314) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, for the period 2005 to date, information, as to –

- (a) the names of the employees who have been interdicted, and
- (b) the salary paid to each of them during the period of interdiction.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a statement giving the information requested by the hon. Member, as provided by the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the Ag. Prime Minister whether a fast-track mechanism has been put to look into the matter?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, comments have been made about what should and should not be done regarding interdiction. A fast track mechanism is being put into place.

PASSPORTS – APPLICATON - PROCEDURES

No. (1B/315) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the application for, or renewal, of passports, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand in relation to the review for the procedures thereof.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the procedures for application for new passports and renewal of passports have been revisited. In regard to application for new passports, for security reasons, it is not proposed to bring major changes to the existing procedures. However, the list of professionals who can countersign an application is being extended so as to include -

- (i) Dental Surgeons;
- (ii) Pharmacists;

- (iii) Veterinary Surgeons;
- (iv) Members of the academic staff of the University of Mauritius or University of Technology, Mauritius;
- (v) Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly;
- (vi) Registered Professional Architects;
- (vii) Registered Professional Engineers, and
- (viii) Registered Professional Accountants.

As for renewal of passports, new procedures have been finalised and an applicant will now be required to fill in a new shortened form. He will no longer be requested to have his application form countersigned and to submit a Police Certificate. He will only have to produce his old passport, his National Identity card and two recent photographs, provided there has been no change in his name or marital status.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regulations to give effect to these new procedures are being promulgated.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister what are the limits of responsibility of the two professional persons - now it has been enlarged - called upon to countersign the applicant's passport?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I take it that whoever signs will exercise his wisdom and judgement. I can't speak for others.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, will not the hon. Ag. Prime Minister agree with me that this procedure is obsolete because any information required on the applicant should be the responsibility of the Police, not on the person countersigning the passport?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I would submit it is an exercise for all three of them, Mr Speaker, Sir. They all have different responsibilities.

Mr Baloomoody: Mr Speaker, Sir, now that we have identity cards, we have to go to the Police Station to certify the address of the applicant and his residence, what is the use of having two professionals to countersign?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Not only to say who he is, but also to say what sort of person he is.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, this question of person signing the passport has been brought to this House on several occasions. I think the last time is when the Catholic priests no longer sign applicant's passport. They have issued letters stating that they are no longer doing it and this question was brought to the House. At that time it was being stated that this procedure will be reviewed. I think it was two or three years back. May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether there has been a follow up on that issue and where matter stands as at now?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I have stated where matters stand, Mr Speaker, Sir.

BOIS MARCHAND CEMETERY - LARCENY

(No. 1B/316) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to reported cases of larceny and larceny with violence in the region of the Chinese section of the cemetery at Bois Marchand, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information, for each of the past three years, as to the number thereof.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during the past three years, one case of larceny has been reported in 2008, one in 2009 and one case of larceny with violence has been reported in January 2010.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the local Police is maintaining regular mobile patrols and has increased its vigilance in the region of Bois Marchand with the support of the Emergency Response Service, the CID and the Divisional Support Unit with a view to preventing the recurrence of such cases.

PRISONERS – HALFWAY HOUSES

(No. 1B/318) **Dr S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to prisoners, he will state if Government will consider the creation of halfway houses to enable prisoners serving long-term sentences to re-adjust to normal life without immediate relapse.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the purpose of halfway houses is to allow detainees who are likely to be released from penal institutions to begin the process of reintegration in society while being monitored and supported by the relevant authorities, with the hope that detainees will not be at risk of recidivism or relapse. In fact, the halfway house programme is an extension of the rehabilitative efforts carried out within the penal institutions. This programme is operational in many western countries and in Asia.

Mr Speaker, Sir, so far, the programme of halfway houses has not been put into place in our Prisons Service. However, in the Government Programme 2010-2015, it has been stated that wide consultations will be held with a Non-Governmental Organisations, the “*Forces Vives*” and researchers with a view to elaborating a long-term reform of the Prisons Service, including the rehabilitation of detainees to meet the requirements of a modern country. Government will certainly consider the establishment of halfway houses during the consultation exercise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that pre-release programmes are currently being run by the Prisons Service with the collaboration of governmental and non-governmental organisations, religious organisations and private enterprises to facilitate the re-integration of detainees into the society.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister of Local Government, may I request you if you have to speak to your friends and turn back, could you please move out of the House and let the proceedings of the House carry on without disturbance?

Dr. S. Boolell: Could the hon. Ag. Prime Minister ascertain that, in the setting up of the halfway houses, some form of job placement agency be associated with it, in view of the problems which detainees do get to get job outside?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand this is part of the possibilities.

APPASAMY, MR TEEREN - EXTRADITION

(No. 1B/319) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the extradition proceedings against Mr Teeren Appasamy, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Independent Commission Against Corruption, information as to if the Commission has received the note by counsel for the United Kingdom Crown Prosecution Service in relation to the discharge of the extradition proceedings and on the steps that need to be taken for an eventual renewed request to make it an apple pie order and, if so,
- (b) will he table a copy thereof.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I understand that the hon. Member is referring to the contents of the correspondence dated 05 June 2009, from the Crown Advocate of the Crown Prosecution Service from UK to the ICAC, which was tabled in this House on 06 July 2010 in reply to the Private Notice Question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to remind the House that the ICAC, which has been established under the Prevention of Corruption Act 2002, operates as an independent body. Its operation is monitored only by the Parliamentary Committee set up by virtue of section 59 of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Furthermore, according to section 81 of the Act, all Board Members and officers of the ICAC are required to take an oath of secrecy and they have a duty to maintain the confidentiality of, and not divulge, any official information that becomes known to them, except as provided under the Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to add, that the correspondence tabled on 06 July 2010 relates to the outcome of the extradition proceedings and may be disclosed by the ICAC. However, information pertaining to the instructions sought and received between lawyers of the Crown Prosecution Service and the ICAC fall in the category of privileged information and cannot be divulged in accordance with section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Consequently, the note from the counsel of the Crown Prosecution Service to ICAC cannot be tabled. As regards an eventual renewed request for the extradition of Mr Teeren Appasamy, as already stated in reply to the Private Notice Question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition on 06 July 2010, the Crown Prosecution Service has informed the Court in the UK and Mr Appasamy's lawyers that if ever his health improved, there would be a resubmission of his extradition case in the Court.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that the correspondence is dated June 2009 and it is more than one year ago, can we know, in the space of one year, whether Mr Appasamy's health has improved and whether a renewed request has been made?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, all I can say is that the Mauritian authorities are doing the follow up and, at this stage, I cannot reveal what is being done...

DETAINEES – DRUG OFFENCES – REHABILITATION ACTIVITIES

(No. 1B/320) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the rehabilitation activities for prisoners convicted for drug addiction, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to the number of -

- (a) male inmates, and
- (b) female inmates following these activities, indicating, in each case, the number of officers running these programmes.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prisons Department runs a well-structured rehabilitation programme for prisoners convicted for drug offences. In that regard, a Drug Secretariat was set up in the Prisons Department in 2007 to plan and monitor all activities concerning the rehabilitation and prevention programme for substance abusers.

The Drug Secretariat has worked out a comprehensive Drug Strategy whose objective is to help the detainees concerned to refrain from using illicit drugs so as to achieve ultimately a drug-free life. In this regard, a multidisciplinary therapeutic and drug prevention programme is

being run in Beau Bassin Central Prison, Women Prison and Petit Verger Prison with the collaboration of governmental and non-governmental organisations.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that 569 male and 62 female detainees follow the rehabilitation activities designed for detainees convicted for drug offences. These activities are run by Prisons officers with the assistance of NGOs. Seven Prisons officers are involved in rehabilitation activities designed for male detainees and four female Prisons officers for female detainees.

I am tabling a list of the rehabilitation activities designed for male and female detainees convicted for drug offences as well as the number of detainees following each activity and the organisations which assist the Prisons officers to run these activities. So, we have a complete breakdown of the situation as it is.

Mr Baloomoody: May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister, with regard to the female prison, whether there is a dispenser to dispense medicines which are provided to inmates following treatment at Brown Sequard Hospital?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there exists a pharmacy service. I am sure it includes all prisoners, including the drug addicts, and I would like to add Mr Speaker, Sir, for the information of the House, that the Prison Department is planning to expand the drug related rehabilitating programme and it is training additional Prison officers to act as trainers. It will also set up an additional residential care centre at Womens' Prison and the Petit Verger Prison. I would like to remind the House that prior to 2005 there was no such rehabilitation programme available and since 2005 there was an increasing number of attendees, from 816 to 1259. So, it is an ongoing programme.

Mr Baloomoody: Is the Ag. Prime Minister aware that up to today, there is no dispenser dispensing medicine at the female wards and that the protocol for the dispensing of medicine is not being followed in the female prison?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter, but I am surprised that after more than 100 years of medical practice, we still don't know how to dispense, I am surprised at this statement, that we need a protocol to dispense drug.

Mrs Labelle: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I feel sad about the information that has been given to the Ag. Prime Minister and which is being provided to the House. I would ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister to go and seek additional information regarding the rehabilitation programme that is said to be on at the prisons. Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Ag. Prime Minister has stated that the Prison officers are carrying out the drug rehabilitation programmes. May I know from him whether these Prison officers have been trained for such programmes, such therapy, and the duration of same?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I will get the information and supply it. But certainly, I take the point. We have talked about numbers, and the hon. Member is interested about the quality. I will certainly look into that.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Ag. Prime Minister has been unfortunately misled in his answer concerning drug rehabilitation activities. Is the hon. Ag. Prime Minister aware that there existed the Lotus Project, which was set up by the former Commissioner of Prison, Mr Bookun, at that time - well before 2005 - relating to prisoners convicted of drug offences? This was a well-known project. Perhaps, it has been improved in the course of time, but the Lotus Project was in operation well before 2005, and this project concerned the drug addicts.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will look into the matter and see what was and what is now.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, first, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he is aware that NGOs are facing a lot of difficulties to carry out their activities at the prisons? Second, is he aware that counselling is being carried out in the corridors of the prisons? And does he think that the corridor is an appropriate place for counselling? While we are talking about shortage of prison officers, does he think that prison officers have time for rehabilitation programmes?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the last remark speaks for itself. There is shortage, but they are also being used for rehabilitation programmes. I would not quarrel with that, but I will look into all the comments that have been made. I can only stand by the answer that I have been given. But I will look further into all the issues that have been raised, including

who gives counselling, what training they have had, where they are counselled, what type of medicine and who gives them. I will certainly look into that.

Mr Bhagwan: The Ag. Prime Minister has said that he will look into it. Can I make a request to the Ag. Prime Minister to make a surprise visit at the Rehabilitation Centre at Barkly, Beau Bassin? He will see by himself what the Ag. Commissioner of Prisons is doing there.

Mr Speaker: The Ag. Prime Minister has said that he will look into the matter. Hon. François, last question on this matter!

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he is aware that, at Pointe La Gueule Prison, convicted prisoners with drug addiction are transferred to Queen Elizabeth Hospital for administration of drugs, as there is no such service in the prison?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I will look into that!

OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE - REFURBISHMENT

(No. 1B/321) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the refurbishment of the Old Parliament House, he will –

- (a) give details of –
 - (i) the date the tender was launched;
 - (ii) the name of the bidders, indicating the value quoted in each case, and
 - (iii) the date the tender was awarded, and
- (b) table copy of the contract agreement.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, following consultations with the Clerk of the National Assembly, I am informed that the tender for the refurbishment of the Old Parliament House was launched on 13 August 2009.

The initial deadline for the submission of the bids was Wednesday 16 September 2009 and was later extended to Wednesday 14 October 2009.

In regard to parts (a) (ii) and (b) of the question, I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

In regard to part (a) (iii) of the question, I am informed that the Central Procurement Board conveyed its approval for the award of the contract to the successful bidder on 29 December 2009. In accordance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act, the Clerk of the National Assembly sent notifications of award to the successful and unsuccessful bidders on 30 December 2009. Subsequently, two of the unsuccessful bidders challenged the award of the contract. The two bidders were informed of the reasons as to why their bids had not been retained on 11 and 15 January 2010 respectively. They had the right to appeal to the Independent Review Panel of the Central Procurement Board in case they were not satisfied. As no application for review was received, the Central Procurement Board gave its green light to the National Assembly for the award of the contract on 10 February 2010. The tender was awarded on 01 March 2010.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know the name of the company to which the contract was awarded?

The Ag. Prime Minister: This is of public knowledge; it is Ireko Construction Limited.

Mr Guimbeau: Can we know the amount for which it was tendered?

The Ag. Prime Minister: The tendered amount was Rs327,976,539,042, and this was subsequently corrected at Rs327,574,781. As I said, it was previously Rs327,976,539,042, and corrected downwards.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether, in the *cahier des charges* of the project, provision has been made for a new *stèle* of late Sir Harilal Vaghjee, the first Mauritian Speaker? There was one in the old building.

(Interruptions)

Can I ask the Ag. Prime Minister to inform the House where matters stand? Has that aspect been taken in the project?

The Ag. Prime Minister: The answer is yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guimbeau: Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister table a copy of the signed contract?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Yes, of course.

FIFA WORLD CUP 2010 - OFFICIAL VIDEO CLIP - BROADCAST

(No. 1B/322) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the official video clip of the FIFA World Cup 2010, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to –

- (a) whether the broadcast thereof was discontinued and, if so, when and the reasons therefor, and
- (b) by whom was the decision taken, indicating if it was approved by the Board.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that the broadcast of the official video clip of the FIFA World Cup 2010 was never discontinued.

During the period 11 June 2010 to 11 July 2010, the clip was broadcast on a regular basis on the three MBC Channels, namely TV1, TV2 and TV3.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Director General of the MBC that there was flexibility in the broadcast of the official video clip of the FIFA World Cup 2010 because, in addition to that clip, the MBC also had to broadcast a video clip entitled “Beautiful Game”, which was produced by the Asian Broadcasting Union in collaboration with the MBC.

The MBC is a member of the Asian Broadcasting Union.

The video clip “Beautiful Game” was broadcast by stations of Member States of the Asian Broadcasting Union, including Mauritius.

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Ag. Prime Minister agreeing, therefore, to the fact that the broadcast was on a very irregular basis? Was it the decision of a body of the MBC or was it the decision of one individual officer that it should be broadcast as irregularly as it was?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have the information. But, for a fact, when I look at the times allocated to the FIFA video clip, it is ample; it is a long list covering two pages. I will communicate the full information to the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions Nos. 1B/345, 1B/346 and 1B/354 have been withdrawn. Hon. Dayal!

ST PIERRE TRAFFIC CENTRE - REDESIGN

(No. 1B/326) **Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the layout of the St Pierre Traffic Centre, he will state if consideration will be given for the reviewing thereof, in view of the fact that it represents serious risks of accidents.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the TRMSU that it has already carried out the Road Safety Audit at the St. Pierre Traffic Centre, and it has decided to re-design the Centre completely. Works will start after the procurement exercise is completed.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. In the same breath, can I ask him that all formalities be carried out in the meantime? Because there are buses which rush in and out, causing many accidents. Could this be monitored?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already given instructions to TRMSU to start monitoring the problem till such time works order will be issued.

ST PIERRE-CIRCONSTANCE ROAD - RESURFACING

(No. 1B/327) **Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if consideration will be given to the resurfacing of the strip of the road from the State Bank at St Pierre to the curb leading to L'Avenir along the St Pierre-Circonstance Road in view of its deplorable state, especially during rainfalls.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, works order has been issued to the District contractor Colas and works have started already on 19 July 2010.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, a little further along the same road there is a junction at la boutique Madame, Circonstance, St Pierre, can I ask the hon. Minister if a traffic light could be installed to regulate traffic?

Mr Bachoo: I will look into that issue, Mr Speaker, Sir.

RIVER BALLAKSING, FLORÉAL - RETAINING WALL

(No. 1B/328) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if consideration will be given to the construction of a retaining wall at River Ballaksing at Floréal in order to avoid the recurrence of floods during torrential rains.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, works may start around September 2010.

MANGALKHAN, FLORÉAL – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. 1B/329) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the football ground at Mangalkhan, Floréal, he will state where matters stand in regard to the lighting and fencing works thereat.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that owing to the financial constraints, the National Development Unit has been approached with a view to financing the lighting and fencing of the football ground at Mangalkhan.

Consequently, a bid exercise has been launched on 04 June 2010 by the National Development Unit for the lighting and upgrading of the football ground at Cité Mangalkhan. I am informed that the bid evaluation of the project is in progress and the contract will be awarded shortly.

VACCINATION CAMPAIGN - CENTRES

(No. 1B/330) Ms A. Perraud (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the vaccination campaign against flu, she will state –

- (a) the number of vaccines administered as at to date, and
- (b) the regions and vaccination centres selected, indicating the criteria used for their choice.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the anti influenza vaccination programme 2010 for the elderly, the Ministry ordered 75,000 doses of vaccines and

these have already been utilised for the campaign which was held from 17 May 2010 to 10 June 2010.

As regards part (b) of the question, the information regarding the regions and the vaccination centres selected is being tabled.

As far as the choice of the centres is concerned, I wish to point out that, over the years, the vaccination has generally been held in regions where there are Social Welfare Centres, Community Centres, Village and Municipal halls. In certain regions, where no appropriate Government building was available, the Ministry had recourse to private halls which could cater for a larger number of elderly persons.

During the 2010 campaign, vaccination was carried out in the Centres mentioned in the press as well as in a few other centres following requests made by Senior Citizens Associations.

CITE LA CURE - ROADS AND DRAINS

(No. 1B/331) Ms A. Perraud (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the resurfacing of roads, construction and re-instatement of drains at Cité La Cure, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the contract was awarded on 09 May 2008 to Trio Development Ltd for the sum of Rs10,976,750 (inclusive of VAT).

As at November 2009 only 15% of the works has been completed. After 18 months the contractor left the site unattended.

Fresh contracts will be awarded by the NDU once the District Contractor is nominated by the Central Procurement Board.

ARTISTS – CONCERT HALL

(No. 1B/332) Ms A. Perraud (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he is aware that, in the past, local artists have made representations to his Ministry to the effect that they do not have an appropriate space for the holding of concerts and, if so, will he state the remedial measures Government proposes to take.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware that local artists have made representations to be provided with a Concert Hall and access to football grounds for the holding of concerts.

My Ministry has liaised with the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the identification of one plot of land in the central part of the island which is accessible to the transport network for putting up a concert hall to accommodate about 2,500 persons. The same goes for a mega concert facility. We are looking for the ideal site. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this has already been announced in the Budget.

Regarding football grounds, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has advised that considerable damage has been caused to the pitch, synthetic track and other infrastructure at stadia when they had been made available for the holding of concerts in the past.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the parking area of Anjalay Stadium which was identified for concerts has now been earmarked for the “Ecole de Foot Project”. I am also informed that the Ministry of Youth and Sports is looking for ways and means to protect the synthetic track of Germain Comarmond Stadium at Bambous, which is also being considered for the holding of concerts by artists.

Furthermore, an exercise is being carried out to identify the basic infrastructure that would be required for football grounds to be used as concert venues.

In the meantime, my Ministry has enlisted the collaboration of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources to survey four halls of State Secondary Schools in different regions of the island with a view to improving their sound and light systems so that they may be used for the holding of concerts. This survey has already started.

Mr Speaker, Sir, pending the construction of more concert venues, my Ministry is presently providing financial assistance to the tune of Rs30,000 to artists for the renting of existing infrastructure such as the Serge Constantin Theatre, Mahatma Gandhi Institute Auditorium, Octave Wiehé Auditorium, Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture, the Swami Vivekananda Conference Centre, Grand Bay International Conference Centre, Rabindranath Tagore Institute at Ilot, Institut Français de Maurice at Rose Hill, Conservatoire de Musique François Mitterrand at Quatre Bornes and l’Eglise Chrétienne Hall at Trianon.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Minister has mentioned that he has liaised with the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports, is he aware that in the last Budget there was item for the appropriate equipment to be installed at the Anjalay Stadium for concert- this was budgeted – and may I know from him whether he has been apprised of the situation? What has happened to this item?

Mr Choonee: I mentioned it earlier in my reply that an exercise is being carried out to identify basic infrastructure that would be required in football grounds to be used for concert venues.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS - STUDENTS – ROAD CROSSING

(No. 1B/333) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state the precautionary measures that are taken for students crossing the roads on arrival at and departure from educational institutions.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, child safety and security are a central concern of my Ministry and are already well embedded in our curriculum. Precautionary measures that are taken to ensure the security of our children are as follows -

- Policemen are posted in the vicinity of schools every morning and every afternoon to help students to cross the road and to canalise the traffic flow in the school vicinity. There is also the posting of ancillary staff at main gate and caretakers standing whenever necessary with the child crossing signs especially in case of the absence of policemen.
- Projects concerning construction of new schools take on board the need for security measures such as placement of pedestrian crossings (humps) or handrails after consultation with the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping.
- Reinforcement of awareness and sensitisation on precautionary measures and good practices relating to safety on the roads is offered through curriculum materials especially those that have been newly developed. Equally, children are

sensitised during morning assembly about the risks involved if they disregard basic precautionary measures that have to be taken when on the roads.

- The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit also carries out sensitisation campaigns. Pupils are sensitised at school level to use pedestrian crossings both those in close proximity of the schools and on the roads. This is part of the process for creating awareness about the highway code in general.
- The Management at school level, in close collaboration with the Police Force and other competent authorities, exercises constant vigilance to ensure the safety and security of pupils and students on arrival and departure from schools.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned police officers in front of schools, but in many cases there are no police officers and one of the main problems is the school buses. *Il y a une anarchie dans beaucoup d'endroits - je vois cela presque tous les jours - en ce qu'il s'agit du parking et comment est gérée l'arrivée de ces minibus. Est-ce que le ministre pense rencontrer l'association de ces minibus pour leur sensibiliser eux-aussi ?*

Dr. Bunwaree: *M. le président, cela se fait et, effectivement, on est en train de voir comment on peut améliorer le système davantage.* There is much to be done and much room for improvement also.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all aware that it is very difficult to have police officers in all the schools in Mauritius. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider the setting up of a network of volunteers around the schools as it is the case in many countries? I know that in Canada it is the case. There are people from the community, some are pensioners and so on, who volunteer to help the kids while coming and leaving the schools. Will the hon. Minister consider setting up such a network around the schools?

Dr. Bunwaree: The idea is interesting but, of course, it has also to take into consideration the responsibility in case some problems crop up. The legal aspects also have to be looked into, but there is also the question of - I mentioned it, in fact, in my reply - posting of ancillary staff at the main gate. They can deal with the Police when they are there and when they are not there, they go outside with the child crossing signs, and they can take on board what the hon. Member is mentioning, of course.

PLASTIC CARRY BAGS - USE

(No. 1B/334) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development whether he will state the measures taken by his Ministry to curb the use of plastic carry bags with a view to minimising its impact on the environment.

Mr Virahsawmy: Mr Speaker, Sir, a series of measures have been taken by my Ministry over the past years to curb down the use of plastic carry bags.

First, regulations to prohibit the local manufacture and import of non-degradable plastic carry bags with wall thickness of less than 20 microns are already in force. Whilst this measure has a positive impact as regards imports of plastic carry bags in the country, it has not yielded the expected results in terms of production and use of non-degradable plastic carry bags.

Secondly, following a proposal made by my Ministry, an excise duty of one rupee per plastic carry bag with handle produced locally or imported is applicable with effect from July 2006. This fiscal measure is being enforced by the Mauritius Revenue Authority at the manufacturers' premises and retail outlets.

Following this measure, feedback reports indicated a drastic reduction in the use of plastic carry bags by about 60% in most supermarkets. However, it has been observed of late that plastic manufacturers have shifted their production pattern to non-excisable plastic bags without handles, which are being distributed freely in many retail outlets, particularly in markets and fairs.

Thirdly, with a view to promoting alternatives to plastic carry bags -

- (i) Local plastic manufacturers have been requested to produce eco-friendly alternatives to plastic bags.
- (ii) Supermarkets and Shop Owners' Associations were requested to promote and raise awareness among their customers on the use of eco-friendly alternative bags. To date, several supermarkets and shops are proposing suitable alternatives including paper bags, green bags, and long lasting and reusable bags.

With a view to discouraging the use of plastic carry bags and encouraging the shift towards alternative re-usable bags, my Ministry has been undertaking a sustained awareness campaign using all communication channels targeting the public at large for the past years. Some 50,000 cloth bags have also been distributed to the public during this ongoing sensitisation campaign.

To give a further boost to this initiative, my Ministry will undertake an intense sensitisation campaign from September 2010 to November 2010.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to curb down the use of plastic carry bags, my Ministry is presently consulting the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development with a view to considering an increase in the excise duty and its extension to plastic carry bags with or without handles.

Ms Anquetil: Would the hon. Minister consider promoting environmental project with the money collected in terms of tax on plastic bags?

Mr Speaker: That is not relevant to the question. Next question, hon. François!

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, along the same line, as Mauritius is moving towards the *Maurice Ile Durable* and sustainable development concept, will the hon. Minister inform the House whether he will consider the promotion of the use of eco-friendly substitute like *tente Vacoas*, which can also become a good economic activity for hooligan artisans and Mauritians also?

Mr Virahsawmy: Mr Speaker, Sir, we can look at that.

At 12.55 the sitting was suspended.

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

EPAs/EUROPEAN UNION - NEGOTIATIONS

(No. 1B/335) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) within the Eastern and Southern African configuration with the European Union, he will state where matters stand.

The Minister of Housing & Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the Eastern and Southern African (ESA) configuration and the European Union (EU) were launched in Mauritius in February 2004. These negotiations were expected to be concluded in December 2007 in view of the expiry of the WTO waiver for the Trade Provisions of the Cotonou agreement on 01 January 2008. However, in view of serious divergence on certain key issues, in particular on the development component, including on additional financial resources to be made available by the EU to the ESA countries to meet adjustment costs, the negotiations could not be concluded as scheduled. With a view to preventing any disruption of trade, it was agreed to conclude an interim Economic Partnership Agreement covering those aspects that would have to be compatible with the provisions of the WTO. The Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (IEPA) negotiations were concluded in November 2007 and initialled by some ESA countries, including Mauritius, in December 2007.

Mauritius signed the EPA interim agreement on 29 August 2009 together with Seychelles, Madagascar and Zimbabwe at the Grand'Baie Conference Centre. Comoros and Zambia, which had initialled the interim EPA, indicated that they would sign at a later stage. The other ESA countries, namely Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi and Sudan have neither initialled nor signed the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement in view of their concern over certain issues which they consider to be contentious in the Agreement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the contentious issues have been divided into two baskets. Basket I contains the infant industry clause, the standstill clause, regional preferences, quantitative restrictions and modification of tariffs. At the ESA-EC meeting held in the margin of the signature of the IEPA in Mauritius in 2009, consensus was reached between the ESA

Member States and the European Commission (EC) on the standstill clause, infant industry clause, modification of tariff commitments and prohibition of quantitative restrictions.

Basket II is made up of export taxes, the MFN clause, the definition of substantially all trade, the non-execution clause and flexibility in applying special safeguard in agriculture. These issues are considered to be important to the ESA region, in particular the LDCs. So far, the two sides have yet to reach agreement on these issues.

The Interim EPA covers a trade in goods chapter, a development and fisheries chapters. It also contains a *rendez-vous* clause on outstanding issues such as trade in services, trade related issues, including trade facilitation and agriculture, amongst others, which are expected to form part of the full and comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement currently under negotiations.

Several rounds of negotiations have been held between the EC and the ESA at technical and senior officials' level between the period January 2008 and the signature of the IEPA in August 2009. Progress has been registered on issues such as trade in services, trade facilitation and competition policy, although several more rounds of negotiations would be necessary to reach a final agreement on these issues.

However, after the signature of the Interim EPA in Mauritius, the negotiations had to be kept on hold because of persisting divergence, on the one hand, on some of the contentious issues in Basket II, and also because of the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the appointment of a new EU Trade Commissioner in replacement of Baroness Catherine Ashton. An informal ESA-EC Ministerial meeting was held in Brussels in April of this year, where it was agreed that negotiations should resume at the technical and senior officials' level both on the remaining contentious issues and outstanding issues such as trade in services, trade related issues, and on the development chapter.

At the ESA level, a technical meeting was held from the 28 to 30 June 2010 to define the groups' position on the issues at stake. An ESA Ministerial meeting was held on 20 July 2010 to take stock of the ESA position on some of these issues, and to provide guidance to the negotiators at technical and senior officials' level. It is also expected that a reality check with the EC would be undertaken at a later stage on what is possible in the medium term and what could be included in a *rendez-vous* clause for future negotiations.

There is also a proposal from Malawi to transform the ESA configuration into a COMESA configuration, given that all ESA countries are also members of the COMESA. The COMESA Secretariat has prepared a paper for the consideration of senior officials and Ministers at the meeting on 20 July 2010.

I will keep the House posted of developments on the matter.

Mr Bérenger: I have two questions although the substantive Minister is not here. Can the hon. Minister let us know whether a final and complete Economic Partnership Agreement has been signed between the European Union and any of the different ACP regional groups?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with due respect to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I have just taken this seat for a couple of days, and I think it would be proper that the question be put to the substantive Minister who is well versed in all the *rouages* of these very tricky negotiations.

Mr Bérenger: I'll put a few more questions, which would give the opportunity to the substantive Minister to make a statement when he is in the country.

The hon. Minister has just told us that COMESA is coming in, and there is a suggestion that, instead of discussions being between Eastern and Southern African configuration and the European Commission, it should be between COMESA and the European Union. Is Government happy with the fact that we are in SADC? SADC is supposed to be the block moving towards integration and so on, and a number of SADC countries are neither in the Eastern and Southern African configuration nor in COMESA and there is trouble between the SADC configuration and the European Union. Instead of moving in this direction, why does COMESA go all the way up to Libya? Is Government giving serious consideration to putting into question the Eastern and Southern African configuration?

Dr. Kasenally: The fact is the very number of issues which the hon. Leader of the Opposition has mentioned. That's why they could not come to an agreement, but they put it to a committee for further negotiation, which means that there is not total agreement on this measure, that COMESA should negotiate with the European Union.

COTONOU AGREEMENT - REVISION

(No. 1B/336) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the Cotonou Agreement, he will state if there has been any revision thereto and, if so, indicate the merits, if any, of the revised Agreement.

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall answer again to this question.

The Cotonou Agreement was concluded for a period of 20 years commencing 01 March 2000. The previous Agreements between ACP Group of States and the EU were concluded for a duration of five years. Between 1975 and 2000, the ACP Group of States and the EU had concluded five Conventions.

Since, the Cotonou Agreement was concluded for a period of 20 years, provision was made in the Agreement for the possibility of amending it through a revision process after each 5-year period in order to incorporate developments in ACP-EU relations, to provide the possibility for consultation and discussion on the emerging issues and to adapt cooperation to new realities.

Negotiations for the revision of the Cotonou Agreement were concluded in Brussels on 23 February 2005 and the amended Agreement was signed in Luxembourg in 2005.

Negotiations for the second revision of the Cotonou Agreement were officially launched on 29 May 2009 and were concluded in Brussels on 19 March 2010. The Agreement amending the Cotonou Agreement for a second time was signed in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on 22 June 2010 during the 35th Session of the ACP-EU Council of Ministers.

Fifty (50) of the 77 ACP States and 18 EU Member States as well as the European Union signed the revised Agreement.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, my colleague, Dr. Arvin Boolell, signed the revised Agreement on behalf of Mauritius.

Merits of the revision exercise

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the merits of the revised Agreement can be categorised as follows -

- (a) amendment of the trade pillar to reflect the joint ACP-EU decision to negotiate WTO-compatible Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) at the level of the ACP regions;
- (b) modification of certain financing instruments pertaining to Development Finance Cooperation (DFC);
- (c) review of the joint ACP-EU institutional structures to reflect changes, and
- (d) new areas of cooperation.

All four aspects of the revision just enumerated are beneficial to Mauritius. I am tabling a paper which elaborates on the merits of the revision of the Cotonou Agreement giving full information as may be required by the hon. Member.

GOVERNMENT FIRE SERVICES – FIRE FIGHTERS - GRIEVANCES

(No. 1B/337) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Government Fire Services, he will state –

- (a) whether he has been made aware of the grievances of the fire fighters in connection with their conditions of work, namely –
 - (i) state of equipment;
 - (ii) unpaid supplementary hours of work;
 - (iii) understaffing, and
 - (iv) the delay in promotion of officers to the rank of Senior Station Officers and
- (b) the remedial measures Government proposes to take.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since I have assumed my function as Minister, I have on three occasions visited the fire stations and invited the fire fighters to submit to me any difficulties they may be facing in discharge of their duties.

Subsequent to the visits, the Government Fire Services Employees Association, in a letter dated 06 February 2010, informed me of various grievances from the officers of Fire Services Department which, according to me, are justified.

I had a meeting with the representatives of the Government Servants Employees Association to look into the following issues raised by them, in respect of Industrial Relation in Government Fire Services, review of Fire Services Order, casual leave, filling of vacancies, payment of extra hours, bank of fire fighters, allowances amongst others.

With regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Chief Fire Officer that all vehicles and equipment in the Fire Services Department are in good working condition.

Furthermore, procedures have been initiated for the purchase of –

- Six water tenders;
- Nine sets of rescue gears;
- 450 length of delivery hoses;
- 20 branch pipes;
- 20 floating pumps;
- 20 breathing apparatus sets, and
- 12 hazmat boots.

Provision is also being made for purchase of helmets, tunics and leggings.

Unpaid supplementary hours of work

With regard to part (a) (ii), I am informed that the Government Fire Services is in the process of paying for work performed on public holidays. And in this regard, the views of the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs have been sought as to how work performed on public holidays should be computed. Necessary action is being taken to pay night duty allowance and also to pay in September an allowance in lieu of time off for work performed on public holidays.

Understaffing

I am further informed, with regard to part (a) (iii), that the scheme of service for the post of fire fighters is being amended in line with recommendations of PRB Report 2008. It is presently at the level of the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs. Approval is awaited.

Promotion to rank of Senior Station Officers

With regard to part (a) (iv), I am informed that the scheme of service has been forwarded to the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and its reply is awaited to proceed further.

Mr Ganoo: I am very grateful to the hon. Minister that he has agreed that the problems which have been raised are real ones. Can he enlighten the House as far as equipment is concerned? May we know when the equipment will be made available, because we are talking of people who are working in very difficult conditions, as we all know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Can the hon. Minister tell us when the lorries, hoses and all other equipment which he has mentioned will be made available to the fire fighters?

Mr Aimée: In fact, I want to inform the hon. Member that, on the various visits I made at the fire station, I have been made aware that one lorry equipped with hydraulic ladder of the Government Fire Services is not being used due to mechanical failure. I am currently studying the possibility of either returning it to the agency or selling it to another country...

(Interruptions)

... and to use the money to purchase equipment.

(Interruptions)

In fact, the hon. Member is right. Some equipment must be changed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister should give the dates. I understand that was the question.

Mr Aimée: Once fund will be made available, not immediately.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other urgent complaint is the question of understaffing. Is the hon. Minister aware that this department is working with an under capacity

of about 100 fire fighters? This makes their work more difficult, that is, there are 100 fire fighters to be recruited.

Mr Aimée: Je dois dire à l'honorable membre que je suis au courant qu'il y a un manque de *staff*. Je ne sais pas s'il y a au moins 100, mais il y a un manque de *manpower*. Avec la collaboration du ministère de *Civil Service and Administrative Reforms*, on fait le nécessaire pour remplir tous ces postes.

Mr Ganoo: This exercise of promotion or this new grade which has to be created dates back to the PRB of 2008. We are now two years afterwards. Can the hon. Minister see to it that this complaint of fire fighters is also looked into?

Mr Aimée: M. le président, je fais un suivi. A plusieurs reprises, j'ai enquêté sur ce qui se passe et on va le faire très bientôt.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the complaints of the fire fighters forwarded to the Ministry concerns ladders. We have more and more high-rise buildings and many of these ladders are not operational on site. This has been reported on many occasions. Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many operational high-rise ladder lorries that the fire services have today and whether there are orders which have been placed for high-rise ladders?

Mr Aimée: I don't know how many there are, but I will inquire and let the hon. Member know. From the information that I got during my visit, one ladder lorry has been broken down for years.

(Interruptions)

No, we have various ladder lorries, but only one has had a breakdown.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have had understaffing and frustrations because of lack of promotion in the Police department, then it was the Prison Service and now we have reached the Fire Services. Naturally, this is a pretext, referring to the PRB, the scheme of duties that has to be changed and so on. Will the hon. Minister see to it that necessary action in terms of promotions and understaffing is taken urgently?

Mr Aimée: M. le président, je crois que c'est un mal nécessaire. Il faut le faire. Je viens d'arriver il y a à peine trois ou quatre mois. Je vais voir.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have one last supplementary question. Unpaid supplementary hours of work has been construed by the hon. Minister as working on Sundays only. Can I also inform him that these fire fighters have also been working during pre-election and election days, especially at night, and they have not been paid yet? This is also another claim. Can the hon. Minister kindly look into this issue also?

Mr Aimée: I have already answered the question of the hon. Member. I said that the view of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms is being sought for work performed on public holidays and should be computed.

FIRE FIGHTERS – TRAINING COURSES - MALAYSIA

(No. 1B/338) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to training courses for Fire Fighters in Malaysia under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP), he will state -

- (a) the names of the officers who have been nominated for the last training course, and
- (b) whether his Ministry has received any letter of protest from the President of the Fire Fighters Union in relation to the selection of the participants and, if so, the measures taken, if any.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following an invitation from the Malaysian Authorities under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme, two officers of the Government Fire Services have been nominated to attend the following training courses in Malaysia -

- (1) Mr Sanjive Ramchurn, Station Officer in "Handling Hazardous Material Incident" Course from 26 July to 20 August 2010, and
- (2) Mr Dyanand Jahul, Station Officer in "International Structural Fire Fighting" Course from 26 September to 01 October 2010.

With regard to part (b) of the question, my attention was drawn to a letter of protest from the President of the Fire Fighters Union addressed to the Chief Fire Officer and copied, *inter alia*, to my Ministry in relation to the nominations for these courses.

I wish to inform the House that the Malaysian Authorities offer such training courses on a yearly basis and I wish to assure that opportunities will be given to the other fire fighters to benefit from the training.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as much as I have been kind to the hon. Minister in putting my supplementaries for the previous question, this time, I must do otherwise. Can I just put it to him, therefore, that there has been *un cas d'injustice flagrante, de passe-droit*, in choosing these two officers whom he has just named? Can I ask him whether he can confirm that there was a first letter sent to his Ministry from the Chief Fire Officer suggesting two other names by a letter dated 19 April? These two officers who have been discarded were chosen by the Chief Fire Officer precisely on established criteria. Year after year, the most senior officers, being aged less than 40, are chosen automatically. This has been going on year after year, but this time, the way of choosing the two officers has been changed and this was done before the elections! Can he confirm that?

Mr Aimée: M. le président, c'est vrai qu'il y a eu cette recommandation, mais il y avait une liste d'officiers sur cette recommandation du *Chief Fire Officer*. Sur cette liste, il y a plusieurs d'entre eux qui ont déjà suivi des cours tout récemment. Il n'y avait que deux qui n'ont pas été, qui ne sont peut-être pas au même rang que ceux qui ont été recommandés, mais ils sont là depuis longtemps. C'est pourquoi ils ont eu l'opportunité d'être choisis.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to differ with the hon. Minister. These two officers whose names have been suggested by the head of the department and whose names have been eliminated by his Ministry were the two most senior officers. There were the automatic choice on the list, they fulfill all the criteria and they were even given forms to fill in. They underwent the medical check-up and so on, but the Ministry then overruled this choice, that is, discarded these two officers and suggested the two other officers whose names have just been revealed by the hon. Minister just now.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said before, there was a list of proposals for officers of different grades. In fact, I have taken those who have been in the service before. I think everyone should get the opportunity, not only the ones who have been recommended. Otherwise, I think the other fire fighters would not get the opportunity to get training.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that these two officers who have been eliminated from the list will now no longer be eligible for this Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme because they will be over 40. This was the last opportunity for them. They were just below 40. Next year, they will be above 40 and they won't be eligible to attend this Cooperation Programme?

Mr Aimée: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the offer of training is not made only by the Malaysian Government, but also by many other countries. It is to be noted that each donor country has its own criteria for the award of training. In time, all officers will definitely have the opportunity for training overseas.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to know the truth. These two officers who have been discarded, had they benefited, in the recent past, from such opportunities?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they have benefited from such opportunities on two occasions before.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister to check his information because I have the two names of the officers who have been discarded? I don't want to give their names in the Assembly, but they have never benefited from any Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme in the past. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether one of these two officers who has been chosen lives in Bambous?

Mr Aimée: I will check the information but, in this context, *je voudrais attirer l'attention de l'honorable membre...*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

Mr Aimée: *Dans ce contexte, je dois quand même dire à l'honorable membre que j'ai reçu d'autres invitations des Russian Authorities.* For example, in that context, Members may

wish to note that “invitation has been received from the Russian Authorities through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade for nomination to attend the following...” which means that most of the staff would get the chance to go on training, but I have given the chance to those who have been in service much before the others.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question!

Mr Ganoo: Although I reiterate that these two officers who have been eliminated are most senior to the two officers chosen, I will ask a last question. Can the hon. Minister confirm that he has received a letter of protest from the President of the Fire Fighters Union in relation to the choice of these two officers?

Mr Aimée: I mentioned this at the very beginning of my reply.

SCHOOLS – PUPILS - DROP OUTS

(No.1B/339) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to pupils who drop out of schools or training institutions before the age of sixteen, he will state if an annual survey is carried out to determine the number thereof.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the Statistics Unit of my Ministry normally carries out an annual survey which covers, *inter alia*, enrolment at primary and secondary school levels and gives an indication on promotion rate, repetition rate and of the trends regarding drop outs.

The situation with respect to enrolment is monitored at school level with a view to ensuring that there is continued schooling. Heads of Schools ensure at the level of their respective schools the follow up with responsible parties regarding the prolonged absence of their wards. Such cases are closely monitored and, in many instances, they are backed by home visits by educational social workers for investigation into the reasons for such absences.

Drop out rate at the end of the primary cycle is negligible. In the secondary sub-sector, statistical compilations for drop-outs within the system undertaken as a whole, show that students drop out for the years 2007 and 2008 in respect of the academic stream for secondary sub sector up to Form IV is on average 2.5% and 2% respectively. The exercise for 2009 is still

in process. I have given these figures although they have not been asked for. I think that this is interesting for the hon. Member, but I must say that we took 2007 and 2008 because before that, I personally believe that the figures that were there and the way that they were calculated, are not reliable.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since education is compulsory up to 16 years, may I ask the hon. Minister what measures he is contemplating to ensure that our youngsters have any training programme up to 16 years so that we do not have children aged less than 16 years out of schools?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is, in fact, a problem and we are looking into it. I have given instructions at the beginning of this year to try to find out the reasons in certain specific cases, for example, where children who ought to go to the pre-voc sector and have not attended school when it started,. The survey has given some positive results and we are seriously looking into the matter and trying to find ways and means to curb this situation.

Mr Obeegadoo: Is the hon. Minister aware that according to the Education For All Global Monitoring Report, Mauritius is a country at risk of not attaining universal primary education by year 2015? On the MDGs, there is the universal primary education. Is he aware that according to the statistics obtained from official sources in Mauritius, the survival rate for children joining primary is only 96%? Is the Minister aware that according to these international statistics, there are some 6000 out-of-school children of primary school going age?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that I gave the reply to the hon. Member last week and I have tried to give the reasons also for this situation. But, this is an important factor that we are looking into.

Mr Obeegadoo: The hon. Minister referred to education and social workers who follow up in case of prolonged absences. Would he inform the House what category of civil servants are being referred to? Are these employees from the Ministry of Education? How many of them are there and where are they deployed?

Dr. Bunwaree: We have, first of all, the school psychologists themselves because in the survey that we carried out, the main reasons are family problems, in fact, Mr Deputy Speaker,

Sir, and this is why the psychologists are actively involved. But, we also liaise with the Ministry of Women's Rights in charge of family and children to enrol social workers to go and do the job.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question!

Mr Obeegadoo: The Minister knows that that is not the case. The parents *médiateurs* are no longer there. Will the hon. Minister ensure that in a country where there is a duty incumbent upon the State to ensure that all children below 16, are in school, we cannot tolerate the situation where according to those figures that the Minister quoted, and with which I do not agree, 2.5% of children joining secondary are drop-outs?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, but the situation is not alarming as such, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. While listening to the hon. Member, we get the impression that he is being pathetic and so on. The situation is not alarming and I can assure the hon. Member, the House and the country that the necessary is being done to try to improve the situation.

Mr Obeegadoo: Can the hon. Minister quote one single measure since 2006 to ensure that children below 16 are made to attend school?

Dr. Bunwaree: Of course, there is the Second Chance Programme, the Special Needs Education Programme and the close follow-up by the school psychologists. In fact, there are other measures that have been taken. There is the Enhancement Programme. We are trying to make the school environment become more attractive for children and students.

The Deputy Speaker: I will allow one last question from hon. Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think that I heard the hon. Minister mentioning that psychologists do follow up for prolonged absence. I would like him to confirm that and to inform the House how many psychologists the Ministry has so that this particular work can be done. Regarding the Second Chance programme are qualified teachers attached to this programme? When were these teachers being recruited, whether this Second Chance Programme is suitable for school leavers after Form II or III, that is, aged 12 or 13, whether this programme was meant for this category of students and what are the qualifications of those persons who are actually working on this Enhancement Programme?

Dr. Bunwaree: You allow the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I think that a proper question should be put. I will give all the information concerning the Second Chance Programme; it's a long reply. But in the reply that I gave, I said that one measure has already started in making the school environment become attractive for the children. Concerning psychologists, I also said that social workers get involved first and when they find that there is any psychological disorder, not only with the children, but sometimes with the environment around, not to say the parents, the psychologists enter into play.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Li Kwong Wing has informed the Chair that he has had to leave; therefore, we will move straightaway to question 1B/342.

RDA - GENERAL MANAGER - WORLD CUP FINALS 2010

(No. 1B/342) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the General Manager of the Road Development Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to whether the AJMC-Colas firm met the expenses incurred by the General Manager in terms of air tickets, stadium ticket and hotel accommodation in the context of the FIFA World Cup Finals 2010 and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Independent Commission Against Corruption has informed my Ministry of an inquiry related to the matter.

My Ministry has given its approval for ICAC officers to get access to all information from the Road Development Authority.

My Ministry has also reassured ICAC of its full support and collaboration in the matter under investigation. The hon. Members will appreciate that, at this particular junction, it will not be in order for me to disclose any further information relating directly to the investigation being carried out by ICAC.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will not go into the investigation carried out by ICAC, but I am sure that the hon. Minister will have looked at the file AJMC Colas. Can the hon. Minister tell us how many tenders has it won over the last two or three years?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a question which has been asked by one of the Members and I am going to place a copy of all the tenders in the Library of the National Assembly. If I am not mistaken, out of 26 contracts, they have obtained 14 and all through the Central Procurement Office, with an exception of one which was internal.

Mr Bérenger: Can the Tender Board rely on the recommendation of the RDA? Can we know - in all those contracts won by Colas - whether in every case it was not the RDA recommendation in favour of Colas?

The Deputy Speaker: Since there is a question specifically on that issue perhaps the hon. Leader of Opposition could just wait for that question to make whatever supplementary.

Dr. Sorefan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there was an ICAC case on the same person for having given the tender documents before tendering exercise was done to Colas?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of whether there was an investigation on the same person.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether in the past Colas has been regularly financing, giving favours directly to officers of the RDA, not only in terms of air travel, but in other facilities, that is, stay at hotels in Mauritius and abroad?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if such is the case the hon. Member can easily go to ICAC and depone. I am not aware of any such allegations and they have never come to me so far.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether pending the outcome of the inquiry by ICAC, he has taken measures for the General Manager to be suspended or being interdicted pending the outcome of the investigation?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there must be the presumption of innocence. I cannot take an action against him because investigations are on. Let the report be out and I'll take my responsibility as a responsible Minister.

CUREPIPE-PLAISANCE - LIGHTING SYSTEM - BREAKDOWNS

(No. 1B/343) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether he is aware that frequent breakdowns occur on the lighting system along the highway from Curepipe to Plaisance and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I wish to inform the House that the Municipal Council of Curepipe is responsible for the installation, maintenance and operation of the street lighting system from Wooton Round About to Midlands area. The lighting system along the highway from Midlands up to Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam Airport is taken care of by the Grand Port-Savanne District Council.

I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that the blackout which occurred in early July at Wooton Round About was due to 33 defective lamps. 14 defective lamps have already been replaced whereas the remaining 19 will be replaced by early next week.

I am informed by the Grand Port-Savanne District Council that there was a blackout between Midlands and Jawaharlall Nehru Hospital on 12 July 2010 and remedial action was taken on 15 July 2010 to address this problem. I am further informed that 32 defective lamps out of the 66 defective lamps detected in the course on inspections carried out by officers of the Council, have been replaced so far and the remaining 34 will be replaced by next week.

Dr. Sorefan: One supplementary question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning this issue of lamps up to the Airport lasts for some weeks and every now and then we have blackout there. It is going to be very dangerous and I think personally...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan, put your question directly!

Dr. Sorefan: Will the hon. Minister see with the District of Grand Port/Savanne that they do their job properly and that this does not happen every now and then twice or three times in a week?

Mr Aimée: Oui, M. le président et je dois ajouter que cela va se faire tout de suite cette semaine, mais les employés du *District Council* n'ont pas la compétence voulue pour stopper le

timer, ils n'ont pas le *know-how* pour le faire. Ils sont là simplement pour changer les ampoules...

(Interruptions)

Voilà pourquoi il y a ce laps de temps quand il y a défauts et réparations.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was driving through this highway last night and there was a total blackout. I would like to refer to PQ No. B/262 in September 2005 where the then hon. Minister stated that frequent breakdowns do occur due to earth leakage sensitive circuit breaker. In July 2007, in another PQ No. B/777, the then hon. Minister stated that breakdowns and blackout were due to the tripping of a main solar switch, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Five years later, we still have breakdowns, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, we would like to know from the hon. Minister what concrete action he is going to take to avoid any accident?

Mr Aimée: M. le président, les lampes électriques sautent assez souvent surtout...

(Interruptions)

Ce que je dois dire c'est qu'il se peut que, de temps en temps, il y ait des *breakdowns*. Mais les autorités locales ne sont pas directement responsables des lampes. Nous changeons seulement le *bulb*, alors que nous avons, d'après les documents que j'ai devant moi, des arrangements avec le CEB.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please address the Chair!

Mr Aimée: Ce ne sont pas les employés des autorités locales qui vont changer une ligne, qui vont s'occuper du *timer* et qui vont changer quelque chose qui est défectueux. Ce sont seulement les lampes, *that is, the bulbs only*.

Mr Bhagwan : Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this question has been raised here on several occasions, people have died, not only at La Vigie, but also in the North, on the main highway. Can the hon. Minister state or, at least, inquire, because the Local Authorities do not have the know-how, they are not equipped, they do not have funds to look after the lighting on the highway and it is high time to have a specialised unit or contract out in the public interest to save lives of people?

Mr Aimée: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: I will allow one last question from hon. Guimbeau!

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we would like to know once and for all who is responsible for maintenance? Is it the Energy Services Division, A. J. Maurel Construction who got the contract, the Grand Port District Council or the Central Electricity Board? And now we hear that it is the Municipality of Curepipe. We would like to know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who is responsible to get this problem fixed?

Mr Aimée: For five years, Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Central Electricity Board and the Local Authorities in year 2007. The salient points of arrangement are as follows -

“As the provider of electricity for the street lighting applications, CEB shall be responsible for the following, as the case may be -

Connecting and disconnecting the supplies leads to street lamps and decorative garlands where the leads are connected to CEB conductors;”

The Deputy Speaker: I think this is clear enough. We move to the next question please. Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

NTC - PRIVATISATION

(No. 1B/344) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation information as to whether privatisation thereof is envisaged, indicating if any offer has been received, and

- (a) if so, by whom, and
- (b) give details thereof.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that privatisation of the National Transport Corporation is not on the agenda of the Government.

ATHLETES – INSURANCE COVER

(No. 1B/345) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to insurance cover for athletes, he will give a list of the sports federations complying with paragraph 2 (d) of the Third Schedule to the Sports Act, indicating, in each case, details of the insurance policy.

(Withdrawn)

COMMISSION NATIONALE DU SPORT FEMININ (CNSF) - BOARD

(No. 1B/346) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the *Commission Nationale du Sport Féminin* (CNSF), he will give –

- (a) the composition of the Board, and
- (b) the date of the appointment of the Chairperson, indicating the activities organised since her appointment as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

PLAINE VERTE MEDI-CLINIC - CONSTRUCTION

(No. 1B/347) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Medi-Clinic at Plaine Verte, she will state -

- (a) the cost of construction thereof;
- (b) the expected dates of -
 - (i) completion of the construction works, and
 - (ii) it will be operational, and
- (c) the services that will be provided thereat.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the contract value for the construction of the medi-clinic at Plaine Verte is Rs53,412,624.00, inclusive of Value Added Tax.

As regards part (b) of the question, it is expected that the construction works will be completed by end of October this year, and the medi-clinic will be made operational one month after the handing-over of the building.

Concerning part (c) of the question, the services that will be provided will be the same as those offered at other medi-clinics. These include –

- General consultation
- Non-communicable Disease clinic
- Dressing
- Dispensing of drugs
- Midwifery/Antenatal clinic
- X-ray and ultra sound
- Pharmacy
- Dental services
- Ayurvedic medicine
- Laboratory services (mini lab services)
- Community Based Rehabilitation
- Family Planning
- Vaccination
- Health education.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the Idrice Goomany Area Health Centre would be closed when the medi-clinic will be operational?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: This is what will happen.

STC - RICE (RATION) - QUOTATIONS

(No. 1B/348) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Industry and Commerce whether, in regard to ration rice, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information, for the last order, as to –

- (a) the name of the companies from which quotations were sought;

- (b) the quantity;
- (c) the price;
- (d) the percentage of broken rice, and
- (e) whether the rice was sold to STCM Ltd and, if so, indicate the quantity and the price thereof.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that, for the last order –

- (i) On 11 March 2010, 14 companies were invited to submit quotations for the supply of 16,000 metric tons for period 01 April 2010 to January 2011. I am tabling a list of the 14 companies.
- (ii) As at the closing date, that is, on 15 March 2010, six companies had submitted quotations as follows –

	Company	Price CNF in USD/MT
	Garibsons Pvt Ltd	404.04
	B.A. Partners Ltd	434.00
	Asia Golden Rice Co Ltd	530.00
	Export Trading Co Ltd	422.00
	Meskay and Femtee Pvt Ltd	430.00
	Meskay and Femtee Trading Company Ltd	426.32

- (iii) The contract was awarded to Garibsons Pvt Ltd for 16,000 metric tons, at the rate of 404.04 USD per metric ton.

- (iv) According to STC specifications, the percentage of broken rice is 25%. I wish to inform the House that inspections of the quantity and quality of rice are carried out at the loading port by an independent surveyor, namely either SGS Ltd or Bureau Veritas (Pakistan), and that analysis of samples is carried out by the Mauritius Standards Bureau (MSB). On 22 June 2010, the MSB carried out analysis of samples and certified that the rice meets the STC specifications. The percentage of broken rice was 23.34%.

As regards part (e) of the question, I am informed by the STC that the rice was not sold to STCM Ltd.

Mr Lesjongard: With regard to the same commodity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand that, over a period of six months, the STC had recourse to two tenders, three quotations and three orders placed over a period of three months. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, in the case where order was placed ...

The Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. Minister answer first! If he confirms, then the hon. Member can put another question.

Mr Soodhun: According to the question that has been asked, it was the last order. But, in fact, it's true, order was placed on different occasions.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister whether compensation was paid with regard to the first order, that is, the order which was placed in January, and the amount of compensation paid?

The Deputy Speaker: Are we with the first or the last order? The question is with regard to the last order.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister has replied also for the first order.

The Deputy Speaker: If the Minister has replied, there is no problem.

Mr Soodhun: No compensation was paid to any company.

Mr Bérenger: I am given to understand that, when we import ration rice, it must be accompanied by a certificate from the country of origin's Standard Bureau. I heard the hon. Minister refer to other certification. Did we get that certificate from the country of origin's

Standard Bureau, and, if yes, can it be laid on the Table of the National Assembly, and, if not, whether whatever certification the Minister referred to can be laid on the Table of the Assembly?

Mr Soodhun: I thank the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, we have both - Pakistan and Mauritius. I am going to table both.

Mr Bérenger: We are buying rice from Garibsons, Pakistan, not through a tender, but through quotations. Does the hon. Minister find it normal that Garibsons from Pakistan defaulted in 2007, took part in the October tender - not quotations – and was ruled out non responsive? It took part in the second tender exercise in November last year - the first one was October and the second one November last year – and, again, it did not qualify. It was non responsive. Does the Minister find it normal that a company that defaulted and was found twice to be non responsive gets finally a chance to supply Mauritius, because it is not through tender, but through so-called quotations?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of any default on the part of this company. In fact, I personally do not agree with the consignment of this company. This is why the Prime Minister himself called me, and my Ministry asked the CEO of Garibsons Ltd. to come to Mauritius. He came to Mauritius, we discussed, and he was warned that we have 10,500 metric tonnes remaining. We have insisted that he has to change the quality of the rice. They have already signed the contract; we can't just withdraw the contract. They can sue us in court. But what we can do is to insist on the quality, and I did it. We have warned him that, if next time the consignment is the same, it will be the last time that we are going to choose the company.

Mr Bérenger: *C'est incroyable!* The Minister says that he is not aware of what I am saying. At least, he would check that they defaulted after having obtained the tender in 2007! They were non responsive every time a tender was issued in October and November. So, he does not check on what I am saying, so-called quotations are issued, and he deals directly with the number one man at Garibsons.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is just asking the question. As I mentioned, I have no information, but I can assure him that, at no time, there was any default from this company. What we have is a tender of 2000 metric tonnes...

Mr Bérenger: Not a tender, a quotation!

Mr Soodhun: We did have a quotation, and he complied with it.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Leader of the Opposition does not know what he is asking!

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, address the Chair, please! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Minister did mention that he is not aware. We have his answer.

(Interruptions)

The question was regarding a particular order, the last order. I allowed the hon. Member a question as regards the previous exercise and the hon. Minister stated that he is not aware. He cannot be more precise than that.

Mr Seeruttun: Being given that the hon. Minister has said that the broken rice level was 25%, may I ask him whether he is satisfied with the quality of the rice and, if not, what does he intend to do?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I myself mentioned that I was not satisfied with the quality of the rice. We have taken action immediately.

Mr Lesjongard: When I asked the hon. Minister whether STC had incurred any loss with regard to the cancellation of the offer from Chaiyaporn rice and Food Products Company Ltd., his answer was in the negative. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he, himself, stated the following in a PNQ -

“This caused us a big problem at that time. We had to cancel this consignment and it is true to say that there has been a loss because of this problem”.

May we know which is which, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not know which part of my PNQ the hon. Member was referring to. They themselves had asked for quotations in the past.

The Deputy Speaker: The question was regarding a particular order. We cannot now open the floodgate and answer questions on consignment in general. I will allow a last question from hon. Ganoo.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since this matter is of so much importance, can the hon. Minister - since he himself has confessed that he does not know the past record of Garibsons - therefore make a statement to the House on the next occasion to enlighten the House on whether this company has defaulted, has been non-responsive in past exercises? Can he also tell us what are the guarantees and performance bonds that have been asked from Garibsons for this present order?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first I will have to look into the matter to see what are the measures we usually take. First, if the performance bonds may be ceased immediately if we are not satisfied and, second, if the contract may be terminated by default. This action can be taken at any time.

Mr Bérenger: Is the hon. Minister saying that they are purchasing now from Garibsons through a simple quotation? Is he saying that there is a performance bond in force? The hon. Minister should check well before answering. Is he saying that there is a performance bond of this order concerning Garibsons, although it has been only through quotations?

Mr Soodhun: We do have a contract signed on this quotation. Among six quotations, this was the lowest bidder.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, the question is simply if you have got a performance bond for this order. If you have got one, you say so.

Mr Soodhun: I'll have to check. I can't give the answer offhand.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: If we could now move on to Basmati rice after *du riz ration!*

'BASMATI' RICE – IMPORTATION

(No. 1B/349) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise, Cooperatives and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to basmati rice, he will, for the period 2005-2010, state -

(a) the amount thereof imported;

- (b) the measures in place to ensure that the rice meets the quality expected of rice with the label basmati, and
- (c) if any sanction is taken against importers who pass off rice as Basmati.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, importation of rice is liberalised and import permits are granted by the Import Division of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that out of a total of 349,178 tonnes of rice imported for the period 2005 to 2010, 135,849 tonnes have been declared as Basmati rice.

As regards part (b), it is the Mauritius Standards Bureau which again falls under the purview of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce which normally prescribes norms and standards. There exists a Mauritian standard which is MS 106:1993, for rice which is based on the ISO 7301: 1988. This standard is, however, being revised. On the other hand, importers are required to submit a certificate of conformity of the consignment to specifications of Basmati rice, as established by the country of origin. This serves to ensure that the quality of the rice is protected.

As regards part (c), no complaint has been registered up to now at the Consumer Protection Unit of my Ministry.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Basmati rice has a strong brand name. Can I know from the hon. Minister what measures are taken to ensure that the Basmati rice that is being sold in Mauritius is actually of Basmati brand? We heard from the hon. Minister that a certificate is required from the country exporting the rice to Mauritius, but what about the case of mixing occurring in Mauritius once the basmati has hit Mauritius?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: In fact, my colleague has talked to me on this matter and it is presently under investigation. At this stage, this is the only official figures and official facts that I have.

Mr Bérenger: I listened to the hon. Minister carefully and he has said that importers are required to submit a certificate of conformity of the consignment to specifications of basmati rice as established by the country of origin. In Pakistan, in India, they have the standards and, according to our regulations, the importers are required to submit a certificate that it is in

conformity with basmati rice in the country of origin. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether importers are submitting such certificates?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: In fact, it is the Ministry of Industry which is looking at this. The Consumer Protection Unit of my Ministry is in charge at the retail level.

Mr Bérenger: I think the hon. Minister should address the issue with his colleague who said in the House that importers are required to submit a certificate of conformity and so on. Has he not taken the trouble to check whether importers are submitting such a certificate or if they are being required to do so?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I humbly request the hon. Leader of the Opposition to ask the question to my colleague Minister.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Order!

Mr Uteem: We heard the hon. Minister mentioning that the importation of rice has been liberalised. In view of this whole issue about Basmati rice, is there any policy to increase the amount of Basmati rice imported by the State Trading Corporation?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! I think this question should be addressed to the substantive Minister.

NTA HEAD OFFICE, CASSIS – LEASE AGREEMENT

(No. 1B/350) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the building housing the National Transport Authority Head Office at Cassis, he will state –

- (a) the terms of the lease agreement, indicating -
 - (i) the monthly rent;
 - (ii) the date of its termination, and
 - (iii) whether it is proposed to renew same, and
- (b) the number of parking lots available to members of the staffs and the public.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Transport Authority that it is renting a building of 2,890 m² for use as Head Office, since 16 January 2000. The present lease, which took effect as from 16 January 2010, is for a period of three years. The monthly rent, inclusive of VAT, for the first year is Rs576,955, the second year is Rs622,815 and the third year is Rs668,675.

As regards part (a) (iii), no decision has yet been taken as to whether the lease agreement will be renewed or otherwise.

As far as part (b) is concerned, the number of parking lots available for the staff is 25, whereas no parking is provided for public use. Parking for the public is available on roadsides within walking distance from the office.

Mr Nagalingum: Can the hon. Minister tell us how many cases of larceny there has been since 2008?

The Deputy Speaker: This has nothing to do with the original question. The hon. Member should come with a specific question on that issue. Next question, hon. Seeruttun!

DEUX FRERES-BAMBOUS VIRIEUX - LANDSLIDE

(No. 1B/351) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development whether he is aware of the risk of landslide occurring in the range from Deux Frères to Bambous Virieux and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that Government proposes to take, indicating the time frame.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is fully aware of the risk of landslide occurring in the range of Deux Frères to Bambous Virieux.

Since no local expertise is available, Government is seeking foreign technical help from Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA-Japan) and France to look into the problem of landslides, landslide-prone areas and the setting up of a landslide monitoring unit at the MPI.

The time frame for the study and intervention at the landslide-prone areas will depend totally on confirmation from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency of France to go ahead with the project since expertise in the field of geotechnology is not available at the level of my Ministry.

ST HUBERT - MULTIPURPOSE COMPLEX - CONSTRUCTION

(No. 1B/352) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a multipurpose complex at St Hubert, he will state where matters stand.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that currently there is a village hall at St Hubert whose construction dates back in the 1960s and is a derelict building. The village hall was being used by the inhabitants of both St Hubert and St Hilaire and was also accommodating a kindergarten.

In view of the risk the building was posing, the Grand Port/Savanne District Council had, in February 2009, decided to shift the service offered in a rented building at Doya Street, St Hilaire.

The Grand Port/Savanne District Council has approved the construction of a village hall at St Hubert and the project may be implemented in the financial year 2011, subject to availability of funds from the Local Infrastructure Fund. The existing derelict building, previously used as village hall, would be pulled down to accommodate the proposed new village hall.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish also to inform the House that with the implementation of the new Local Government legislation, a number of infrastructural works will be undertaken, including the construction of village halls and community centres for the use of the community.

EAU BLEUE - SUGARCANE FIELDS - PULVINARIA PESTS

(No. 1B/353) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether he is aware of the alarming situation caused by the presence of Pulvinaria pests affecting the sugar cane plantations in the regions of Eau Bleue in the factory area of Riche en Eau and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that are being taken.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Farmers Service Corporation of the increased presence this year of Pulvinaria pests (*poux à poche blanche*) in sugarcane fields in the region of Eau Bleue.

This situation has been reported to the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute. On the recommendation of the Institute, the planters concerned have been advised to thrash the fields affected and send their canes to the milling factory without burning during the crop season. The planters have also been advised that where there is a minor incidence of this pest during intercrop season, they should thrash their fields, but where more severe cases are noted, the canes have to be stubble shaved and left in the fields to prevent spread of the pest to adjacent fields.

I am also advised that the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute has effected since January 2010 several visits to cane fields affected in the South East region. The Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute has also recommended the release of coccinellid beetles (*poule bon dieu*) to destroy the pest. I understand that this has been done in the affected fields.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know that the preventive method being used is a natural one despite that we are not having concrete solution to that problem. We know that the farmers have suffered a decrease in the price of sugar for the last few years and also, with the euro going down, the proceeds are really getting reduced year after year. Now with that problem, can the hon. Minister contemplate having some sort of compensation to those planters being given that there is no real solution to that problem?

Mr Faugoo: I cannot give any commitment in the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but surely we will look into it.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, PQ No. 1B/355! PQ No. 1B/354 has been withdrawn.

MEDICAL COUNCIL - DR. MRS S. R – REGISTRATION

(No. 1B/354) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the application by Dr. Mrs S. R. for registration as specialist, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Medical Council, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

PRIVATE CLINICS - RADIOLOGICAL SERVICES - FEES

(No. 1B/355) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to radiological services, including Computed Axial Tomography (CT) scans and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) offered by private clinics to public hospitals, she will, for the years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 to date, give a list of the private clinics, indicating the annual fees paid to each of them.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the list of private clinics which offered radiological services to public hospitals during period 2007 to date as well as the fees paid to each of them.

EU - FISH – EXPORT

(No. 1B/356) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Fisheries and Rodrigues whether, in regard to the export of fish to the European Union, he will state if a Competent Authority has been appointed and, if so, state –

- (a) his name
- (b) the date of appointment, and
- (c) by whom he was appointed

Mr Von-Mally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Competent Authority was set up under Section 2 of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act (Export of Fish and Fish Products Regulations 2006), subsequently amended in 2009, as the division of Veterinary Services (DVS) of the Ministry responsible for the subject of Agriculture. The Competent Authority is the body to which competence has been conferred for the organisation of official controls for certification of fish and fish products for the export market.

Mr Jean Yvon Thépaut was employed as Officer in Charge of the Competent Authority on contract basis with effect from 01 October 2008 by the then Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security.

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Minister is saying that he was appointed in 2008 on a contract basis. Can I know for how long the contract is?

Mr Von-Mally: For one year.

Mr Baloomoody: He was appointed in 2008, we are in 2010 now. Do we have a competent authority? Has his contract been renewed?

Mr Von-Mally: His contract has been continuously renewed.

Mr Bérenger: May we know whether this Competent Authority is being challenged by anybody and, if yes, the details?

Mr Von-Mally: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that it is not being challenged. In fact, we have been asked by the European Union to have a completely autonomous Competent Authority and we are working in that direction.

Mr Baloomoody: Is the hon. Minister aware that a Mauritian company has challenged the authority of that Competent Authority? In fact, a *mise en demeure* was sent to him in June 2010.

Mr Von-Mally: Challenged the competency of Mr Thépaut?

Mr Baloomoody: A Mauritian company in the export of fish has challenged the authority of that Competent Authority and he has caused a *mise en demeure* to be sent to that gentleman on 11 June 2010.

Mr Von-Mally: Everybody can challenge, but if it is before the Court, it is personal, but the Competent Authority is here and is working seriously.

The Deputy Speaker: We move on to the next question.

BALACLAVA - STATE LAND - LEASE

(No. 1B/357) **Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State lands forming part of former War Department Land Batterie Dartois at Balaclava (Ville Vallio) in the District of Pamplemousses, he will state if, since July 2005 to date, any plot of land thereat has been leased and, if so, give –

- (a) the name of the beneficiaries, and
- (b) in each case -
 - (i) the extent of the land leased, and
 - (ii) terms and conditions and purpose of the lease.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer to PQ 1B/166, PQ 1B/265 and PQ 1B/311. All these questions refer to the same subject of lease of State land being part of former War Department Land Batterie d'Artois at Balaclava (Ville Vallio) in respect of which the hon. Member has himself made a statement to the Police last year.

As the Police inquiry is on, it would neither be in order nor proper to make any further statement on this matter at this stage.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I have been to the Police, it is because I have got no answer from Parliament.

The Deputy Speaker: No, please, in the light of the answer, I will allow supplementaries, but the hon. Member must make sure that they are within the answer.

Mr Guimbeau: I would just like to inform the House the reason as to why I have been to the Police; it is because I don't get any answer from the hon. Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: No, the hon. Member should ask his question. If there is no question we will move on to the next question.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to table a document which has been on the Net and which is a public document, just to inform the House and the public out there what is going on at Balaclava.

The Deputy Speaker: No, the hon. Member should ask questions. If there is no question, I will move on to the next one. All right hon. Guimbeau, we will move to the next question.

LAND COMPULSORY ACQUISITION – NOVEMBER 2007-JULY 2010

(No. 1B/358) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to compulsory acquisition by Government since November 2007 to date, he will give the number of plots of land acquired, indicating, in each case -

- (a) the reasons therefor,
- (b) the names of the former owners,
- (c) the location and the extent of land,
- (d) the amount of compensation payable as per the assessment of the Government Valuer, and
- (e) the actual compensation paid, indicating the date of payment.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, information covering the period September 2005 to 15 September 2008 has already been placed in the Library of the National Assembly in response to the previous Parliamentary Question B/410 of 06 June 2008 from the hon. Member.

Details for the period 16 September 2008 to date are being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as the exercise is completed.

Mr Guimbeau: Can we know at least the number of plots of land acquired?

The Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Minister has the information he can...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Kasenally: I am afraid, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't have all the details because the information is still being compiled and we have already given part of the answer covering the period disaster and the rest is being compiled.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question! Hon. Guimbeau!

INTER-COLLEGE SPORTS COMPETITION

(No. 1B/359) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether Government proposes to re-introduce the Inter-college sports competition and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Games, formerly known as the National Inter College Games was reviewed in August 2008 by my Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, the Mauritius Secondary Schools Sport Association and National Sports Federations with a view to giving a boost to school sports. The question of re-introduction therefore does not arise.

Six sports disciplines were involved in this first edition, in 2008 namely athletics, badminton, basketball, football, table tennis and volleyball.

In December 2008, i.e. three months after I assumed office, I had a meeting with the Union of Secondary School Managers, the MSSSA and other stakeholders to discuss the organisational aspects of the second edition and it was agreed that the MSSSA will take the lead to organise the National Games as from 2009 in close collaboration as usual with my Ministry. For this edition again, the same six sports disciplines were involved.

As regards the 2010 edition, I wish to inform the hon. Member that preliminaries and finals at regional levels have already been completed in majority of the sports disciplines.

However, the MSSSA has informed my Ministry that the calendar of activities had to be reviewed due to several reasons, namely, time constraint, the large number of students involved for the Athletic competitions, policy of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources not to organise major activities in the 3rd term due to School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Exams and the holding of the last general election. Consequently, the finals of the athletic competition will not be held exceptionally this year.

But, the MSSSA will during the beginning of the 3rd term organise the finals for football, volleyball, table tennis, badminton and basketball at national level.

In the context of the 4th edition in 2011, a joint Technical Committee will be set up involving MSSSA, Ministry of Youth & Sports, Ministry of Education and Human Resources and Sports Federations to monitor the preparation and timely, implementation of the calendar of activities.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, did the Minister say that for 2010 there will be no inter-college games?

Mr Ritoo: As I stated in my answer, exceptionally the finals of the athletics competition will not be held this year due to time constraint because we had the general election and it is also the policy of the Ministry of Education not to hold athletics competition during the third term.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Minister give some precision who takes part in those games? Is it all the colleges?

The Deputy Speaker: This has been answered, I understand. It is regional.

Mr Ritoo: It is organised by the MSSSA in collaboration with the Ministry for all the colleges.

Mrs Ribot: Can we know from the hon. Minister when the regional competitions were held?

Mr Ritoo: The MSSSA organised the regional competitions and also at national level.

Mrs Ribot: The question that I'm asking is about the dates on which the regional sports were held?

Mr Ritoo: They were held at the beginning of the first term.

Mrs Ribot: Does the hon. Minister mean that between the beginning of the first term and the end of the second term no date was available for the holding of the National Athletic Competition?

Mr Ritoo: As I stated in my answer, there was general election and also because a large number of students were participating in the athletic games, so it was not possible to continue with this activity. We had to withhold everything for one month during the electoral campaign.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't think that the students were being held up in the electoral campaign.

The Deputy Speaker: This question has been answered. We know the reason. Hon. Guimbeau, last question!

Mr Guimbeau: In reply to PQ No. B/144...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please!

Mr Guimbeau: In reply to PQ No. B/144 in April 2008, there were two committees which were set up. A technical committee comprising of officials of his Ministry and the Board of Education and there was an implementation committee comprising of all stakeholders, including sports federations. Can the hon. Minister table the report of both committees?

Mr Ritoo: There is no problem to table the reports.

AJMC-COLAS –INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS - CONTRACT

(No. 1B/363) Mr A.Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to local infrastructure projects, including construction of roads and expansion of the road network under the Stimulus Package Scheme, he will state the number of contracts awarded to AJMC–Colas firm, indicating, in each case -

- (a) the date of the award, and
- (b) the value of the contract.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am placing a copy of the list of contracts that have been awarded to AJMC-Colas firm in the Library.

Mr Bérenger: Concerning the question which I put earlier on, the Central Tender Board by its new name relies on technical reports, appraisals and so on from the Ministry or bodies concerned. Can we know the number of tenders with AJMC–Colas won, whether in all those cases the RDA recommended Colas?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the information that I have, out of 26 contracts, AJMC–Colas firm obtained 14 of them, including two cases where they were in joint-venture, and all these projects have been procured through open advertised bidding strictly in accordance with Public Procurement Act of 2006 for all the projects except one. One was internal, other bids were received and evaluated and the award was approved by the Central Procurement Board. But, at the same time, I would like to inform the hon. Member that RDA has nothing to do as far as the allocation of contracts was concerned. But, time and again, officers of RDA, that is engineers, are requested to come to CPB's office and to take in the evaluation process. But CPB is fully free, independent; they don't even depend on the recommendation made by RDA. Now gone are the days in the past where RDA used to make recommendations, but now CPB of its own picks and chooses engineers, even from outside, undertakes all types of evaluations. That is the reason I am mentioning that all these works were done entirely, independently by CPB.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister give us the value *in toto* of these 14 contracts?

Mr Bachoo: Well, one thing I can say is that in all the 14 cases AJMC – Colas was the lowest, but I have not computed the figures. I am going to place a copy in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Lesgongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister the duration period of those 14 contracts awarded?

Mr Bachoo: It all depends. It starts with one contract, which is above Rs2 billion. For example, Terre Rouge/Verdun will take almost two years and others can be of months only. It all depends on the quantum of works that have been given to that contractor.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question!

TOURISM AUTHORITY - CHAIRMAN – CHAUFFEUR-DRIVEN CAR

(No. 1B/364) **Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the Chairman of the Board of the Tourism Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the expenses incurred in connection with his utilisation of a chauffeur-driven car for the financial year 2007-2008.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, during the period 2007-2008, in accordance with current practice, a car was put at the disposal of the Chairman of the Tourism Authority together with a driver attached to that car, whenever he had to attend official meetings, committees and site visits.

The vehicle was given on loan to the Tourism Authority by the MPTA from 10 April 2006, up to 13 January 2010 in connection with the activities carried out by the Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that, for the same period, which relates to the question, that is the year 2007 and 2008, a total amount of Rs110,770.11 has been incurred in respect of expenses for fuel charges, insurance and repairs and servicing of the car.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to add that I have taken cognizance of the comments made by the Audit Department in its report for financial year 2007-2008 on the Tourism Authority and I have been made to understand that the Authority has given the explanations mentioned above - and which I am giving, in fact, now - to the Audit Department.

I also wish to point out that the above-mentioned Chairman is no more in office since 04 May this year.

I have been made to understand that the authority has given the explanations mentioned above and which I am giving in fact now. These explanations have been given to the Audit Department. I also wish to point out that the above-mentioned Chairman is no more in office since 04 May this year.

Mr Ramano: Le ministre peut-il confirmer que le Chairman n'est pas *eligible to a chauffeur-driven car*?

Mr Bodha: The Chairman, being not an Executive Chairman, was not entitled to a chauffeur-driven car, but as per practice, often Chairmen are given a car to attend official meetings, committees and site visits.

FRENCH-OWNED COMPANIES – BPO & CALL CENTRES

(No. 1B/365) **Mr K. Ramano** (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to French owned companies registered in Mauritius, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof operating as call centres and in the Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) sector, and
- (b) measures taken by Government in the light of the announcement made by the French Government in regard to the delocalisation of business activities of French Enterprises (BPO).

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Board of Investment (BOI) that, currently, there are 19 call centres and 45 Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) operators which are French-owned companies.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am made to understand by the BOI that the announcement made by the French Government would impact mostly on North African countries such as Morocco and Tunisia since employment in French-owned Call Centres in these countries range between 30,000 to 60,000.

The BOI has, nevertheless, put in place a strategy to diversify the export of services to other markets namely to Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Canada for French-speaking operators.

The BOI is monitoring closely the matter and it will take such steps as may be required once additional information is obtained on the precise objectives and targets of the announcement. It is expected that the issue will be discussed in France in September 2010, when Parliament will resume its work.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, le nom de l'île Maurice a été cité en plusieurs occasions dans différents journaux et il y a le Secrétaire d'État à l'emploi, M. Laurent Wauquiez, qui a

expressément mentionné le nom de l'île Maurice. Le ministre peut-il faire des commentaires à ce sujet ?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Sir, once again I would like to reiterate what I have said. From the Ministry of Labour in France, we were given to understand that this concerns only north of Africa, that is, Tunisia and Morocco and more precision will be brought to our attention when the French Parliament will resume in September 2010.

Mr Bérenger: I don't know why on earth he went to the French Labour Ministry. The statement was made by *le Secrétaire d'État à l'Emploi* – my colleague has just referred to – I am quoting: “*prépare des mesures anti-délocalisation*” in general not targeting Tunisia or Morocco. Those two names are mentioned because they are next door and they have the largest number of *centres d'appels* and so on, but Mauritius was also mentioned, so why did we go to the Ministry of Labour of France of all places?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: We have tried to look for all the information where we can gather it and I would like to inform the hon. Member that necessary steps have been taken in the unlikely event that it delocalises from Mauritius also.

Mr Bérenger: Is the hon. Minister aware that, among the measures mentioned by the French Minister – *pas du travail mais de l'emploi* – there is a *surtaxe sur les sociétés françaises ayant délocalisées - une surtaxe* which would hit us directly, also *de l'aide financière directe pour empêcher les firmes françaises de se délocaliser*. Therefore, can I know from the Minister whether this has been taken up with the French authorities either here or in Paris and with the European Union because it is very possible that if there is a *surtaxe*, it is struck down by the European Commission.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed that a tax surplus is originating from abroad and terminating in France. This measure, however, can be against European Union directives and can also cause prejudice to telecommunication companies termination calls in France.

LE MORNE HERITAGE SITE – SIGN POSTS

(No. 1B/368) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the Le Morne Heritage Site, he will state

if consideration will be given for the putting up of conspicuous sign posts at different spots in the region to indicate its exact location.

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for flagging this issue. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Ms Stéphanie Anquetil, the former Chairperson of the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, had already drawn my attention to the dearth of sign posts indicating the World Heritage Site. I have already issued directives to correct this shortcoming.

In the meantime, two informative panels have been installed at the main northern and southern entrance points to the World Heritage Property. Unfortunately, one of them has been stolen.

A third sign board has been installed at the International Slave Route Monument at Le Morne.

RODRIGUES – HEALTH DIRECTOR – MANAGEMENT MEETINGS

(No. 1B/369) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the health sector in Rodrigues, she will state –

- (a) whether the Health Director participates in management meetings at her Ministry and, if so, the frequency of his attendance thereat and, if not, why not, and
- (b) whether consideration will be given for the setting up of a Community Health Unit and a Medical Social Unit and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Health Director does not participate in the management meetings held at my Ministry.

However, there are regular meetings in Mauritius between senior officials of my Ministry and the Departmental Head as well as the Health Director of Rodrigues. The last meeting was held on 09 June 2010.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Health Director of Rodrigues that the services related to vaccination, school health, home visits and counselling on health matters are being provided by the Preventive Unit in the absence of a Community Health Unit. I am further informed by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly that further consideration is being given for the setting up of a Community Health Unit.

Consideration is also being given to set up a Medical Social Unit with the recruitment of a Medical Social Worker by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and all the necessary technical support will be provided by my Ministry.

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. GUIMBEAU – DOCUMENT - TABLED

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I would like to make a statement in relation to a document which has been tabled by hon. Guimbeau. I have had a look at the document. The hon. Member stated that it was a public document in his hand, but it would seem that the document is not a public one. It contains anonymous allegations and it is not signed. I will ask the hon. Member to take back this document please.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, 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.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the following Bills were read the third time and passed.

- (a) The Supplementary Appropriation (2008-2009) (No. 2) Bill (No. XII of 2010)
- (b) The Supplementary Appropriation (2009) Bill (No. XIII of 2010)

At 4.09 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.44 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

MOTION

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME 2010-2015

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following motion of the hon. Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal (Ms S. Anquetil).

“This Assembly resolves that the Government Programme 2010-2015 presented to this Assembly on Tuesday 08 June 2010, copy of which has been circularised amongst Honourable Members, be and is hereby approved”.

Question again proposed.

(4.45 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Mr S. Mohamed): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me, at the very outset, to thank the population for having, once again, renewed their trust in the Government under the able leadership of our Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. This is a testimony of the population endorsing the various reforms/measures taken by Government to put the economy on the path of sustainable development, based on the values of unity, equity and modernity.

It is important, Mr Speaker, Sir, to remember that, during the previous term, when I, myself, was a backbencher - it is my first speech in this Parliament as Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment - the Government between 2005 and 2010 led by the Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navin Ramgoolam, had had to face many daunting crises. It seems as though that many seem to easily

forget the past, important elements of our recent history. This recent history has shown to one and all that the Government, led by this Prime Minister, has had the ability, the capacity, the knowledge, the means, and has come up with results, in spite of many of the crises, be it the fuel crisis, the global financial crisis, the petroleum crisis, all types of crises and, even now, recently, the price of sugar dropping by 37%, the Multi-Fibre Agreement disappearance. In spite of all those crises, we have managed, as a Government, to satisfy the population, and it is only because we have satisfied the population that we have come back to power. It is very important to be honest when one tries to talk about a new way of doing politics; one should not try to forget the recent past.

Before I go into details of the Government Programme as such, and specifically with regard to what my Ministry will be endeavouring to achieve, based on the Government Programme, allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to reflect on the excellent speech that was made by my hon. friend the first Member for Constituency No. 3, and I would like to congratulate him for that. At the last sitting, he made an excellent speech; it was his maiden speech. I guess it is fair game to say that nothing was done in five years in Constituency No. 3 by our Government and that all developments in Constituency No. 3 were only done by the Government of which the MMM formed part of before 2005. I think this is very unfair criticism. Why do I say it is unfair? True it is that he did say - and I have to be honest - that no houses, for instance, social housing, was built in five years in Constituency No. 3. I totally agree. The difference is that I will agree where it is true. It is true, Mr Speaker, Sir, that nothing was built in five years in Constituency No. 3. What is also true is that, between 2000 and 2005, nothing also was built in that constituency.

(Interruptions)

Now, let us put everything in perspective. When we are to call a spade a spade, let us basically look at the truth. We cannot come up with half truth; we have to come up with the truth. We cannot qualify the truth as being something else, but the truth. The truth is, as he had told me at the last sitting, when he was making his excellent speech, that there is no need for me to feel in any way aimed by what is being said. Let me say the same thing. I am not aiming at any particular person or individual, but I am only speaking the truth. And the truth is: there is a need for social housing in Constituency No. 3, and it is unfortunate that, for the last five years, nothing was built. It is even more unfortunate because, in ten years, nothing was built, and that is, in fact, something which I am addressing as Member of Parliament of Constituency No. 3. I have already had meetings with the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands where land has already been identified because there is a lot of people in our Constituency No. 3 who not only need houses, but there are some of them who can't even afford a deposit of Rs70,000. They are poor people who can't even afford to pay rent, as you would all agree, and maybe sites and services as a project in that particular area. Those matters have already been discussed, and I am happy to say the very good help that I am getting from my colleague, the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands, with regard to this particular issue. It will do one thing which is different. What it will achieve is that it will be different to the absence of houses having been built there in the last five years. And it will also differ from the absence of any impetus on the part of the then Government, now the Opposition, of which the hon. first Member of Constituency No. 3 belongs to, to build any single house when they were in power. It is something which not only I have the responsibility to address, but I say it out

loud, it will be addressed and it will be sorted out. That is a promise I made during the electoral campaign and it is a promise that I will keep.

With regard to other projects, I remember that the hon. Member made a comment that the Islamic Cultural Centre is a baby of the MMM Government at the time. It is very unfair to say that. True it is that it was built during the mandate of that Government, but the money that came from abroad was used for constructing it. Let's not forget that foreign countries helped to input money to build it, namely Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, etc. All those foreign Governments helped. It is not fair to come and say, and it would also not be fair on my part, if I were to come during these five years and say, that we have done something in that constituency or anywhere in Mauritius when it is not the Government of Mauritius that is spending its own money to build. That would not be fair. I think, once again, that one should be very careful. True it is there was a swimming pool that was built during their mandate as referred to by the hon. Member. What is a swimming pool? Let's be honest! A swimming pool is a container that contains water. If there are holes in there, it is not a swimming pool. It is, what we call, a sieve. A sieve was built by the then Government. Fair enough! It's an excellent job. And it was this Government, as from 2005, that had to make sure that the sieve turned into what was a pool. Maybe this is the reason why they are so good at building sieves. Precisely, it could not be used because it was a sieve.

(Interruptions)

I am speaking the truth! Unlike them, I do not hide the truth! Learn from that! What I am saying here is that maybe, they have this habit of building sieves. In Les Salines also another pool was built. It is also a sieve, and until today the sieve has to be turned into a pool very soon by the good work of this Government again.

What about the upgrading of St François Xavier Stadium for Rs30 m.? For that stadium also, money was used from FIFA while we were in power in order to put a synthetic turf on this particular stadium. I will not say it's us because money came from abroad and I have to be honest. But what we have to remember is how bad that sewerage network at Military Road was and the upgrading of the reticular network at Cité Martial for Rs40 m. What about the construction of the Municipal complex at St François Xavier? What about the Abercrombie, Vallée Pitot bypass via Military Road? What about the resurfacing of the whole street network throughout the constituency? What about, at least, the setting-up of a centre which is now the MITD in the constituency? One may criticise the way it works, but the fact is that there is a will, and there was a will in the previous Government that continues today to show that, not only is it important to come and pretend to tar roads - because as far as I am concerned, tarring of roads is not really sufficient but what you have to do for the youngsters of that particular area is to bring *la formation*, to see to it that they can come out of poverty and get a job. That is what is important. At least, we have addressed such important matters. We have gone forward and invested into a building.

True it is that not enough members of that particular constituency - the inhabitants - are making use of such a facility. I have already had meetings with Prof. Dubois of the MITD, and I have asked him that it is not only important for him to change this curriculum, but *la formation*, the training availability in that centre. Why is it so important? It is because at the particular moment, if you want to obtain some sort of certificate from that *centre de formation*, the MITD, you need to have a minimum of Form III in order to start your process of *formation*. I have insisted that a lot of people in this constituency do not even have the CPE. But they are good enough to be able to have *formation*. He has promised that as

from September there is going to be new intake with people who do not even have CPE to learn how to become electricians, plumbers and all other types of training which will be given to them in order for them to get jobs.

Not only is social housing at the top of our agenda, but *la creation d'emploi* also. Thank God, I am now in a position where I have facts and figures before me, Mr Speaker, Sir, which show that we have a huge problem of mismatch in Mauritius. This morning, I did not have to answer a question from a Member who was not present. The question was a situation of unemployment. How many people lost employment in the Textile and Tourism factory? Those figures are interesting actually. When I look at those figures, between January and June of 2010, in the textile sector, 224 people lost their jobs and in the tourism sector, 115 people lost their jobs. But, at the same time, for that period between January and June of 2010, there were 27,082 vacancies at the level of my Ministry. Those figures are very alarming. At the same time, you lose only this number of jobs in those two sectors, but there are more than 27,000 jobs available and the problem is that we cannot find enough people to fill in those vacancies. Why can't we find enough people to fill in? It is simply – and I have to be once again very candid, and I will say it - because a lot of people do not want to work odd hours in Mauritius. That is why today we have more than 29,000 expatriates working in Mauritius. A lot of Mauritians do not want to go into the private sector. Why? A lot of hon. Members here, even those in the Opposition would agree, that most people who come to see us on Wednesdays in our constituency, the only thing that they ask is jobs. They ask for jobs at the Municipal Council, the District Council or Government. There is a culture in Mauritius - and it is very sad - that when you go and work in Government there is this feeling that you can obtain the security.

But what is important for job seekers is that there are jobs available. There are 27,082 vacancies from January to June and we cannot fill them in. This is an urgent matter to address. There is a huge mismatch. I am also happy to point out that at the level of my Ministry work has already started with the officers of my Ministry and other Ministries, getting together trying to address particularly this issue of mismatch. Yes, we are thankful to foreigners coming to Mauritius. They have also contributed to the development of our country. We are, but a country of immigrants. At some time our forefathers came to this country from other shores, and we have all contributed to the development of this country historically. Again, people from China, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and other countries are coming. They are also helping. We have to be thankful. But, I, as Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment would like to see more Mauritians taking up those jobs and to do that we have urgently to address this issue of mismatch. This culture of Mauritians wanting to work only for Government is something that should be discouraged. I am not saying that no Mauritians should go and work for Government, but they should also be encouraged to see that in the private sector there are jobs that are available, that will give a good salary, that would help them because years and years they have been unemployed and the importance here is to come back home with a pay packet. This is what should be encouraged and this is what I will encourage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a known fact that the very best way to protect our people and to eradicate poverty is to provide them with jobs. Employment is the main source of livelihood and self-fulfilment for most women and men. It is critical to the way women and men live and view their lives. A well nurtured and productive labour force contributes towards a dynamic economy and equitable society. It is therefore important to work and this is what my Ministry will do, to

work towards the goal of decent and remunerative work for all women and men seeking such work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. In that perspective, in order to address those objectives, my Ministry is very soon coming up with a National Employment Policy which will be a crucial instrument, which will help to focus efforts at the national level to the world's economic development. Moreover, it will indicate the direction in which we should proceed regarding the mobilisation and better use of our human resources.

We are all conscious of the fact that wider consultation as well as consensus is needed in order to make the National Employment Policy a success. My Ministry has approached the ILO for assistance in drawing up the National Employment Policy. Our labour force is known to be versatile, intelligent and adaptable, our economic success since independence bears testimony to this. More recently, we showed our capacity not only to face the recent world recession, as I have explained, but also to bounce back whilst many other countries, though better endowed than us, are still struggling with the aftermath of the crisis.

There are labour agreements that are in existence, only one labour agreement with the People's Republic of China. That labour agreement is to ensure that the employment of skilled Chinese expatriates in Mauritius is undertaken within a set framework. The agreement provides *inter alia* for a list of Chinese recruitment agents approved by the Chinese authorities through which employers have recourse to labour. My Ministry will look into the possibility of entering into similar bilateral agreements with other countries from where expatriates are recruited. On this chapter of having bilateral agreements, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say it to the House, there is a piece of legislation that is called the Recruitment of Workers Act. The Recruitment of Workers Act provides for licensing by my Ministry to agents who want to recruit workers. But, from advice received from the

State Law Office, there is an absence in the law that allows our Ministry to insist that Mauritians or any company recruiting workers from abroad should have a licence. As it stands today, with the 29,000 or more expatriate workers in Mauritius, there are no companies in Mauritius that are acting as agents everyday that have a licence. This is pretty serious and I have information that many of those agents work therefore without a licence in an informal sector, I would like to bring them in the formal sector and then think about amendments, if need be, to the Recruitment of Workers Act in order to enforce the need that a licence is required.

A lot of those recruiting agents today are charging between Rs5,000 to Rs10,000 per head of expatriates coming to Mauritius. If that is the case, they are doing this quietly, without any knowledge of the authorities. There is no responsibility placed upon the agent and according to ILO recommendations, when a worker comes from abroad, we should basically take charge of him from his country of departure, before he even takes the aircraft. We should, together with the agent, and if there is a bilateral agreement with the Government authority concerned and the employer from Mauritius, take charge of that worker before he even boards the plane to know where he is going, what are the laws in Mauritius, where he is going to live, those are his conditions of employment and those are the rights under the laws of Mauritius that exist which cover him. He is allowed to join a trade union and he has equal rights as any other Mauritian. Those are the issues which the ILO recommends that we should do as a responsible State for a foreign worker when he comes to Mauritius. I have all the intentions to make sure that through various bilateral agreements - I have, for instance, had the opportunity recently in Geneva to meet my counterparts from Qatar and the UAE, the Minister of Labour from those two countries, and they have themselves asked me to see whether we could finalise a bilateral labour agreement between our two countries

not only for manual labour, but most importantly in Dubai, in Qatar, if we could send people who are qualified skilled workers like accountants, lawyers, medical doctors and teachers. And, I had this opportunity only this morning to meet a delegation from Kuwait and they also have made a request for me to meet the Minister of Labour and Employment from Kuwait. Kuwait also would like to see a lot of Mauritian skilled workers come there. Only yesterday I had the opportunity and pleasure of meeting his Excellency the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at my office and he also spoke the same language. It is only through those bilateral agreements that we can have order and structure in the recruitment of workers and less problems for the workers who are working in Mauritius.

My Ministry has also, Mr Speaker, Sir, been fully involved in the recruitment and selection process for the placement of Mauritian nationals abroad, especially in Canada. We are now impatiently awaiting the ratification from France for Mauritians to move for employment. My Ministry will pursue its efforts with the collaboration of other Ministries concerned and with the International Organisation for Migration on this initiative of sending Mauritians abroad for employment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is already 18 months since the new labour legislation has been implemented. The new laws have had a very positive impact in the world of work, particularly with regard to protection of workers, mechanisms and institutions for mediation, conciliation and collective bargaining.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, toute loi n'est pas figée dans la pierre. C'est un processus continu de consultations avec nos amis les syndicalistes pour recevoir leurs suggestions et c'est en consultation avec les partenaires sociaux qu'on peut décider si oui ou non certaines clauses de la loi doivent être amendées. Lors de ma participation à la dernière conférence du BIT à Genève, j'ai rencontré plusieurs

directeurs et aussi le directeur général du BIT, Juan Somavia, avec qui j'ai évoqué plusieurs suggestions des syndicalistes. Il m'a été dit que la première chose à faire avec les nouvelles lois est de les laisser opérer pendant un certain temps et, en même temps, continuer à enregistrer les suggestions tout en continuant les consultations. C'est quelque chose que j'avais déjà commencé, M. le président, avant même d'aller à Genève et qu'on fait en ce moment-ci.

The consultation process is ongoing and I am always open to any suggestions if the need is felt appropriate - suggestions not only from our friends the trade unions, but also from the Members of the Opposition. I am sure that they have interesting comments that they would like to make to improve our labour legislations. I am very open and I would welcome any suggestions from all quarters to see to it that our legislations could be improved as we go along.

There are also 35 ILO Conventions that Mauritius has already ratified, which include the eight fundamental Conventions of the organisation. I am, at the moment, looking into the possibility of ratifying some more Conventions which have become relevant for Mauritius following development in the world of work. Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the overall objectives of the International Labour Organisation to promote opportunities for decent work for women and men in all countries, my Ministry is in the process of finalising the Decent Work Country Programme for Mauritius. Decent work is about equal access to a decent employment without discrimination. Decent work is about a living and reasonable wage for workers to allow them and their families to live in dignity. It is about social protection in case of illness, pregnancy or the normal ups and downs which most of us face in life. Decent work is being free from exploitation, it is about secure or productive and safer work. It means align people to organise themselves to represent their interests collectively through trade unions and engage in genuine

dialogue as citizens and workers. In fact, the Decent Work Country Programme is meant to be the main instrument for ILO cooperation with member States, and aim at organising such cooperation in a coherent framework that effectively enable the country to make sustainable progress in achieving decent work goals.

Let me announce that the Decent Work Country Programme is *en phase d'être finalisé* and I am informed that, by the end of October hopefully, we may have a visit from the Regional Director of the ILO, Mr Charles Dan, who would like to come to Mauritius in order to sign that particular Decent Work Country Programme and by October it should be finalised. Mr Speaker, Sir, there are presently several labour related tripartite institutions such as the Labour Advisory Council, the Advisory Council for Occupational Safety & Health, Commission for Conciliation and Mediation, Employment Relations Tribunal and other bodies such as the National Economic and Social Council and the National Productivity and Competiveness Council, where labour issues are also discussed. These institutions have special mandates. There is need, therefore, for an apex tripartite body, having as primary objective to further consolidate social dialogue and tripartism, by following principles that focus on common goals and building consensus.

The role of National Tripartite Forum will be among others -

- (i) to provide institutionalised structures and processes whereby potential conflicts, for instance, wage and working conditions are channelled and resolved in a control manner thus preventing unnecessary disputes;
- (ii) to assist in promoting bargaining;
- (iii) to establish wages and working conditions at a centralised level;

- (iv) to build consensus on international labour contracts with minimal rights, and
- (v) to access social and economic policies in the light of changes in the world of work and make appropriate recommendations in setting up standards, principles and programmes on labour, and industrial relations.

It is important to have such a National Tripartite Forum that will be a permanent institution where this collective bargaining will be something that will be alive, where the social dialogue will be alive and in such a forum, for instance, we could also have a sub-committee that would take issues such as Occupational Safety and Health, because everyday things are changing, like hon. Bhagwan stated earlier in a question today. True it is in Mauritius, more and more, we have high-rise buildings, thereby the need for the Fire Services to be equipped for such high-rise buildings. Those issues are so important and such high-rise buildings in construction and in maintenance bring about new Occupational Safety and Health issues. New issues are brought up. That is why it is important to have a National Tripartite Forum that would have a sub-committee on specifically safety and health issues that would come up with working documents and suggestions in order for us to make new implementations and improve the conditions of work of our labour force.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as per the commitment in our political manifesto and as announced in the Government Programme, the National Pay Council will be phased out and will be replaced by tripartite mechanism on salary compensation. Discussions on the setting-up of the mechanism have already started and further discussions will be held with my hon. colleague, the vice-Prime Minister, Minister

of Finance and Economic Development, and also with other stakeholders. Extensive consultation will be held so that we come up with a mechanism for the determination of the salary compensation payable, which is acceptable to one and all.

There are many forms, Mr Speaker, Sir, of discrimination in our laws. I am having discussions with my colleague, the hon. Attorney General, with a view to amending the laws and identifying all forms of discrimination that exist particularly in our labour laws and other laws. There is an instrument such as the ILO Convention No. 111, concerning discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. There is also the Convention No.100 on equal pay for work of equal value and the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discriminations against women, just to name a few. In light of those Conventions, the hon. Attorney General and myself, have already started working, on the way to implement and phase out those discriminating facts that are in our laws and we are co-chairing a committee on this particular issue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2005, which has been proclaimed in August 2007, has – apart from consolidating the existing legislation on Occupational Safety and Health and enlarging its scope of application - come up with a number of new and innovative concepts. It has been noted that, at some point in time, those concepts were not being implemented by employers in view of their innovative nature. With a view to assisting stakeholders to better understand these concepts and also facilitate their implementation, my Ministry, with the assistance of the ILO, has organised National Tripartite Workshops on guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management System and also on National Occupational Safety and Health Profile. Guidelines on Risk Assessment have also been prepared to assist employers in their exercise to carry

out regular risk assessment at their work place with a view to identify hazards, elimination of the risks arising and taking corrective measures as necessary.

During my participation only last month at the ILO Conference in Geneva, I had the opportunity to discuss those issues of safety and health with ILO officials and I did request them to expedite matters for the finalisation of the Risk Assessment Guidelines. Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it is important for me to say it here. When I was just appointed Minister I had received some reports about the deplorable state of the accommodation of foreign workers in the textile and construction industries. I had taken it upon myself to go and visit and the reason why I did that is because I think it is important for us to send a strong signal, not only it is important as a responsible Government for us to protect the interests of all workers - local or foreign - but also as a responsible Government to send a strong signal to the world and business community, would-be buyers of our products in the textile industry, that we are a Government that will take our responsibility and we will see to it that the industry will operate in conditions that are acceptable to all standards of human behaviour, treatment of workers will be enforced by us. It is for this that buyers of other countries must have confidence in us. Why should they have confidence in our enterprise and why should they be encouraged to come and buy from us? It is because we will see to it that in their country they will not have any reproach, they will not be looked upon by the people from their countries who would say: "Why did you buy from Mauritius because it is not a country that respects the fundamental rights of workers"? On the contrary, what the people from those countries will say: "We will buy from Mauritius because Mauritius is a country which has a standard that other countries must follow". A country where the fundamental rights of a worker - foreign or otherwise - on his place of work, in his accommodation, are respected and we

follow it and enforce it. This is a seal of quality which I am, at the level of my Ministry, trying to make sure. We send this message abroad.

I am happy to note that at the particular industry I did visit that works have started and the workers there today are happier than they were before. There are other visits that I will carry out on construction sites because I have also been informed that there is a lot of those companies that are importing workers from abroad are making their workers sleep in containers, there are no toilet facilities. Those are issues that will have to be addressed very fast and I am coming up with a regulation on Occupational Safety and Health Employees Lodging Accommodation very fast where we are giving the tools to our officers to take action, be firm against those *qui vont contre les provisions* of the regulations.

Only recently, Mr Speaker, Sir, there was an accident where the scaffolding fell down in Beau Bassin next to *l'école maternelle La Coccinelle*. Can you imagine what I have noted with shock and surprise? We are in 2010 - and you see, this is the truth, I will not hide anything - and there are no regulations for scaffolding erection in this country. In other words, anyone can go and buy iron bars, not of the right tension or solidity, and without a permit, can put up scaffolding. When it falls and when people get hurt, there are no regulations and then they will start knocking at the door of my Ministry at the department of Occupational Safety and Health. Why is it that they have not taken action? But what action? There are no regulations. We are already coming up with much awaited building and construction regulations. I have insisted that we should specifically have regulations particularly with regard to scaffolding. This is very important.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the context of strengthening the non-Government organisation sector in Mauritius, my Ministry embarked on an exercise to carry out

a full scale review of a Statute which is the Registration of Associations Act. It has already been to the office of my good friend, the hon. Attorney General. The new legislation will aim, amongst others, to improve the registration process and ensuring that the Registrar of Associations is genuinely and speedily accessible and in compliance with the best international agreed practices. Everyone will hear about the objects of the law when we will come up with it in this august Assembly, but most importantly, I think it is very important for us to remove from the Registrar of Associations this responsibility of sorting out conflicts between associations or members. There should be some sort of mediation which is separate and, secondly, at the moment we are all aware there are some institutions with conflict of interests that arise with the deputy or a member of the Registrar of Associations, this new legislation will be of utmost importance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, indeed, it is an honour and privilege for me to address, as I have said at the outset, this august Assembly and, for the first time, as Minister of Labour, Industrial relations and Employment and forgive me if I say I never thought that I would occupy the previous post that my father once occupied in the 70's and, for that, I feel privileged indeed to be before you, Mr Speaker, Sir, to make this quasi-maiden speech as Minister of Labour and Industrial relations. I will, during this time that is given to me as Minister, do my utmost best to satisfy the whole population and I will not mix politics with this. Elections are over and, as far as I am concerned, I will help one and all, all Mauritian citizens. I am the Minister of the Republic and I will also, as I have said, require the constructive contribution of the Opposition. That is why I have said that there is an open door policy, I shall welcome any constructive suggestion from the Opposition.

Let me, in conclusion, say that the agenda that we have set as a Government in our Government Programme is very ambitious indeed and the reason why I am

very confident is that we will achieve what we have set out in this programme. The reason why I am confident is because *on a fait nos preuves*. At a time when the world was in *topsy-turvy*, at a time when there was global economic crisis, at a time when there was crisis upon crisis, we have succeeded, we have prevailed. This Government with the Prime Minister and its Members altogether collectively succeeded. We can make the difference and I am thankful to the hon. Prime Minister to have given me the opportunity to be Minister in his Government and I will promise that I will do all my level best to make the population proud and for history also to remember that.

Thank you very much.

(17.26 p.m.)

Dr. M. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, hon. Shakeel Mohamed. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me present you the best wishes and congratulations from the people of my constituency No. 15 on your election to the Chair of this Assembly without forgetting, Mr Speaker, Sir, that you are a resident of my constituency.

I wish to congratulate all of you for being elected as Members of the Assembly and to convey my thanks to your close ones and families who have undoubtedly supported you during the campaign. I wish them good health and happiness.

My thanks go to the Clerk and his associated staff for the proper running of the sitting of this Assembly without forgetting the Police Force outside and the caterers and waiters who are overfeeding us and congratulations to all Members who have intervened so far on the programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will try to be brief as I can for my maiden speech, but please, bear with me if I get carried away. Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, when after having taken the oath and sat here, the first thing that I asked myself was why I am here and the answer was - I represent the people of Mauritius. Because we must not forget we are here by the people and, most important, for the people. Whatever is said in this Assembly has a bearing on the population outside. This Assembly is well designed with a more or less circular display and there is a centre point which I will always focus on and this centre point is the population of Mauritius. Mr Speaker, Sir, all Members of this Assembly, the Clerk, the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and all of us should look at this point - the population. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have promised myself that when I will intervene in this Assembly, I will always look at this centre point for the betterment of the population at large.

Mr Speaker, Sir, election is over. Government has presented its programme. I am not here to criticise this programme, but constructive criticisms do form part of this side of the House. I personally intend to bring today a real stimulus package of ideas to be engaged hopefully by Government. This stimulus package needs no refund, no interests, it is free.

Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will start on health, especially Public Health as I am in the medical field. For people to succeed in whatever spheres, and Mauritius to succeed, good health is the most important parameter. I will try, Mr Speaker, Sir, to define what is Public Health.

In a narrow sense, Public Health refers to the health of the population, the longevity of its individual members and the extent to which they are free from disease. Public Health is the science and art of preventing diseases, promoting physical health and efficiency through organised community efforts. This includes sanitation of the environment; the control of community infection; the education of the individual in principle of personal hygiene; the organisation of medical and nursing services for the early diagnosis and preventive treatment of diseases to ensure a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of health.

From this definition, Mr Speaker, Sir, prevention and health are everybody's business and to provide what I have just mentioned, we should aim at health targets, for example –

1. To reduce death rate from heart disease and stroke and related illnesses by 30% or more;
2. To reduce the death rate from –
 - (a) accidents by at least 20%;
 - (b) serious injury by at least 10% or more;
 - (c) cancer by at least 20%, and
 - (d) suicide by at least 30%.

To achieve these, we should aim at preventing the problems arising at the earliest possible stage. Policies should be orientated to focus on maintaining and improving health.

Health promotion must include and involve the community, healthy lifestyle and supportive environment. Our service must be orientated towards primary health care and geared to promoting health rather than simply treating illnesses.

Some other targets that we must consider by the year 2020 –

1. All new born babies, infants and pre-school children should have better health, ensuring a healthy start in life.
2. Young people should be healthier and better able to fulfil their role in society.
3. People over 65 years should have the opportunity of enjoying the full health potential and playing an active social role.

4. People with mental health problems should be provided with better comprehensive services available.

There are many others like reducing communicable diseases, reduction of morbidity and disability and premature mortality, decrease in injuries, disability and death arising from accidents and violence, just to mention a few.

To achieve all these, I have mentioned that the Ministry cannot do it from the fifth floor of the Emmanuel Anquetil Building. The officers have to move to the Regional Hospitals. If the office of the Ministry of Health is the driver at the fifth floor of the Emmanuel Anquetil Building and the Regional Hospitals are the tyres of a lorry, then the driving shaft is too long to sustain a constant driving force for a proper running of the tyres; without a short time the shaft will break and that is what is happening to our Regional Hospitals. They are not running smoothly. We must let the Regional Hospitals enjoy a strong independence to run the affairs to improve the Public Health.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding hospital equipment, I strongly suggest that the Ministry opt for leasing rather than buying equipment, with well-defined conditions like duration of use of the equipment, maintenance and training by the leasing company. This will help unduly long delays for repair of bought equipment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the last in health matters; I propose that Mauritius be made a non-smoking island by the year 2020 and to set up a health service ombudsman to investigate patient complaints against maladministration in the health departments.

Regarding health insurance, I sincerely wish that the Health Minister look closely into this matter, because Insurance Company compels patients to be, to attend to their listed doctors, dental surgeons and private clinics. I think this violates the right of an individual to choose his or her doctor or dental surgeon. I think this is unconstitutional.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will consider Public Infrastructure. We have heard Decongestion Programme with lists of projects at exorbitant costs - many contracts are enjoyed more or less by one contractor - we are trying to decongest our roads for better flow of traffic, in so doing we are creating bottlenecks at the entrance of the township of Port Louis. Ring Road project to bypass Port Louis centre, instead of opting for short distance and short tunnel, the

Ministry is going for long distance with a long tunnel about 775 metres. Definitely, the cost is exorbitant.

I propose that Government goes through a Traffic User Questionnaire to choose which proposal they opt for because at the end of the day it is the road user who will use it more, rather than the Ministry or foreign consultants.

Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the bridge over Grand River North West from Beau Bassin to Sorèze with a Toll Tax to come, when I visualise myself on the bridge, looking down at the river, what I see, Mr Speaker, Sir, '*gros gros anguilles sous roches*', M. le président, and when I visualise myself on the Dream Bridge at harbour looking down the sea what I see, Mr Speaker, Sir, '*gros gros requins*'.

Regarding the enlargement of M1 from Sorèze to Caudan, all the concrete works are mainly without reinforced steel, if any, there are two bars horizontally and cracks are appearing. The water drainage systems along those concretes are made up of pure concrete, no steel bars. If any heavy vehicle will drive near it, it will cause damage to these drains. Does the contract of this nature that all concrete work is without reinforced steel?

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the Jin Fei Project, huge sum of Mauritian tax payers' money is being spent for this mega project.

Tax payers are contributing towards water supply to the level of Rs110 m., electric generator to the tune of Rs180 m., wastewater system to the tune of Rs85 m., road and roundabout at Riche Terre about Rs80 m. Mr Speaker, Sir, will you believe me, if I say that the traffic impact assessment was done by the Jin Fei group? Thus, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is unacceptable, who knows better our road system network in Mauritius, definitely it is the Mauritian engineer who knows it better. Instead of a roundabout at Riche Terre, left shoulders designed would be more suitable, less costly and more practicable, but in Mauritius a few people at the Ministry is taking us for a ride thinking Mauritians are drowsy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with my few sittings in this Assembly, I have a tendency to come to a conclusion that complexity of a project makes numerous Bank fixed deposit account with colossal amount. Mr Speaker, Sir, corruption is getting at an alarming pace. ICAC has to do its job. Mr Speaker, Sir, ICAC should not be a *bouledogue sans dents*. If it is, I will not provide full set of dentures because with political pressure, dentures of the same bulldog may get loose when it tries to bite.

I will provide dental implants that are strongly fixed to the jaws, so that when it bites, it will really hurt. This also goes to the Medical Council, which is treated as a *bouledogue sans dents*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my question on the Axle Weigh Bridge is of paramount importance. This equipment is used to scrutinise the weight of heavy vehicles using our roads. As the hon. Minister has said, it costs only about Rs700,000, but it will help to implement the Road Traffic Regulations. Hence, our asphalt will have a longer lifespan. Mr Speaker, Sir, our roads are costing taxpayers huge sums of money. We must protect the road asphalt from overweight vehicles.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now I will try to propose two stimulus ideas for the alleviation of poverty. Some hon. Members have mentioned that we must change our mindset which, among poor people, is quite difficult, but by changing their living environment will certainly help. Instead of constructing low cost houses in concentration, I am proposing that Government buy three or five lots of about 50 to 100 *toises* in new *morcellements* and build three or five houses, so that poor people mingle with higher social groups. This will definitely, in the long run, change their mindset. Works will be available, better earning within the surroundings of the *morcellements*.

I come to my second proposal, Mr Speaker, Sir. Many poor people live in *cités*. When I was Mayor of the town of Quatre Bornes in 1996, my first motion was to change the name 'Cité' into 'Résidence'. *Cités* are now known as *Résidences*, for example, *Résidence John Kennedy*, *Résidence Candos*. Why not change the name 'Cité' into 'Résidence' throughout Mauritius? I may come with a motion in this House for changing the name 'Cité' into 'Résidence', hoping that the motion will be seconded by Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding finance, as we are in a worldwide financial turbulence, it is high time that we and the world start thinking about a single global currency, managed by a single global Central Bank within a global Monetary Union, with a single global currency. There will be no fluctuations. The current multicurrency international monetary system is absurd. Single global currency would eliminate current foreign exchange, currency risk, current account imbalance and eliminate the need for foreign exchange reserve. Mauritius should join the single Global Currency Association which was founded in 2003, and which is hoping to implement the unique currency by 2024. Well, this is for the future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, right now, our financial situation is not healthy. The total public sector debt to a percentage of GDP has increased to beyond 60% in December 2009. The Public Debt Management Act 2008 stipulates that the percentage should not exceed 30%. So, the Ministry of Finance has acted illegally. The audit report pointed out that it is crucial to break the vicious circle of high debt and high deficit and put the country's debt on a dealing path. A word of warning: drastic cut in our debt to GDP ratio will cloud the country into a recession. Another issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that cross-subsidisation is illegal. Profits from petrol can't be used to subsidise rice, flour and gas. We must change the formula and use direct subsidy from the Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me talk on tertiary education, especially medical students in Mauritius. Government should revise the agreements signed with the medical and dental colleges. The intake for Mauritian students should not exceed 20% per year for dental students and should not exceed 50% per year for medical students. The fees should be in rupees and not in US dollars, as it is right now. The teaching staff should be within international norms, and the promoters should produce their morality certificate from the countries they come from. We want well qualified professionals and Mauritius should not be flooded with doctors and dental surgeons who may find themselves faced with unemployment. Recently, we had 20 to 25 locally qualified dental surgeons being unemployed.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is high time to say a few words on my Constituency No.15. At Camp Fouquereaux, most of the drain system needs to be maintained. Now, drains are needed from junction Tout Court and Hermitage Road to join the existing drain facing the roundabout of Camp Fouquereaux. New covered drains are mandatory along Camp Fouquereaux main road. At Vacoas Road, at the bridge opposite La Caverne Street, the pavement is not continuous. If you walk on it, you are bound to suddenly end on the main road, and it is very dangerous. This should be attended to. The bridge near l'Abattoir Road should be enlarged. Handrails should be fixed at Hollyroad Road, near Pandit Sahadeo Government School.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member will speak after. Then, he can reply!

Dr. Sorefan: Anyway, I thank him for his unprofessional intervention.

Mr Speaker: He cannot interrupt!

Dr. Sorefan: At Phoenix Royal Road, around Farook Supermarket, although there are double yellow lines, cars are parked there and people have to walk on the road. Sooner or later, there will be a serious accident if nothing is done. The hon. Member who has just intervened has probably never been to that supermarket to see what's going on there. We have a road decongestion programme heading to Port Louis. We have congestion problem at Phoenix roundabout, opposite Phoenix Breweries. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure should come urgently with a capital project to decongest this area, by providing a double lane flyover bridge to bypass the roundabout of Phoenix, Pont Fer, up to the roundabout near Supercash.

The M1 road from Wooton and even to SBM roundabout at La Vigie should be provided with lighting points. This is the only place deficient of lighting. This time, let's hope we do get lighting points that function properly. To sum up, Mr Speaker, Sir, all programmes should specify a time frame for the achievement and measurement, which this Government Programme 2010-2015 is deficient of.

A Government must be driven by citizen demands and needs.

Taxpayers will pay for results not for efforts. Management by crisis should not be the motto of this Government. Instead, it should be proactive. We must listen to ideas of young Members of this Assembly. Parents who listen to their young children always stay young in their approach and actions. They never grow old, because last time when my colleague, hon. Ameer Meea, was intervening, one hon. Minister said 'you are a *baba!*' Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has mountains to climb, but with the trust in almighty and with constructive criticisms from the side of the House the climbing will be made much easier. Please, in the process of climbing, do not create other mountains, or else the Labour Party will never succeed to fix the red flag at the summit of those mountains that have been climbed. You can trust me to give a helping hand to climb these mountains and why not climb together with you, especially where it is very steep. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

May God bless you all with good health and happiness; peace be upon you.

Thank you very much.

(5.51 p.m.)

Mrs P. Bholah (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Mr Speaker, Sir, and Members of the House, it is said we must never ask a woman her age because women are meant to stay eternally young. I can't claim to be in my thirties, yet I still am a new-born in active politics.

Mr Speaker, Sir, taking the floor for the first time in this august Assembly, I wish, right in the beginning, to thank and express my deep gratitude to the Leader of the MSM party, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, who provided me the opportunity to emerge as a player in the field of active politics, to the Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam who endorsed my bid to contest the last general elections and the electorate of Constituency No. 7 Piton and Rivière du Rempart for the overwhelming support and precious votes which have brought me into this House as their elected representative.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me also express my warm and sincere congratulations on your unanimous re-election as Speaker of the House. This indeed is a tribute to your personal qualities and your experience in exercising sound judgement and fairness over the deliberations in this Assembly. In the same breath, I also congratulate the Deputy Speaker, our worthy colleagues from Constituency No. 9 and all elected Members.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the hon. Prime Minister gave me my ticket, he shared with me a deep anxiety. He told me: I want you to critically and positively look at what Mauritius is and what it should be from the eyes of the new generation of politicians. This is what I am going to do. My vision of our country will be that of any citizen, irrespective of age and creed. It will be with my firm commitment to serve the needy and to provide protection to the vulnerable, in particular to the women in asserting their legitimate rights and their aspirations for equality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our country has been very fortunate to have had leaders like *Chacha* Ramgoolam who gave us political independence; his worthy successor, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who gave us economic independence, and now Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, who is making modern Mauritius. It is thanks to their vision and the resourcefulness of our people that Mauritius has achieved such a level of progress and development over the last four decades, in spite of not being endowed with mineral and other natural resources. That is nothing short of a miracle, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The making of modern Mauritius has caught its cruising speed. Those who will join us will fly high. Those who will falter in it will rue it forever!

Mr Speaker, Sir, Members who have preceded me, have addressed almost every aspect of the Government Programme 2010-2015, envisaged by the new Government of *L'Alliance de L'Avenir* and I subscribe to the views that my colleagues have expressed from the Government bench. Therefore, rather than being repetitive, I shall stress on some aspects that seem to be relevant to me.

It is important to outline goals and objectives so that Government can concretely work towards them. Without a solid plan, development and progress cannot be achieved and by making the said plan available to the public, Government not only makes a commitment to the nation, but also emphasises transparency and urges the nation to work with it to fulfil the dreams of one and all. This programme is not only a hope, but a compass to the amount of work that needs to be accomplished in the spirit of unity, equity and modernity. The workload ahead is massive and by setting a good plan in action, Government places the stepping stone to the betterment of the future of our children.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to ease the problem of traffic jam and congestions in Port Louis, it is time for our dream bridge to become a reality. For Goodlands, Rivière du Rempart and Grand Bay, we may consider having a second city in the north of the island. People would say: I am dreaming! Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am, because all great things start with dreams. They say, there is nothing wrong with building castles in the air. All that you have to do is to construct a foundation underneath and a dream bridge over. Was not Dubai doing that when they stated that one day they will bring snow in the desert of Dubai? And they did it!

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to transparency and good governance, I am confident that the Audit and other Departments concerned will do their best to give full satisfaction. The Police Force should maintain law and order and strengthen their capacities to capture and safeguard prisoners. While imposing harder penalties to criminals to bring down the rate of crime in the country, the rehabilitation of convicts of non-criminal acts should be encouraged. Many steps have been taken in the field, but many others are yet to be put into action, for safeguarding our country against international trafficking, cross-border piracy and other illegal and criminal actions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know the vulnerability of our country towards climatic disasters, like tsunamis, floods, etc. which are caused mainly by industrialisation in very large nations and, we, in a small island State, cannot ignore the effect of these dangers. Let us stay alert and cooperate with our neighbouring countries to avoid any catastrophe like in Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to make Mauritius a modern country, the campaign of planting a million trees should be given full support. In our plea to sustain the environment, numerous clean-up campaigns, the separation of waste and elimination of plastic bags are worthy and should be expanded thanks to my colleague Minister, hon. Anil Bachoo. Mr Speaker, Sir flash floods that had caused human losses in the year 2008 have led us to think deeper into actions that will improve our infrastructural capacities of draining off our rain water overflows. The National Development Unit and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure have already started looking at the best methods of channelling run-offs in order to prevent inundations of low lying and flood prone areas. In order to consolidate the now obsolete 2003 Gibb's Study on flood risk areas, and integrated Watershed Management Study, under the World Bank Funding is being soon put up to develop plans to improve our drainage systems.

Likewise, Mr Speaker, Sir, pockets of the population are facing scarcity of water as a result of outdated water reticulation systems. These need to be renewed at the earliest and this Government will spare no effort to provide safe potable water to each household.

Mr Speaker, Sir, unplanned developments in the rural and suburban areas, backfilling of wetlands, deforestation of green belts to give way to hard concrete structures should not be permitted. The *Ile Durable* programme should be a commitment for every citizen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, socio-economic developments in a country are successful only when all components of the society live above the poverty line and enjoy the fruits of economic development. In his plea to combat poverty, our Prime Minister has created a Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment and has entrusted the responsibility of this Ministry to hon. Xavier Duval. The Minister has started nationwide visits in villages where people really live in difficult conditions and in precarious shelters. This Government will leave no stone unturned and will definitely bring concrete respite to those afflicted by misery and sufferings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, everybody knows the prevailing poverty at the village of Panchavati which falls in my constituency. It is the situation at this village that had inspired our Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, to implement free transport to students so as to make education accessible to everyone. Likewise, all possible efforts are being made to assist the poor struggling to earn a living. Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, poverty should have no place at all in this little paradise island of ours!

As PPS of the region, I shall ensure, through the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment and all other stakeholders, that people living in such conditions are given a decent roof and a suitable environment with all basic facilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, developments can only be realised when a country has sufficient financial means. The present Government has, through its new policies of duty-free trade, reduction of duties on various articles, the complete removal of NRPT and taxes on interest of savings, blown a sigh of relief into all households, especially residential property owners.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to the loan facilitation systems by banks, the low rate lending policies for SMEs, the payment of bad weather allowances to fishermen, payment of compensation to planters, other incentives such as assistance for integrated farming and larger scale in milk production should be encouraged to ensure the economic stability and to strengthen the food security programme. In short, this Government should be able to raise the living standard of every citizen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to face the side effects of development. We need to minimise the emission of CO₂ which is polluting our environment with the increase of our car park. The growing numbers of patients suffering from allergy, asthma, bronchitis and the risk of cancer is a serious alert! It suffices to cross Port Louis from north to south at any time of the day to experience our helplessness and irritation while gently breathing the polluted air, often cooled by air conditioners and well directed to our noses. Then I think of the lungs of our kids, the dirty and dark gas heavily leaking from old engines is unhealthy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I suggest that existing rules should be applied with more severity to irresponsible owners of engines when emission of CO₂ is above an acceptable limit, for example 140 g/cm³ as in Europe. Every engine should undergo a complete revision and the gas emission

of the engine should be measured. A warning should be issued to every owner to clear all the defects in due time.

On dit que la santé n'a pas de prix! Alors, les pollueurs doivent payer!

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that the vehicle is often a working tool for the owner. In such cases, Government could give a well structured financial help such as low taxation for renewal of all cars/buses/trucks, plus subsidies for buying low polluting engines; give all the means to fitness centres to exert the tightest and rigorous control of vehicles; propose an increase of taxes on the 4x4 vehicles often driven by a single person; encourage car pooling and renewal of the automobile park which will hopefully reduce the number of tragic loss of lives in car accidents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are conscious of health disasters such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, hypertension and cancer. Worthy health programmes are underway, but what about the socio-economic catastrophe knocking at our doors! Chronic kidney disease: it is a risk factor for cardiac patients. Its ignorance, the enormous cost of its treatment and a lack of healthcare planning are converging to establish this chronic illness as the fastest growing socio-economic burden on each individual, family, society and every Government worldwide. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, dialysis is a highly expensive treatment and is only a supportive measure. We should focus on prevention and cure, for example, expanding our kidney transplant programme. I have in hand a genuine project to solve our social and economic handicap. I have already contacted my colleague, the Minister of Health, hon. Mrs Maya Hanoomanjee, to initiate the necessary negotiations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, nutrition and public health have always been my passion. I wish to personally implement in my constituency of Piton/Rivière du Rempart, and elsewhere later, a nutritional programme based on healthy eating at a low-cost. I wish to generate awareness on nutritional aspects of foods and on the benefits of physical activities - walking one hour daily for all.

I shall, Mr Speaker, Sir, emphasise through workshops and seminars on the role of nutrition in the prevention of digestive cancers, osteoporosis, anaemia which affect both sexes as

early as they reach their 40s. An evaluation of the accessibility to food and water in different income families will be part of my contribution to the Government Programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I add that I have recently started in Constituency Nos. 7 and 9, in coordination with medical doctors, an educational campaign which has proved to be successful and is widely appreciated. These will be carried out on a regular basis and such programmes will be evaluated by experts at 12 to 18 months time point.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now turn to sports, arts and culture which are vital for our country especially for our youth. We are a vibrant and creative nation. We have young people with talents. Let us promote these talents. Let us make sports accessible since school age, thus inculcating the awareness and drive to shine at national and international levels like Bruno Julie, Stephan Buckland, and many others. This Government has in its programme pledged to give to the young all facilities, better sports infrastructure and better opportunities. Sports, artistic and cultural activities will establish self-esteem in the young, strengthen ties in the community and contribute towards solidarity and national unity. We need to promote artistic excellence and professionalise various sports by providing logistic and financial support where necessary.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we should create a website dedicated to arts and culture so that the young can network with each other and showcase their work. My dream is to see every young Mauritian having the facility to handle one or more musical instruments as in the case in several countries. While arts and culture will unite the people in harmony, sports will bring a sense of patriotism when our Mauritian team will play an international match.

Turning to other priority issues, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has reaffirmed its commitment to achieve gender equality and women empowerment through a Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. Here I wish to commend the Prime Minister for the choice of hon. Mrs Sheila Bappoo to whom he has entrusted this important responsibility of making gender equality a reality.

In 1995, the Beijing NGO Conference on Women's Equality, where I was personally present, Hilary Clinton stated thereby –

“There cannot be a true democracy unless women's voices are heard and unless they are responsible for their own lives. The forum came up with a gender policy document. It

recognises that the participation of women in politics is a key element of democratic principles and a means for attaining gender equality.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the policy to grant free education has enabled women in our country to take important strides in the social and economic level. Similarly, days are not far when the gap will be bridged in the few sectors where women are still lagging behind. Today women are saying “enough is enough” and want to assert their right to equality as human beings. They aspire to come out of the four confines of the household and earn gainful employment like their men folk and contribute to their family budget and to ensure a better living standard. In short, women today clamour nothing more or less than gender equality, pure and simple.

The key to the advancement of women is education, Mr Speaker, Sir, because by educating a woman, you educate a family. You put a woman in a job, it strengthens the economic well-being of the whole society.

While talking of education, Mr Speaker, Sir, a high rate of illiteracy hampers economic and social progress. Mauritius has seen such development due to the fact that education became accessible to all children, including the girl child with the decision taken as far back as 1976 by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, to provide free education at all levels. The biggest beneficiaries of free education have been those children living in difficult conditions in remote villages, but from there emerged finest lawyers, engineers, architects, pilots and other professionals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the exchange of education programme with other nations has made Mauritius an education hub where foreign counterparts are coming to study; renowned international universities are laying their foundations in Mauritius to enhance the Government’s plans for a high level of education system.

Nelson Mandela, who was the son of a farm worker, once said –

“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that a son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of a farm worker can become the President.”

I will extend this to say that it is through education that Kewal, son of a labourer, became Sir Seewoosagur, the Father of the nation; it is through education that Sir Anerood Jugnauth set such a great example to the entire nation.

While ending my *exposé*, Mr Speaker, Sir, and hon. Members of the House, I wish to reiterate here that -

- (i) I would live, along with my countrymen in a secure and safer Mauritius, with cities less crowded with vehicles;
- (ii) I would make full efforts to convert Mauritius into a Green Island, giving my maximum contribution to enhance food security and build a healthy nation by propagating healthy lifestyles, and
- (iii) assist to eradicate poverty and illiteracy without forgetting to pay reverence to the elderly and all seniors who have paved the way for a modern Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, and hon. Members of the House, I thank you all for your attention.

(6.16 p.m.)

Mrs M. Martin (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Speaker, Sir, since congratulations are in order, allow me, as other Members of this House have done before, to congratulate you, as well as the Deputy Speaker, on your election to your respective post.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2005, I, along with hon. Varma, were the youngest in this House. For having been during the past mandate an elected Member of this Assembly, I can honestly say that your guidance and longstanding experience in this House have been of precious help to the then new Parliamentarian that I was.

I have no doubt that during this mandate also, having been endorsed with higher responsibilities, I will learn much from you even as a silent observer, and acquire further experience in the dealings of Parliamentarian debates.

My congratulations also extend to all Members of this House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with an immense sense of gratitude and pride that I stand before you today as the first returning Member for Constituency No. 4 and as one part and parcel of a team whose leader and members are determined to make Mauritius a country even more renowned on the regional and international agenda.

My first thought as a Christian and a believer goes to God, who has always been my guide ever since I set out in life.

Encore une fois, le proverbe “Aide toi, le ciel t’aidera” n’a pas été démenti.

My second thought goes to my family who has always been by my side and my leader, hon. Pravind Jugnauth. Their faith in me has given me the necessary strength to always forge ahead with the results that we know.

The elections are now over. The voice of the people has been heard. The verdict is that *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* forms the Government of this country with, at its head, the Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

My thanks also extend to the Prime Minister. In his wisdom, he has grouped behind him a team of determined and capable individuals, each in his or her capacity, ready to work hard to achieve a common vision which I will dwell upon later during the course of my speech.

My gratitude, Mr Speaker, Sir, would not be complete if I did not thank the *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge* team and the electors from Constituency No. 4 who have put their trust in me as well as in my colleagues, hon. Mrs Juggoo and hon. Mrs Perraud.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the electors of Constituency No. 4 have translated the vision of hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam of a united, modern and equal Mauritius into reality. In our patriarchal society, the electors of the constituency of Port Louis North and Montagne Longue have created history. Three women candidates under the *Bleu/Blanc/Rouge* banner are in this House today because the electors have understood the message of the hon. Prime Minister to make place for more women in the higher spheres of politics. They have ensured that equality does not remain a mere concept. During this campaign, the question of gender was not their only priority. Competency has also been the criteria of the day. They have recognised that the team put together by hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, hon. Pravind Jugnauth and hon. Xavier Duval was the best team. The candidates of *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* were the people that they wanted to see as their representatives in Parliament. The result speaks for itself.

They have enabled us, three women, to be their voice in the constituency because they believed that the Government that they wanted to see was that of continuity with the adjoining contribution of the MSM team. Competency above gender was the main preoccupation and being a woman in this electoral campaign was not a handicap as long as we proved to be able to deliver.

The open-mindedness of the inhabitants of Constituency No. 4, even rose higher above petty politics, bordering on racist undertones which I personally have been a victim of during this campaign, notably with regard to the use of Hindi language.

The population of Constituency No. 4 have made me proud by confirming what I knew all along in my heart to be true, that the Mauritian population in all its nobility of heart and soul is capable of going much beyond the barriers of origins, caste, colour, region, religion or creed. It is a vision to which I totally adhere to.

La population de la circonscription No. 4, en m'élisant dans son ensemble, a prouvé sa grande noblesse de cœur, moi qui revendique haut et fort cette identité mauricienne, créole et multi ethnique à la fois. Une identité de jeune femme bien dans sa peau qui ne se coule dans aucun moule préfabriqué.

Et c'est avec leur confiance et un sens de grande responsabilité que je m'adresse à vous aujourd'hui. Je tiens à rassurer la population mauricienne et, en particulier, mes électeurs que je ferai tout ce qui est en mon pouvoir pour les servir au mieux conformément au serment prononcé dans cette même Chambre. L'équipe gouvernementale est d'autant plus consciente de la lourde responsabilité qui lui échoit quand elle est plébiscitée par le peuple. Car la majorité du peuple se reconnaît dans notre équipe et notre programme gouvernemental de cinq années. Et il nous incombe de faire de notre mieux pour répondre à leurs attentes.

M. le président, en 2005, quand j'étais élue dans l'opposition, je m'étais lancée en politique. Nous avons toujours mené notre combat en temps qu'opposition constructive. Mais ma vision, que dis-je, la vision du MSM, et cela le leader l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth l'a toujours dit, c'était de former un gouvernement.

Participating in the decision-making process for the betterment of the Mauritian population has always been the objective of the MSM. When we decided to join the then *Alliance sociale* for the 2010 electoral battle, we were convinced of one thing: that we wanted to form part of a team made up of people we could trust, and that we were ready, eager and more than able to contribute to help our beloved Republic face up to the daunting challenges that it is going to face during the coming years.

Our engagement goes much beyond lip service or a mere signature written upon a contract. It is one of profound loyalty and respect with regard to our given promise as a party and the decision was taken unanimously.

Being today an integral part and parcel of a team which advocates bringing further unity, modernity and equality in the Mauritian society through concrete measures announced in the

Government Programme 2010-2015 is very comforting. Indeed, during the years to come, Mauritius will face challenges as regards to maintaining its leadership position in the region.

For maintaining our good reputation at international and regional level is an ongoing challenge and struggle. The face of the world is changing so fast, our adaptability as well as our capacity to respond quickly to the necessity of development and modernity while, at the same time, preserving the core values which make our social fabric so unique in itself is a feat, *un veritable exercice d'équilibriste*. The Mauritian people recognise in hon. Dr. Ramgoolam, the qualities of a leader whose vision is the best for the future of this country. I have no qualms in saying that with us, the future of this country is in good hands.

Modernising the island is a real challenge. Indeed, developing the appropriate infrastructure is going to be crucial during the coming years, as major factors such as changes in climatic conditions, ageing population increase and urbanisation imperatives become more striking and cannot be ignored any longer.

Constituency No. 4 is one of the largest of the country in terms of size and population. Much has been done, but there is, as always, space for improvement. For example, in this constituency there is no fire station, one of the basic and essential amenities. I would appeal to Government to do the needful.

Furthermore, Constituency No. 4, with its problems of landslide in areas such as Chitrakoot, Vallée des Prêtres and Congomah just to give a few examples, have much to gain in Government's on-going land drainage programme.

The country's traffic congestion programme is called to improve from the Terre Rouge/Verdun highway, another major project from which my constituency stands to benefit greatly. This highway will help in alleviating the traffic congestion in the capital.

Another route, that of Crève Coeur/Vallée des Prêtres, could be a further solution to alleviate the heavy traffic flow that will inevitably result from the year by year increasing number of vehicles. Not to neglect also the alternative mode of transport which, according to the Government Programme, could be a further solution to curb traffic and pollution problems.

Yet, Mr Speaker, Sir, well maintained roads, accessibility to clean water and electricity supply are still today, unfortunately, a real problem in many places. My constituency is no exception. Despite efforts, in some areas of Cité la Cure, Batterie Cassée, Cité Briquetterie,

some people are still living without electricity in dire poverty, a stark reality no doubt, but one which is also a task which Government is determined to address.

Regions such as Crève Coeur, Tomasin, Boulingrin and Robinson experience the uncomfortable problem of irregular and inadequate water supply. For not only do we have roads, drains, buildings to construct, to supply to the country's demand in development, their maintenance and judicious use through proper and advance planning will prove even more strategic given the limited area of land that we, islanders, dispose of.

These development and modernity imperatives will be further challenged by the necessity to respect the environmental norms that have now become a *sine qua non* condition to all sustainable projects for the survival of mankind. Mauritius as an island has to be an example of such development. This Government's vision in giving full reign to a Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development says it all. Government is committed to trying to find a solution to address all those issues in a cohesive manner. Mr Speaker, Sir, modernity does not extend only to the physical environment. It is also a state of mind. An intellectual and modern nation can develop further the sense of unity and equality among its citizens.

Two Ministries, in my humble opinion, stand to make a great change in this quest for unity among our Mauritian brothers and sisters - that of Gender Equality and that of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment. Both Ministries designated by the Prime Minister, have marked a stepping stone in the way the vision of Government is now orienting itself. We are working towards the more inclusive society where the main objective is to put men at par with women in terms of rights and competencies, and to help the poor live in dignity by giving poverty the attention it deserves. A Ministry to make a real change is that of Social Integration, for it is not about only changing the way poverty is looked at and dealt with, but also about devising unique and adapted means which, in the medium and long term, will help reduce this scourge. For the poor, Mr Speaker, Sir, are the ones who need not only assistance, but also to be given the appropriate means and opportunities to help them climb up the ladder of economic prosperity.

Educational measures as elaborated in the Governmental Programme, will be of crucial importance to help them move out of their strife. And, the revalorisation of their capacities and competencies is a vital component towards giving them back the self respect which they often tend to lose when they think that there is no hope. This Government has understood all this, Mr

Speaker, Sir. This is why so many measures mentioned by my other colleagues have been put in place to make Mauritius move forward in a positive manner. We dream of a country where everyone will have his place in a society composed of each and every individual who is proud of being Mauritian-born. United we will stand, divided we will fall. Each and every parcel of our Mauritian identities which make up the Mauritian nation is to be considered with equal dignity and equal respect.

As I have said before, the elections are over. It is now together that we have to construct a better future for our people. Like in every democracy, there have been voices for and voices against this Government. But, the fact is that Dr. Navin Ramgoolam and his team have won this election. This is the verdict of the majority and is to be respected. Let us now put our heads together for the betterment of this country.

I thank you for your attention.

(18.34)

The Attorney General (Mr Y. Varma): Let me congratulate the hon. First Member for Constituency No. 4 for her speech, Mr Speaker, Sir. Five years ago, I addressed you as a Government backbencher freshly elected and today, I feel privileged to be addressing you in my capacity as Attorney General on the Presidential Address debates outlining the Government Programme 2010-2015. I thank Dr. the hon. Prime Minister for the trust he has placed in me and a special thought goes to my former constituency Plaine Magnien and Mahebourg.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me, at the very outset, congratulate you for your election as Speaker of the National Assembly for a second consecutive term and the Deputy Speaker for his election. I also seize the opportunity to congratulate all Members of this august Assembly and hope that they will, through their participation, ensure fruitful deliberations of the House. Our guiding motto of both the Government and the Opposition should be service to the nation. This is the first time, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a Prime Minister has won two consecutive mandates and an increased majority for the past two decades. The electorate has voted both in the urban and rural areas for *l'Alliance de l'Avenir*, electing Members of Parliament from all components of our society to form a representative Government. In our electoral system, general elections are meant to choose a Prime Minister and the population at large voted for Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. And, *jamais deux sans trois*, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has been rejected again in 2010 like he was in 1983 and 2005. The writing is on the wall, Mr Speaker, Sir. The MMM Opposition is not

a credible alternative. As the saying goes: *vox populi, vox dei; la voix du peuple c'est la voix de Dieu*, and, God willing, MMM is again in Opposition.

The MMM Opposition, Mr Speaker, Sir, filed what it called electable candidates in some rural constituencies, thought it would win all seats in the urban areas and form the Government. Mr Speaker, Sir, the election results speak for themselves. The electorate rejected the policy of divide and rule as advocated by our then colonial masters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I start speaking about the office of the Attorney General, I would like to reply to the Fourth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix. Mr Speaker, Sir, he has during the course of his speech, criticised the enlargement of the road from Sorèze to Caudan. He has said that the bridges that are being built have *anguille sous roche and requins dans la mer*. Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know the congestion problem that we are facing. They were in Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, and what did they do?

(Interruptions)

That is why they were booted out and they have the guts now to stand up in Parliament to criticise what we are doing to solve the congestion problem.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Fourth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix spoke about ICAC being a *bouledogue sans dents*. He seems to forget, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a member of the MMM has recently been convicted by the Intermediate Court under the POCA. Why does he not speak about it? He has spoken, Mr Speaker, Sir, about his term as the Mayor of Quatre Bornes. But, he forgot to mention that, at that time, he was a mayor chosen by the Mauritius Labour Party, chosen by Dr. Navin Ramgoolam to be the Mayor. Why did he say it, Mr Speaker, Sir?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is unfortunate that a section of the press played a partisan role during the elections. The role of the media is to report news and not to create news. It is unfortunate to say that, in many cases, a certain section of the media has become a business and yellow journalism is the order of the day. The ultimate role of the media is to report news and to use money to achieve that goal is perfectly legitimate. But, when the goal is to make money and the medium is news, then there is a problem. Thus, Mr Speaker, Sir, the pressing need for a Media Commission.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I joined politics at the very early age of 24, and for a youngster there was no choice, but to join the Mauritius Labour Party. This party has been at the root of each and

every major political, social and economic development in the country. Next year, we are going to celebrate the 75th anniversary of our party. Today, with the PMSD and MSM as partners, we have pledged “modernity, equality and unity” to the country. Projects, which were started under the last mandate, will be completed during this mandate. I am here making reference to road projects all over the island, the Jin Fei project, the construction of the second terminal at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, the new city in Highlands, and many others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to congratulate my predecessor, Rama Valayden, for his achievements. However, I wish to add that, being two individuals, there will obviously be difference both in style and in substance.

Since my assumption of office, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have held a number of consultations, namely with the Law Reform Commission, the Bar Council, the Law Society, the *Chambre des Notaires*, the Association of Court Ushers, the students from the Council of Legal Education among others, to find ways and means to improve our legal system.

I believe, Mr Speaker Sir, that our Judges Rules relating to criminal evidence and procedure is completely outdated and need to be reviewed. My office is currently working on the changes that need to be brought to police practices relating to arrest, custody and interrogation. A new legislation will be introduced to take into account the development in the law, in particular the reinforcement of rights of individuals, be it for suspects or victims. I believe that an accused party should be given all the facilities to prove his innocence, but once a court of law has found him guilty beyond reasonable doubt, there should be legal provisions to provide for harsh sentences.

Let it be known, Mr Speaker, Sir, by one and all, that, just like Dr. the hon. Prime Minister, I am in favour of the reintroduction of capital punishment in cases of most heinous crimes, and I am also against remission for serious crimes like sexual offences, drug dealing and murder.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member can't interrupt the hon. Minister who is speaking. His name is on the list of orators, and he is going to speak later. He will have time to reply.

Mr Baloomoody: I was just saying that the capital punishment is not in the Programme. We are talking about the Government Programme.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is interrupting the hon. Minister. This is my point. Carry on, hon. Minister.

Mr Varma: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Attorney General's Office has played an important role in overhauling the Mauritian Justice System, through the implementation of a substantial part of the Mackay Report 1997, as updated in 2006. The criminal sessions of the Supreme Court are now being held all the year round, resulting in a substantial decrease of remand time for those prisoners. A Commercial Division and a Family Division of the Supreme Court have been set up, and these have greatly assisted in the speedy disposal of cases. We are going to continue with those reforms and implementation of the Mackay recommendations. Legislation will be introduced to make the Court of Appeal and the High Court a reality. We shall also bring in legislation with a view to have within the High Court, a Family Division that has the required support services. We shall also continue to work towards the simplification of court procedures to ensure that a greater number of people have speedy access to our justice system. It is worth noting that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has sat in Mauritius on two occasions, namely in 2008 and 2010.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the International Arbitration Act 2008 came into force in January 2009. An agreement has been signed with the Permanent Centre of Arbitration, and the PCA will soon have a branch in Mauritius.

We have also engaged ourselves in reviewing the Mauritian Civil Law and Procedure, with a view to include the evolution of the law in various areas covered by our Civil Code known as *Code Napoleon*, including matters relating to divorce.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already given instructions to the Law Reform Commission to look at the updating and reviewing of the *Code Civil Mauricien*, *Code de Procédure Civile* and the *Code de Commerce*. These will also be translated into English, given that a number of foreign firms are establishing themselves in Mauritius, following the amendment to the Law Practitioners Act in 2008. This will no doubt increase the ease of doing business in Mauritius, as well as assuring a better understanding of our legal and judicial system. It is worth mentioning that the Law Reform Commission submitted to me a preliminary review of the codes mentioned last week, but hon. Members will appreciate that this task will be long and tedious. I am here commending the Law Reform Commission for the work it is doing with limited resources.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as Government backbencher, I raised the problems faced by the students of the Council of Legal Education a number of times. It cannot be accepted that students following a professional course have no manuals, no proper classroom, no library, no full-time lecturers and other adequate facilities. I am personally working, together with my officers, to find ways and means to restructure the course, to make it practice-based in line with international standards. I met Judge, Paul Lam Shang Leen, the chairperson of the Council of Legal Education, and he is agreeable that the course be reviewed. In this context, I also have already had discussions with Mr Ian Brookfield from the University of Cardiff and with Mr Deveral Tapps from the University of Northumbria. My colleague, hon. Dr. Rajesh Jeetah, Minister for Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, has gladly agreed to the setting up of a department for Professional Legal Studies at the University of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker Sir, I intend to introduce legislation in order to review and intensify the training of lawyers after completion of their law degree, through the introduction of the concept of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Also the method of pupillage will be reviewed, so that prospective barristers are better equipped when they call to the Bar.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the institutional set-up for the training of Judges, Magistrates and Law Officers is underway and, God willing, in the near future, we will have a fully fledged institute that will conduct induction courses for Judges and Magistrates, and also conduct continuous training for all law officers. I am again personally working on this project, together with my officers and Sir Victor Glover, former Chief Justice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, reform of the legal profession will, therefore, be pursued to ensure that it has the right and appropriate legal structure to meet the needs of liberalisation and maximize on the opportunities that globalisation brings. The Bar Council Act and the Law Society Act will be amended to provide for a Registrar vested with administrative responsibilities. I have already started discussions with the relevant stakeholders on these issues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions now operates with its own budget. The Law Reform Commission has been reinforced with the coming into force of the Law Reform Commission Act 2005. My office is already studying amendments to the existing legislation, to further reinforce these institutions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Sexual Offences Bill, which was introduced in 2007, is being revisited. I can recall when the Bill was to be read for a second time, not being agreeable with

certain provisions, I, together with certain friends, expressed our concern, and the Bill was remitted to a Select Committee. This shows the democratic way in which our party and our Government function.

As hon. members would recall, the report of the Select Committee could not be tabled before the dissolution of the National Assembly, due to unforeseen circumstances. As I stated earlier, my office is currently reviewing the Bill. Once this is done and Cabinet approval obtained, the Bill will be introduced in the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Divorce and Judicial Separation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, introducing the concept of divorce by mutual consent, has been circulated for public consultation, and this expires on Friday 31 July 2010. I have already held a meeting with my officers and requested them to start working on the proposed changes for the Bill, if any, in the meantime.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a draft of the Assets Recovery Bill is ready and a delegation from the International Monetary Fund will be here in August. Following consultations, the Bill will be finalised. The main objective of this Bill is to prescribe the procedure to enable the State to recover assets which are proceeds on instrumentalities of crime or terrorist property. Where there has been no prosecution, but it can be proved on a balance of probabilities that the property represents proceeds of unlawful conduct.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during his speech at the inauguration of the seat of the Bar Council, Dr. the hon. Prime Minister requested me to find ways and means to introduce the concept of pro bono work among lawyers. I am pleased to inform the House that my office is currently working on a scheme together with the Bar Council to make the wish of the hon. Prime Minister a reality.

I also intend to bring about legislation to, first of all, review the practice of provisional information. Secondly, introduce the concept of spent convictions and thirdly, review the practice of disclosure in criminal proceedings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Law Reform Commission has submitted to me a report on witnesses who have been intimidated. We have had working sessions in my office and have planned another meeting tomorrow, 28 July 2010 with the Director of Public Prosecutions before any legislation is drafted.

Hon. Members will note that the Attorney General's office is the only institution that has regular and constant interactions with all the three limbs of the State, namely Parliament, the

Judiciary and the Executive. Generally, the Civil Advisory and Litigation Unit of the office represents services to all departments of the Government in relation to legal advice and representation. It thus ensures the day-to-day functioning of the State according to the rule of law. We normally attend to some 40 to 50 requests for legal advice on a weekly basis excluding representation before courts, tribunal and committees. The Drafting and Law Revision Unit plays an important role in the implementation of Government policy through the passing of legislation. The importance and central role of the Attorney General's office as a legal service provider to the Government needs to be recognised and reaffirmed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a wrong perception among a section of the population. Let me make it clear that the Attorney General does not and cannot interfere in Court cases, police enquiry nor can he give instructions to the Director of Public Prosecutions. According to the Constitution, the Attorney General is only the Principal Legal Adviser to Government. The internal structure of my office has been reviewed. A new schedule of duties came into force yesterday, 26 July 2010 to reinforce our capacity to deliver efficiently and to internationally recognised standards.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Attorney General's office needs more office space to better meet the oncoming challenges. It has been brought to my attention that the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions will be moving to new premises soon and my colleague, the hon. Mookhesswur Choonee, Minister of Arts and Culture has happily agreed to help us with the refurbishment of the old prisons premises. This will help us to have more office space and it is proposed that the Attorney General's office should have its own building. We have already worked on a plan and the cost estimate and these will be submitted to the Ministry of Finance shortly. We should provide our office with adequate infrastructure so that it becomes a centre of excellence.

Hon. Members will deduce how much has been done over the past two and a half months. Yet much remains to be done, but we are determined to persevere and go ahead to fulfil our objectives.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: According to the list, we are left with three hon. Members who are going to take part in the debate this evening. So, I am going to stop here for one hour fifteen minutes for dinner and then we will resume at ten past eight.

At 6.55 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.30 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mrs L. N. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, allow me to congratulate you for your election as Deputy Speaker. I would like to express my gratitude to the leader of my party, hon. Paul Bérenger, for having placed his confidence in me. You will understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that a ticket in Constituency No. 19 is one of the most coveted ones. And I am very happy and proud to have contributed in keeping the 'Citadelle Mauve' alive and I am most confident that it will remain unconquered for years. I would like to thank my colleagues, hon. Paul Bérenger and hon. Deven Nagalingum for having supported me throughout the campaign. A special word of thanks goes to Mr Jayen Cuttaree for having guided my first steps in politics. I must also thank all the electors of Stanley/Rose Hill for having placed their trust in me. My dearest wish is never to disappoint them or my party and to prove them right for having given me their vote and their confidence. Last but not least, a word of thanks to the members of my family for their support.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all of us here, in this Assembly, have been elected. No one has been more or better elected than others. I have chosen not to come back on the lack of freedom and fairness of the past elections, on the role of the MBC, of the communal campaign and personal attacks on the part of a few candidates as I prefer to consider these as things of the past. Let bygones be bygones, goes the saying. I have chosen rather to look with great optimism at the present and the future with the hope that some of the shortcomings of the Government do not repeat themselves, but are redressed.

My intervention today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will be based on the policy of this Government concerning the welfare of the family, the most important aspect of which is the welfare of the woman, the woman being the pillar of the family. *L'Alliance de L'Avenir, dans un souci d'unité, d'équité et de modernité, a introduit un nouveau ministère - le ministère de l'égalité des genres, du développement de l'enfant et du bien-être de la famille. Egalité des genres au lieu des droits de la femme! Est-ce à dire que le seul droit de la femme se résume maintenant à un droit d'égalité à l'homme? Qu'a-t-on donc fait des autres droits spécifiques que nous, mauriciennes, croyons avoir? Triste illusion! Egalité des genres: en théorie, cela pourrait paraître un avancement énorme pour notre société, mais, M. le président, ne serait-ce*

pas plutôt une utopie ? Quel est le statut de la femme au sein de la société mauricienne ? N'y a-t-il pas une énorme discrimination envers la mauricienne ?

En 1982, le MMM, au pouvoir pour la première fois, crée un ministère des droits de la femme et de la famille et amende le Jury Act, donnant ainsi droit aux femmes de faire partie du jury. En 1997, le Protection from Domestic Violence Act est voté. En 2002, le gouvernement MMM/MSM vote la loi révolutionnaire, le Sex Discrimination Act, et met sur pied le Sex Discrimination Division, branche de la Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme, pour permettre aux femmes de dénoncer les discriminations dont elles sont victimes et faire valoir leurs droits.

Par contre, M. le président, nous pouvons compter sur les doigts, les lois qui ont été introduites ces cinq dernières années, pour l'avancement de la femme. Au fait, à part de quatre amendements, il n'y a eu que deux lois concernant la femme et la famille –

- 1. Combating of Trafficking In Persons en 2009, et*
- 2. Le Equal Opportunites Act annoncé en novembre 2008 mais n'a toujours pas été promulgué.*

La Sex Discrimination Division, alors qu'elle est supposée être toujours en opération, d'après une réponse du vice-Premier ministre au Parlement le mardi 13 juillet 2010, n'a écouté aucun cas depuis avril 2009, et a été dans l'incapacité de produire un rapport annuel.

L'inactivité de la Sex Discrimination Division est-elle une résultante de l'attente de la promulgation de l'Equal Opportunities Act qui englobe également la discrimination et le harcèlement ?

L'île Maurice, M. le président, est donc dans l'illégalité totale internationale puisqu'elle ne peut respecter ces conventions qu'elle a signées. Par exemple, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; The Protocol on the Rights of the Woman in Africa; The SADC Gender Protocol. Moreover, Mauritius, as a member of the United Nations Member States, has also pledged to meet the Millennium Development Goals, the third of which reads – “To promote gender equality and empower women”.

Women are underrepresented in the political field. We are far from the target of 30% women in Parliament as advocated by the SADC Convention. We are not better represented at

the level of village councils and local authorities. We are almost inexistent in Boards of Management and at the level of Chairperson of such Boards.

As far as National Awards are concerned, not a single woman, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has ever received the highest award of merit, that is, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean. And only one woman has been awarded the second one, The Grand Officer of the Order and Key of the Indian Ocean. Does that mean that women are not up to standard in that country? Or are we second-class citizens? Even two do not make the grade.

The most flagrant case of discrimination against the woman is the last exercise of nomination of Senior Counsels. Female lawyers who have obtained international recognition have simply not been nominated. This confirms the saying that - "*Nul n'est prophète en son pays*".

Des points forts du premier ESI du rapport du Bureau Central des Statistiques en date du 07 juillet, nous retenons -

- *Les femmes sont plus propices à être pauvres, à vivre seules, divorcées ou séparées et sans emploi ;*
- *Les femmes qui travaillent sont plus susceptibles que les hommes à être des employées et moins à être chefs d'entreprise ;*
- *Les femmes gagnent l'équivalent de 67% du salaire des hommes ;*
- *Les femmes sont largement sous-représentées dans les sphères de prise de position publique.*

M. le président, un issu que le gouvernement devrait adresser est la violence domestique dont est victime la mauricienne. Dans son programme gouvernemental de juillet 2005, ce gouvernement avait écrit, à la page 25 -

"In view of Government's commitment to reinforce the institution of the family, Government will adopt a National Policy on Family. Concurrently, the enforcement mechanism of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act will be strengthened to provide better services to victims of domestic violence".

Cinq ans après, M. le président, ce gouvernement revient avec les mêmes promesses dans son programme de 2010 : promesse de mettre sur pied un National Action Plan to Combat

Domestic Violence *et un National Action Plan on the Family, d'amender le Protection from Domestic Violence Act et de formuler un Victim Empowerment and Abuser Rehabilitation Policy. Mon vœu le plus cher, M. le président, est que ces promesses ne restent pas des lettres mortes.* Arrêtons de nous voiler la face en mettant en avant, quand on est à court d'argument, que le nombre n'a pas augmenté. Même pas puisque, en réponse à une question concernant l'augmentation de la consommation des carburants pour son ministère, la ministre, pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, a dit que la hausse était due au nombre grandissant de cas d'abus contre les enfants et de violence domestique et que les officiers avaient à intervenir sur un grand nombre de cas. Ne nous arrêtons pas aux chiffres et voyons plutôt l'atrocité de ces cas de violence domestique et les séquelles sur les victimes et leur entourage. Donnons un sérieux coup de pouce et allouons des subventions à ces ONGs telle que SOS Femmes qui font du si bon travail pour venir en aide aux femmes battues et maltraitées.

M. le président, qui dit *family welfare* dit *family facilities*. Dans son programme de 2005, ce gouvernement promettait à la page 25 –

“In order to promote support services to enable women reconcile work and family responsibilities, Government will consolidate Day Care Centre facilities.”

Qu'avons-nous vu en cinq ans? Non seulement ces *Day Care Centre facilities* n'ont pas été accrus, mais il y a même eu la menace de fermer la crèche de la Résidence Père Laval à Quatre Bornes. Il a fallu des protestations des familles et des forces vives de la région pour que cette crèche reste opérationnelle. Nous nous rappellerons aussi ce triste épisode de l'APEIM qui a aussi été menacé de fermeture à un moment donné. M. le président, le monde du travail est devenu très, et trop, compétitif et les conditions de travail sont devenues dures, voire inhumaines, dans certains secteurs. Et c'est parce que nous au MMM croyons que la famille est le pilier de la société ; c'est parce que nous avons à cœur - sans jeu de mot - ces mères de famille qui ont des bébés ou des jeunes enfants que nous avons préconisé dans notre programme l'introduction du *flexi-time* pour que celles-ci puissent trouver une balance entre leur travail et leurs responsabilités familiales.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another issue that should be addressed without delay is the rate of juvenile pregnancy. A la page 15 du programme du gouvernement nous lisons –

“In the light of the findings of a study on teenage pregnancy, Government will devise policies and a National plan of action to address the issue.”

Mr Deputy, Sir, as much as I welcome this policy, allow me to express my surprise at the Government mentioning “the findings of a study on teenage pregnancy.” En 2007, M. le président, l’organisation mondiale de la santé entreprend, dans 43 pays et à travers le ministère de la santé, *un Global School Based Student Health Survey* qui comprend un module sur la sexualité des jeunes de 13 à 15 ans. Le point principal étant de les interroger sur ces « *sexual behaviours that contribute to HIV infection, other STI, and unintended pregnancy.* » Or, le *Country Report for Mauritius* n’a donné aucune indication à ce sujet pour la simple et bonne raison que le ministère de l’éducation n’a pas donné son autorisation pour l’inclusion des questions y relatives dans le questionnaire distribué aux collégiens. Alors que des pays tels que les Seychelles, l’Inde et l’Indonésie ont, d’après le rapport, abordé avec grand sérieux la question de comportement sexuel des adolescents, quelques statistiques, M. le président, nous ferons frémir : parmi les 11 à 17 ans en 2007, il y a eu 1,103 cas de grossesse dont 574 naissances ; en 2008, 1,346 cas de grossesse dont 670 naissances, et en 2009, 1,247 cas dont 665 naissances. En 2009, M. le président, 19 filles de 13 ans et moins étaient enceintes, et neuf d’entre elles ont donné naissance à un bébé ; 50 filles de 14 ans étaient enceintes et 28 sont devenues mères.

In 2007, 213 girls between the ages of 11 and 19 gave birth to their second child and 23 gave birth to their third child. In 2008, still between 11 and 19, 203 girls gave birth to their second child; 10 to their third child and three to their fourth child. Et M. le président, nous ne parlons là que des cas traités à l’hôpital. Ceux traités dans les cliniques privées évidemment sont passés sous silence. De là, l’importance d’introduire le *Sex Education* ou le *Health Education* dans nos écoles. Les recommandations des auteurs du *Country Report for Mauritius* se lisent comme suit –

“Introduce health education as a separate subject in the secondary school curriculum, as has been done for primary schools, and include sexual health education in the curriculum of upper primary and secondary classes.”

To those ‘*petits esprits*’ who fear that the introduction of Sex Education could mean encouraging the youth to indulge in sex, we can only say that we would simply be teaching them to know and respect their body.

Ce même *Country Report for Mauritius* fait état de la consommation d’alcool, de cigarettes et de la drogue chez nos jeunes de 13 à 15 ans, mais aussi de leur prédisposition aux

actes violents et agressifs. En une période de 12 mois, 31.2% de ces étudiants ont eu une bagarre physique dans l'enceinte de l'école et 52.9% ont été gravement blessés.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another problem that our society has to face and which is a hindrance to family welfare is the violence among our youth and in society at large. I form part of those who believe that the best way of solving a problem is first to admit that it exists.

In 2006, the Mauritius Research Council carried out a study on violence in our schools. All stakeholders were invited to depone, but unfortunately, the findings were so damning for a particular sector that the report ended up in some drawer. In 2010, a new survey is being carried out on violence in our schools. We doubt what the fate of this report will be!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think it is high time we put an end to that hypocrisy and we accept to face reality. If only we had done so, so many years back, the situation would not be so alarming today. We would perhaps not have heard of a primary school student trying to poison his teacher, a student burning the blackboard and the classroom, if not the teacher's car, of elder students removing shoes or tracksuits of junior ones in the middle of the road just for the sake of stealing. The most recent case that can, but make us shiver, is that of a 15-year old student who tried to commit suicide because she could no longer bear the bullying of her peers. Mr Speaker, Sir, there is perhaps nothing new under the sun concerning the conflicts among the youth. As Counsellor Rob Lugo of the Indiana University rightly said at a forum in violence in schools, "The conflicts have not really changed. The problem is that they now solve them in a different way". And the violence that starts in school goes up to adulthood, where we witness crimes nowadays, one more atrocious than the other. We all remember the case of the man who killed his wife, buried her in the basement before covering her with cement and then going on to live normally in the same house with his mistress. The latest crime to have shaken all of us is that of that young man who raped, killed and dissected his mother-in-law, before scattering parts of her body along the river, all this while his own wife was giving birth to their child in hospital. That violence is present among all strata of society; we cannot forget the case of the young student in medicine who killed his wife or lover before burying her in the cemetery in the middle of the night.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the time when the Mauritian society is losing some of its most important moral values, when we can witness so much violence among our youngsters and our citizens at large, when justice and peace are becoming rare in the world in which we are living,

when there is such a lack of self esteem and self respect and respect for others and for the environment, when the words love, honesty, patriotism are gradually losing their meaning, no one can question the essential place of citizenship education in our educational curriculum. It can, but help in the process of the individual's socialisation. We have to aim, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at making our students who are the adults of tomorrow become good and even better citizens, learn to live together and to have recourse to words and dialogue rather than to blows.

I would like to end this *volet* on family welfare by talking of women health. It is most welcome that the Government has in its programme decided to, I quote –

“set up an institute for women health, to cater for the specific health and medical needs of women with state-of-the-art technology and a new digital mammography screening service.”

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *une lacune importante* is the vaccine against cervical cancer, the second cause of cancer death in women. Since 2006, the question of treatment and prevention against cervical cancer has been raised in the National Assembly. On 28 April 2009, the then Minister of Health, hon. Dr. Jeetah, in answer to hon. Bodha said -

“We are looking into the matter to see what best course of action to take.”

The question was again raised on 23 June 2009 by hon. Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun and the then Minister of Health replied -

“The final report is expected by June 2010.”

We have now reached the end of July. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us not wait any longer. The cost of vaccines may look exorbitant, but the preventive measures for sure will cost less than the curative one. The cost of a vaccine in the private sector is Rs4500 and you will agree, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this sum is far beyond the means of a Mauritian family with two or three female members. Should the vaccines not form part of the free Government health service or should we think of a subsidy of a soft loan or a sort of health insurance? Anyway we all know that the suffering caused to the victim and her family has no price.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude with this *exposé* on the Mauritian women and gender equality, child development and family welfare, and particularly on behalf of all Mauritian women, I will simply leave to the House for some meditation, a quotation from Swami Vivekananda. I quote –

“The Gods are pleased when women are held in esteem. If you do not raise the women who are the living embodiment of the divine Mother, don’t think you have another way to rise”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would now like to talk about my constituency - the constituency of Stanley/Rose-Hill. The inhabitants of that constituency have always been known to be proud of their town for various reasons. It used to be clean and very safe. Lots of sport and cultural activities and competitions used to be organised for the inhabitants. Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, things have greatly changed for the past few years. Rose-Hill is no longer the *ville phare* it used to be. It is no longer the town that rendered the inhabitants of other towns jealous. What used to be the pride of the town, I mean the Plaza town hall and the theatre, is now the shame of the town. Works have been going on for years now without a hint of their coming to an end. What used to be a beautiful place where families gathered and children played has now become a place where people learn to drive, where motorcyclists organise races, where there are gang fights and where it is no longer safe. The inhabitants are constantly complaining of the lack of security in the town. Drug trafficking, prostitution, aggression of elders and women have become *monnaie courante*. The Rose-Hill bus station has become a place ruled by gangs and the appeal of the inhabitants to the Police for regular patrol has remained *lettre morte*. The same insecurity reigns in regions such as Camp Levieux, Cité Camp Levieux and Cité Trefles. Some sports teams, some of which belong to the first division, have no club house, and their request to be allowed to use the *centre social* of their region has met with a negative reply. The plot of land that had been earmarked for a boxing centre in Plaisance at the cost of Rs10 m. is now being taken for a tennis club, which is not that welcome for the inhabitants as they are more boxers than tennis men.

In Camp Levieux, there is no bus shelter. Five to six buses line up and wait for the time to depart on a new trip. The employees don't even have a toilet nearby. In the same corner, where there is such a lack of hygiene, there are *des marchands de boulettes*.

Many regions of Rose-Hill complain of the irregularity of buses at peak hours. The problem, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the roads are so narrow that it is difficult for the big buses to get through. The solution would be to have smaller buses on a more regular basis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the most acute problem the inhabitants of Stanley/Rose-Hill have to face is the shortage of water and the irregularity of water supply. Some regions remain

without any drop of water for days until a *camion citerne* is sent to distribute water. You can imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the rush of these inhabitants who have been waiting for days to get some water. At times the driver of the tanker cannot face that angry mob and finds it safer to go away without distributing any water.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this type of situation used to be unknown to Mauritius and we used to see such scenes only on TV. The problem of water supply in Stanley/Rose- Hill has become so acute that the inhabitants cannot stop themselves from thinking that they are just paying the price for having voted 3 MMM candidates for years now. We can but hope, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that they are wrong.

In such regions such as Rue Petite Montagne, Rue Alphonse, Avenue Chady and Avenue de Plevitz, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the problem of water drainage is such that, whenever it rains, there is an accumulation of water that either floods the houses or prevents the inhabitants from getting into or out of their houses.

Another sad characteristic of Constituency no. 19 is the state of the NHDC flats, which are not only an eyesore, but also a danger to the occupants. There again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, works have been going on for quite a long time now and only God knows when they will come to an end. In the meantime, there have been a few accidents like the four-year old boy who received a slab of the roof on his head while he was having his bath. The reason behind this is simply a lack of coordination. The workers had not warned the occupants that work would be going on in that block and now, according to the inhabitants, the waterproofing works have stopped midway and the roofs are still leaking. To end with the Constituency, we can mention the lack of facilities such as post offices, dispensaries and sports facilities in the town. *Plusieurs centres de jeunesse sont désaffectés et sont devenus des repères pour voleurs et drogués.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, avant de terminer, je voudrais ouvrir une heureuse parenthèse pour exprimer ma joie d'être ici et une triste parenthèse par contre pour dire ma déception en voyant la tenue ou plutôt le manque de tenue de certains membres de cette assemblée. Certains malheureusement prennent cette assemblée pour une cour de récréation. Pas plus tard que ce matin, M. le président, le président a eu à rappeler à l'ordre certains qui n'arrêtaient pas de parler, de faire des commentaires et ricaner pendant que, tenons nous bien, le *Deputy Prime Minister* parlait.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mrs Ribot: M. le président, moi, enseignante,....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mrs Ribot: Moi, enseignante, je réfléchirai à deux fois....

The Deputy Speaker: I trust all Members to listen in silence to the hon. Member for her maiden speech and any hon. Member who wishes to reply will have the opportunity to do so.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot deny the incident which occurred not later than this morning. *Moi, enseignante, M. le président, je réfléchirai à deux fois avant d'inviter mes élèves à venir assister aux travaux un jour. Je choisis de les laisser avec leurs illusions.*

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to express my hope as a citizen and lover of Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they are all proving me right. I would like to express my hope as a citizen and lover of Mauritius, as a woman of Mauritius, as a mother of Mauritius and as a teacher and leader of the youth of Mauritius. The hope that we all toil together so as to make Mauritius be a real paradise and not make our beloved motherland become a *paradis en deuil*.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(9.04 p.m.)

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, allow me to congratulate Mr Speaker who, in fact, is not here for having been unanimously elected in the House and he deserves to be praised because he has been able to uphold the spirit of fair play and free speech in the House. He has been doing his work so impartially that he has almost become an exile from politics. Everybody accepts and the same is with you as the Deputy Speaker, Sir. You need to be congratulated and, at the same time, I am proud because you are my *colistier*; you are elected from the same Constituency. You are not an exile from politics. He is a newcomer in that field so he needs to be congratulated and, at the same time, let me start by thanking the electorate of my Constituency because they have placed their faith in me as well as in my two other *colistiers*

and I should not forget the difference of votes between us and the Opposition. It has been over 11,000. This gives you an indication that, in fact, it is not a surprise, but this clearly indicates the amount of confidence that the electorate has placed in us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in our victory, we have been very humble; we have not been apologetic. We are proud of our success, but we are not arrogant. We have got a strong Government, but we do not have a rude Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the last three months the way things have been going on, is a clear indication that this is a Government which listens, which is a caring one and we believe in the principles of accepting noble ideas from all sides, but unfortunately the way I heard the hon. lady speaking today, I was really shocked. I had also been a teacher in my life for 25 years and 25 years is not a short time in the life of any individual. But the way things were painted in front of us as if blackening and darkening everything in this country. At times I wonder, if an outsider or a foreigner would hear such a speech, what would be his impression on our country, on our beloved motherland.

Secondly, I was, myself, shocked to hear her. It was as if a motion of no-confidence against her own Leader who had been the Prime Minister of this country for two years at least. I am in the House since 1991. Being in the Opposition, we can speak; we can criticise, but everything has got a limit. We do not have the licence to go on and on against our own country, against our own countrymen. That is why I have mentioned that we have got a firm Government, but we are not stubborn. This is not the case. This had not been the case that if in a Constituency we do not have Government Members that we turn a deaf ear to the demands and requests of our friends.

Thirdly, the way things have been painted as if all evils that have cropped in society are the responsibility of this Government. We have to be very careful while making such statements. There are values, there are attitudes in life. Now values need to be inculcated, at least, in our homes, in our houses and all of us are concerned as a Mauritian community, a Mauritian nation. The indication as if one particular Government is responsible for this, I believe is too much of it.

Another point which I didn't like at all because I have been here since 1991, I have never disturbed anybody whenever anyone addresses, but to come in the House and say that this is a rude Assembly and, for example, children cannot come; students cannot come, I consider that to be an exaggeration and secondly, indirectly it means insulting Members because we are not

schoolchildren here we are adults and, at times, we have the right to express ourselves, of course, within limits.

My humble plea is that we should know when to talk, how to talk and how much to talk. This is very, very important. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we had the courage to show grace in victory and the Opposition, at least, should realise that there had been an electoral battle. One party won, another one lost, we show grace in victory and you also have to show that sense that you have been defeated. You are to be there for five years, but the impression I get from the very beginning we have started is as if nothing is good in the country; three months is a long time, we should have performed miracles which is not possible. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they have become a bit *aigri*. I get the feeling that they have been defeated. Everybody knows that modern election is no longer a fight between Members of Parliament or Opposition and Government, it is basically a fight between two Leaders.

People try to choose a Prime Minister; they have chosen properly and rightly so, and they deserve to be congratulated. The cause of success is a question of leadership. We had a strong leadership, a leadership which inspires confidence, and people accepted that. What is the meaning of leadership? It means the capacity to transform visions into reality. It is as simple as that. All of us know we have plenty of problems in this multicultural, multiracial, multilingual country, but we have got answers to problems, and we are trying to answer. They, on their side, have got only questions to ask; that is the biggest problem. We have got answers; they have become part of the problem. I just listened the way one hon. Member has been talking a few hours ago, and that reminded me of, let us say, 30 or 40 years ago; the same language: *anguille sous roche, requin, renard*, this and that. These are all archaic words which used to be taught earlier in the late seventies. Those were the languages of late sixties and early seventies. That is the biggest misery.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been a study conducted by Harvard University on the cause of failures in life, and that study concluded that 85% cause of failure or defeat in life is because of wrong attitude, negative attitude, and 15% is because of intelligence and knowledge. So, let their attitude, at least, be positive. They have developed such a negative attitude and, when attitude is negative, life becomes restricted and success is limited. That's why my advice to the hon. Member is: think of the best, work for the best and expect the best in your life.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bachoo: This is the message I have to give them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, only sitting in the House and speaking of the past, that we had done this and that, gets your present efficiency punctured, and that is the reason why they '*bouge fix*' in the House.

(Interruptions)

In Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have got a programme. We have got an answer to every problem...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bachoo: ...and they have got a problem for every answer which we are giving. Every Tuesday, the hon. Minister of Health answers series of questions. She tries to explain, she has got answers, but, unfortunately, for every answer, they have a problem; they keep on getting entangled in such problem, and they don't know how to get out of it. That is a misery. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have got commitments.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order, please!

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have got commitments, whereas they have got...

(Interruptions)

No! I am not...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, please address the Chair.

Mr Bachoo: They are trying to disturb me. We have got commitments and they have got promises, and promises are always made to be broken. This is exactly what happens. Whenever they are here, they only make promises.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one thing I can tell you is that we are trying to do our best and, for more or less the last three months in Government, we have been able to show how much we can perform and how we can perform as a group.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would now like to come on the different departments of my Ministry. Government, today, is investing massively on road infrastructure to sustain growth, because we are determined to modernise our road networks.

The last 15 years, there has been too much talk on road decongestion. Historically and traditionally, investment in roads had always been financed from the budget. But these investments have become so heavy these days that we are compelled to explore new models of financing road projects, and we have been looking at different methods of financing those, for example –

- (1) funds from the Government ;
- (2) loans from the development partners;
- (3) participation of the private sector funding;
- (4) public and private partnership, and
- (5) build and operate through public companies.

These are different models. We have gone through all the different models and, in the past, there has been too much of hesitation, dilly-dallying as to whether to go or not to go, whether to be or not to be, and that explains the cause why the situation has become so chaotic today. For example, since 2007/2008 onwards, we have been investing massively on road projects. In 2008-2009 - one year - we have spent almost Rs1 billion on road projects. From July, last year, to December, we have spent Rs708 m., and this year the projected expenditure is about Rs2.1 billion.

As at date, we have already completed procurement for Rs13 billion, and many people think that congestion is limited only to the city centre. But, now, it has become a nationwide issue. With us, this question of dividing, segregating urban and the rural areas is no longer there; it is a relic of the past. Far from a slogan, now we have moved into a nation, into one country.

Congestion, as I have said, is not limited to only one region. Everyone feels, whether in the north or south, east or west, that he is a victim of congestion. People feel suffocated when they are caught in traffic jam, and that's why we have started the decongestion programme throughout the island.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the daytime, there were questions on the number of contracts x, y or z is getting. But one thing I would like to make clear is that this Government or the previous Government had voted the Central Procurement Board. It is there, and the responsibility of allocating contracts goes to the Central Procurement Board. Whether it is the RDA or any other parastatal body, they have got no right to poke their nose; even recommendations are not

allowed, except that engineers or technicians of the parastatal bodies, at times, are called by the Central Procurement Board to have discussions. But the Central Procurement Board is the only authority to give contracts. Then, to come in the House and cast aspersions, trying to poison the ears or trying to speak any *bla-bla-bla*, I get the feeling this is mere machination with a view to, at least, discourage Government from going ahead. We have seen this in the past too much, and I sincerely believe that this Government will never tolerate. We have taken the decision to go ahead and we have got the ICAC. Anyone who does any wrong, everybody is free to go to ICAC, ICAC *pas pou guette aukene figure*; ICAC will take its decision.

So, once I have already made this clear, I can tell you the amount of work that we have done. Regarding Macondé Bridge, hon. Alan Ganoo knows the efforts which were made in the past to put that bridge on, but nothing was done. I still remember, I was myself the Minister, but he who holds the purse holds power. I was the Minister, but if it is not voted in the budget, if things are not done, what can a Minister do? But, now, we have got a Government that is willing to invest, and we have invested. Everybody who lives in the south of the country knows that we are not dreamers of dreams, we are doers of deeds. We have done it, and we have shown that. That has cost the country Rs185 m., and now people are proud; they use that road freely, without fear or favour, whether it is winter or summer, whether there is flood or not. That was started by no other than the Deputy Prime Minister. He initiated it, and we have to thank him.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was in the Government previously. They tried a lot; we have to thank them, but unfortunately, nothing was done. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as they have mentioned, when we speak in terms of congestion, congestion does not mean only the city centre. For example, in the north, people who go to the northern parts, towards Cap Malheureux, Grand' Baie, Triolet, know the difficulties that they have to face, either in the morning or afternoon. Luckily, the Triolet bypass is nearing completion by August, and we have spent approximately Rs226 m. Anybody who lives in the north knows what a relief it is to have such an interesting bypass in the extreme north of the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know time is limited and that is the reason why I will not go into the depths. One thing is clear, this plot of land was there and the idea was to prepare designs. That was completed earlier.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have the Goodlands bypass. As everybody knows, Goodlands is becoming a new township now and by the month of August at latest or early

September, the inhabitants of Constituency No. 6 will be overjoyed to see a beautiful, modern road at the cost of Rs295 m. This is the meaning of decongestion. We do not want to limit ourselves to one particular plot.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning the Flacq bypass...

(Interruptions)

I am proud to be from that constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. By the month of August we would be able to decongest that region at the cost of Rs40 m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning the Rivière du Rempart bypass, that also is coming up. We know the difficulties people living in Schoenfeld, Pavé Road, and Rivière du Rempart are facing. There is only one way towards Piton to come to Port Louis. Government is spending Rs80 m. and the work has started. Probably within eight to ten months that will be ready, the bypass of Rivière du Rempart will lead you to Poudre d'Or Hamlet and from there to Port Louis. That is another great step that we have taken to decongest that region.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who does not know Camp Thorel? It was landlocked, you can go in, but you can't get out. Luckily, we have spent Rs42 m. and the work has already been completed. This is the meaning of decongestion. This is the meaning of bringing development into the nook and corner of the whole country.

The Grand Bois/Mare d'Albert Road is nearing completion. There were some slight problems in that road. My colleague, the hon. Minister of Education, drew my attention and we are having a look at it. We have spent Rs54 m. and it is nearing completion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the entrance of Terre Rouge, the Tianli Road is nearing completion and that also at a cost of Rs101 m. There is also the upgrading of two kms of the motorway, from Colville to Caudan which has already been completed and now we are using it. The motorway from Terre Rouge to Pamplémousses: 6 kms of road at the cost of Rs102 m. That also has been completed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, those who travel from Wootun to Quartier Militaire know the difficulties that they were encountering to go towards Quartier Militaire, Camp Thorel, Flacq, Providence, Montagne Blanche. Now, part of the road is already completed and we have spent Rs140 m. From Wootun to Belle Rive and from Belle Rive to Camp Quartier Militaire, the tender exercise is almost ready. We are awaiting the clearance of the World Bank. Once we receive the clearance in the days to come, we will go for tender and that is approximately Rs750

m. Réduit Triangle is nearing completion. Slight problems were existing there, but in a month or two, that road will be completed.

The dual carriage way from Pamplémousses to Forbach is another masterpiece. I can't say that it is nearing completion, but it may take, at least, four to five months. This will cost Rs228 m.

Regarding the third lane from Grewals to Caudan, I heard the Fourth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix, hon. Dr. Sorefan speaking about the third lane. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this will be ready in two months' time. I am sure that once it is ready, people will get a sense of relief from the stress that they have to undergo.

Concerning the third lane from Pont Fer, that is, from Phoenix to St. Jean, work has already started at the cost of Rs135 m. With regard to the third lane from St. Jean to Collville, we are inviting tenders in the days to come. And from Collville to Grewals, the tender documents are being prepared.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I heard an hon. Member asking if the third lane is constructed, whether there will be congestion at the roundabout. Let me inform the House that we have already given the order for a grade separated junction. Tender exercise is over; a contractor had been appointed and preliminary work has already started at Caudan for the grade separated junction. Some eight to ten months' work will be required. Therefore, the congestion will no longer be there. The third lane starting from Phoenix will come directly to Port Louis. At the city centre, we are appointing a consultant for a subway and the pedestrian crossing would be removed. Probably, the consultants will be appointed in the weeks to come and, thereafter, we are going to construct a subway in the city centre.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Terre Rouge/Verdun was the talk of everybody, but it was the play of a few. Luckily, the contract has been awarded; work has started at an accelerating speed and most probably in one and a half year's time, work will be completed at Terre Rouge/Verdun.

Concerning Phoenix/Beaux Songes, work had already started. If I am not mistaken, part of the road, for example, from Phoenix to Solferino will be ready by the end of this year.

We have heard so much about the Ring Road, Phase 1, that it is all bla bla bla and that nobody will do it. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, work has already started for the Phase 1. We had a problem of land acquisition. There was a challenge in the Supreme Court, but we won the case and work has already started. It is going on at an accelerating speed.

Insofar as the upgrading of Caudan road is concerned, a contract has already been awarded.

(Interruptions)

No, that's a different one. From the Caudan roundabout to Quay D, it will cost Rs100 m. and the contract is awarded to Gamma Civic and the work is going to start in the days to come.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not drunk. I know what I am talking about. We are moving step by step. We cannot undertake all the works at one go because of the dense traffic all the time.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, apart from these we have major programmes for the enlargement of roads. Anyone going to Petrin can see that we have enlarged and upgraded the road from Petrin to Plaine Champagne and this at the cost of Rs50 m. The St. Pierre Bridge is ready.

Everybody knows the problems that the inhabitants of Nalletamby at Vacoas were facing. Now, it is a problem of the past. We have spent Rs20 m. and we are continuing with the enlargement of the road.

Concerning the Quatre Soeurs Bridge, tender documents are ready. We have spent Rs13 m. and the work is going ahead.

In the extreme south, at Ferney, we are spending Rs61 m.; work has already started.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the request of the Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes, hon. Ms Deerpalsing, we had already awarded the contract of Rs50 m. for Tulip Avenue. The only problem we are having is that sewerage work is going on. Once this is over, work will start there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are other projects in the pipeline. There is a dual carriage way from Forbach to Grand Bay. The contract will be issued in the days to come. General Construction got the contract.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the project of Verdun/Trianon is at a tender stage. I have already mentioned the project of Belle Rive to Quartier Militaire. The upgrading of the motorway from Nouvelle France to La Vigie will cost us Rs200 m. We are expecting clearance from the World Bank and once we get the clearance, work will go ahead.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, among the most important projects, we have the Ring Road (Phase II) Harbour Bridge that connects A1 M1 and this is also coming. Be patient a little bit!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a transaction adviser has already been appointed. The Central Procurement Board is evaluating the bids and we have received requests for proposals from three selected bidders. This will be issued in August of this year. The cost of the three projects is estimated at Rs15 billion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are other major projects in the pipeline. It is not just for the sake of talking that I am telling these. Everybody knows the St Pierre/Moka bypass.

(Interruptions)

Why is the hon. Member in a hurry? I am coming; there are so many other things!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please! Order!

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all the university students and those students who go to MGI, Moka, know the difficulties that they get in the morning from St. Pierre to Moka. Life is really a hell there. In fact, I had discussions with the Minister of Finance who has been kind enough to give us the green light to go ahead. We have already started the preliminary design, the acquisition procedures are on and if everything goes on well, most probably towards the end of this year, we are going to allocate the contract. The value is approximately Rs200 m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one project which is coming is the East Coast Trunk Road, that is, from the roundabout of Forbach near Cottage to Bel Air, from one extreme to the other. The cost is approximately Rs2 billion and the design has already been completed. This was a project which was kept in the coffers. It is out, designs are ready, CES was the company that prepared the design and actually we are at the stage of land acquisition. Land acquisition has started and once it is over, we are going to seek for funds to complete this project that is going to link the extreme east to Port Louis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the East West connector...

(Interruptions)

These are all projects of this mandate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is the East West Connector from *Centre de Flacq* towards Quartier Militaire, the consultant is being appointed.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the upgrading of Higginson Road, the design is also being prepared. That is a very dangerous road and we have been requested to look into it.

I heard the hon. Fourth Member of La Caverne/Phoenix who spoke before me. He raised the issue of Pont Fer. At Pont Fer, we have three roundabouts and if we are going to move for a grade separated junction, it will not be possible because one grade separated junction will not be of any help. That is the reason why we are preparing a design for a flyover which is going to connect all the three. But, it is a very, very costly and complicated issue. We are already working on it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can go on and on because the hon. Member has raised an issue. There are dozens of other projects, but I am going to take up one project at least. The hon. Member has raised the issue of *la rue* Vandermeersch. I can assure the House that we are working on that. Certain recommendations were made and the technicians of my Ministry are working on them.

Apart from that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have tarring and upgrading of roads, construction of footpaths and enlargement of roads. All these are being undertaken throughout the country. Once again, I would like to assure the House that everything is being done in *transparence* and that all the dirty habits of casting aspersions uselessly and particularly on x, y and z, I consider that to be something very, very mean.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have decided to review, revisit and reconsider the LRT because policy is never a static matter. It is not frozen in time. It is subject to change similar to the changing environment. We have got a new Government with new people having new ideas. So, we agree to change, but not for the sake of change. We agree to revisit our stand, our viewpoints and our policies where the interest of the country lies. That is the reason we are continuing with the Road Development Programme, but we have agreed to revisit the LRT. We do not say that we are not going ahead with this particular system, but we want to get a little bit of time because the investment is very heavy and we want to invest in the right direction. We have to reassess it; we have to revisit the situation and the levels of investment, the returns and the affordability of tickets are all factors which we are considering. We are also looking at the timing of investment because we are investing massively and heavily on infrastructure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, apart from roads, which form one part of the responsibility of my Ministry, the second most important...

(Interruptions)

... is infrastructure, buildings, that is, the backbone of my Ministry, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. All infrastructural works of the Government are undertaken in my Ministry. There is no denying the fact that we have, in fact, worked wonders, I may say. These are all visible works which everybody can see. We have got capital investment and, at the same time, the maintenance of infrastructural works.

As far as maintenance is concerned during the last five years, the Engineering Section of my Ministry has undertaken minor works in different Ministries to the tune of R1.5 billion, including Rs1 billion for education alone which consists of the construction of additional classrooms, upgrading of existing classrooms, construction of new toilet blocks, upgrading of toilet blocks, construction of football and volleyball playgrounds, waterproofing, painting and tiling works. These are all minor works that are very time consuming. From 2007 to 2010, 14,000 items have been attended to by the Engineering Section of my Ministry. That is no mean achievement and that is why I would like to thank all the officers of my Ministry, technicians, engineers and architects for the good work that they have done.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will come to all Government buildings - starting from pre-primary, primary, state secondary schools, hospitals, dispensaries, medi-clinics, community centres, police stations and civil status offices as all these are constructed under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

As far as the main capital projects are concerned, I would like to name a few because the list is so long that I can go on and on and it will not finish. In the educational sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, works have already been completed in 23 new SSS. Works are ongoing in 9 SSS and extensive works are being carried out in 4 MGSS: Moka, Nouvelle France, Solferino and Central Flacq. We have completed construction of 17 new toilet blocks; upgrading works have been completed in 50. This means that we have not even forgotten the toilet blocks because we know the difficulties that our kids get. We have had the construction of 24 classroom blocks in the primary schools and construction of classroom blocks in another 23 primary schools is on. There are 34 projects for the extension or construction of primary schools which are ongoing. As I have mentioned, we have also undertaken the construction of football grounds in primary and secondary schools. 342 extension works, renovation works, electrical works and other specialised works have been carried out in the schools. We have also been requested to carry out

the construction of a new classroom block at the Royal College, Port Louis. For the past 50 years, nothing was done in Royal College, Port Louis. I still remember the then Minister of Education had the intention, at least, to do something at the Royal College, Port Louis, but nothing was done. For Curepipe we had constructed but Port Louis was left. So, now we are constructing one classroom block at Royal College and having extension works at Régis Chaperon, Emmanuel Anquetil and Souillac. We have five new gymnasiums, multi-purpose halls in Bon Accueil, Rivière du Rempart, Pailles, John Kennedy College and Quartier Militaire and for these, most probably, in the months to come we are going to start the construction. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, five new sports complexes, football grounds and volleyball/basket playgrounds are being constructed at Plaine Magnien, Sodnac, Mapou, La Gaulette and St. Aubin.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to come to what we have done in the health sector.

(Interruptions)

In the health sector, my Ministry has carried out extensive renovation works in almost all the area health centres, dispensaries and hospitals. Among the most important works undertaken by my Ministry is the construction of –

1. a new block B at Flacq hospital costing Rs 140m.;
2. a medi-clinic at Plaine Verte;
3. a new Accident and Emergency Unit at SSRN hospital costing Rs75 m.;
4. a community centre at Vacoas;
5. a hospital block at Long Mountain, the work is starting.

My Ministry is also involved in the construction and supervision of the new Jeetoo Hospital, which will be completed by the end of December next year. We have prepared bidding documents for the construction of a medi-clinic at Triolet and it is above Rs60 m. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Blocks C and D at Flacq Hospital are at design stage because that is becoming a centralised hospital.

Regarding the Police sector, works in seven new Police stations have been completed and works in two Police stations are ongoing. 157 renovation and upgrading works in different Police units have been completed and renovation works are ongoing in nine of them. A new detention centre at Piton will be constructed shortly. We are also involved in the preparation,

supervision of the design plans and ultimate construction of the new prison at Melrose. We have been able to live up to the expectations, we are doing it and besides, other construction works are being carried out in the prisons by my Ministry; for example, six dormitories at new wing at Beau Bassin prison, Medical Unit at women's prison and renovation of different buildings.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the Judiciary department, six projects were at design stage, one at construction stage and among the major projects are the new Bambous Court and new Moka Court. For the Ministry of Agriculture, six projects, including five fisheries projects are being implemented. A new containment laboratory at Réduit is being designed. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the youth sector, infrastructural sports works have been completed in many parts of the region and actually, we are working on the design of a multi-purpose sports complex at Triolet. Site visits have been effected at the New International Football Stadium at Tyack also and we are going to take it up.

As far as Social Security is concerned, the recreational centre has been constructed at Belle Mare and technicians are working. This is just like a 5-star hotel for all our mothers and fathers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, two additional recreational centres are to be constructed at Pointe aux Piments and Riambel. At Pointe aux Piments, we have already started working on the preliminary designs and there is one Respite Care Centre at Bambous. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are preparing the designs and drawings for construction of social security offices at Rivière des Anguilles and St. Pierre and the construction of a Probation Home for girls at Barkly. Preliminary works have already started at National NGOs Academy at Réduit. Other projects, where my Ministry has been involved, are the construction of Nelson Mandela Centre; it is nearing completion, a new market fair at Flacq, a new labour office at Curepipe, *espace culturel* at SSR Botanical Garden and the renovation of the Emmanuel Anquetil building.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the Fire Department, a new fire station at Flacq is ready for inauguration, we don't have time.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, Order, please!

Mr Bachoo: There is one fire station at Tamarin, the design is nearing completion. Most probably in a few weeks it will be ready. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the CIDB, the Construction Industry Development Board, a new Act was passed and it was set up last year in

order to promote and stimulate development, improvement and expansion of the construction industry. We have been able to regulate the registrations of contractors and consultants and we are also working on a national schedule of rates that will benefit consumers, as the course of construction is going on at a skyrocketing speed. Specially, those proposing to construct houses, these people can get some support from the CIDB.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another department of my Ministry that is very important is the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit. Everyone is concerned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There has been an increase in the number of accidents which have taken place recently and that is the reason why we are laying more emphasis on road safety aspect also.

At TRMSU, we receive almost 2,500 requests and complaints yearly and we are looking at handrails, humps, one-way scheme traffic lights and whatever requests are made, the TRMSU sees to it that those requests are attended to urgently. The TRMSU also carries out road safety campaigns each year so that the public is sensitised on how to behave safely on our roads. The Drink/Driving and Two-Wheelers campaigns are continuously done and we are planning also to have Seat Belt campaign that we are launching next month; Pedestrian Safety campaign in September and Drink/Driving campaign in December. So, these are regular works that we do.

The speed cameras which we have procured last year; we are getting 3,000 contraventions monthly; most probably many hon. Members of the House might have paid already, it is Rs2,000. We have got three mobile cameras actually and within a few months, we are going to have two additional cameras. Wherever required, we are trying to put up humps and we have provided 4.5 kilometres of handrails in one year's time.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order Please!

Mr Bachoo: Ten sets of traffic lights are being provided per year and this coming year we are going to procure 25 new traffic lights. Last year, 100 bus shelters were constructed and this year we will be constructing an addition of 100 bus shelters.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like now to turn to another important arm of my Ministry, that is, NDU. Here, I would like to thank the Private Parliamentary Secretaries because, in fact, they are doing a very good job; day and night they are in the fields-in different nooks and corners of the country. And, in fact, sincerely speaking, they are doing a very good job. Over the years, NDU has successfully implemented a large number of micro projects, a

wide range of basic amenities and infrastructure which have changed the very physical image of the country. NDU has, in fact, improved the quality of life of our people. It has constructed roads, drains, bridges, football grounds, volleyball pitches, community centres, cremation grounds and other sports infrastructure and social amenities. Besides, NDU has constructed an effective drainage network all over the country, especially on non-classified roads.

The Land Drainage Programme aims at putting up effective drainage system which could support economic activities and protect the environment. After the great flood of 2008, NDU came up with an Emergency Rehabilitation Programme to address the flooding problems in 146 critical sites. Out of 146, 84 projects worth Rs436 m. have already been addressed. Eight bridges have already been constructed, three at Mon Gout, Hermitage, Pointe aux Sables, Ebène and Pailles, all of them costing Rs125 m.

Major drainage systems have been put at La Flora Government School, Rajcoomar Gajadhur SSS and Bel Air SSS to alleviate the hardship of our students. From 2005 to December 2009, an amount of Rs735,235,000 has been spent on drain works. 207 drain works have been completed. 24 ongoing drain and bridge projects are on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the report of the Fact-Finding Committee on ex-Lola flooding, even Justice Domah has acknowledged the good works of NDU. The Judge has also mentioned in the report some of the great works done by NDU. For example, the big drains at Ville Noire, Mahebourg, Village of Batimarais, Morisson Street, Souillac and 16^{ème} Mille - that is a bridge and we have already constructed it.

Community-based infrastructure and amenities, construction of community centres, football grounds, volleyball pitches, children's playgrounds, *pétanque* courts, fixing of handrails and supply of street lighting, are other responsibilities of NDU. From 2005 to June 2010, Rs1,307,297,400.39 have been spent by NDU on road works, amenities, buildings and on street lighting.

During the last five years, CAB officers have processed around 20,000 applications for NHDC slab grants and organised about 400 social activities. Government has decided to reorganise the CAB offices to make them more responsible to the current needs of the community. A Committee has been set up at the level of my Ministry to come up with firm proposals.

In the forthcoming years, NDU will continue with the construction of roads, drains, cemeteries, health tracks, sports complexes as well as market fairs. We have also decided to put up major drain works in Quartier Militaire, Bonne Veine-L'espérance, Malinga, Mahebourg, Gros Billot, Panchavati, Gokhoola and Vallée des Prêtres among the most important areas. As I have already mentioned, I wish to place on record the support that I am getting from the Parliamentary Secretaries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another important institution that is under my Ministry is the National Transport Authority. National Transport Authority is a regulatory body that is responsible for implementing Government policies and decisions relating to Road Transport. It ensures that there is a satisfactory level of transport services provided to sustain the social and economic development of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the NTA has dealt with 300 disciplinary cases against bus operators and their crews as well as against the taxi operators. 492 licenses were suspended, 24 licenses were revoked. Actually, there are 366, 500 vehicles registered with the NTA by the end of last year. There is an average increase of 4.5%, it means more than 15,000 vehicles are coming on our roads yearly and the data base of registered vehicles are computerised. Six thousand checks have been carried out on bus services, 1,300 cases of bus crews for offences relating to misbehaviour have been dealt with and 10,000 contraventions have been established by inspectors. 22,000 contraventions for parking offences by Traffic Wardens and, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the NTA also looks after the free travel scheme. As we have mentioned in our programme, the free travel scheme will be maintained as per Government Programme, but the mode of payment will be reviewed to make it more efficient and returns submitted by bus operators are scrutinised by NTA to ensure that no bus operator makes an abuse of the scheme by claiming unwarranted payment. A fast-track has also been set-up at NTA to deal with complaints from beneficiaries of free travel scheme. 94 disciplinary cases have been heard and the licenses of 65 operators and their crews have already been suspended. As at now, we have 155, 000 students who have been issued with student bus passes every year by NTA to enable them to travel freely in buses and with the increase in the number of vehicles and with a view to providing better customer service the number of pay points for renewal of motor vehicle licences has also been decentralised.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a new Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicle) Regulations has come into operation this year and it caters for new technological improvements in vehicle manufacture and sets new requirements for the safe transport of goods and passengers, for example, fitting of speed limiters to heavy vehicles, special identification needs for vehicle transporting inflammable or hazardous substances, carrying of fire extinguishers in all vehicles for emergency needs. Regulations are being vetted at State Law Office to enable the transfer of registration of deeds of sale of motor vehicles from Registrar General's Department to NTA. As set out in Government's Programme, examination of vehicle centres will be privatised. Five centres will be licensed in different parts of the island for the purpose and, in this context, the required legislation is being finalised.

Retro-reflective registration plates for vehicles will be introduced - white in front and yellow at the rear. The public will also have the possibility to apply for personalised registration numbers. If you want your name to be included in the number you can apply within limits which will be prescribed.

My Ministry is ensuring that all these requirements are implemented as smoothly as possible in order to avoid undue hardship to vehicle owners. Whenever the deadlines set cannot be reasonably met, appropriate measures will be taken and public will be informed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, last but not the least, the National Transport Corporation. Government is giving special consideration to National Transport Corporation to put it on a sound financial footing and, actually, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the CNT carries over 220,000 passengers daily and this represents 57% of passengers carried by the other five companies and CNT is the biggest bus company having a fleet of 549 busses. It operates along 79 routes out of which only 32 are profit-making. So, Government relies heavily on CNT for providing an essential social service and all measures are being taken to boost revenues, contain cost, enhance productivity and efficiency and improve the capital base of the Corporation.

In fact, we are adding 47 new buses to this ageing fleet. Most probably we are going to start receiving the buses in a month time, that is five monthly and, the last one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the shipping sector that plays an important role in the economic development of the country and due to increase in regional traffic, the role of Mauritius Shipping Corporation will be revamped. The merging of the Corporation and a subsidiary, the Coraline will be looked into to bring in economic efficiency. As Mauritius Pride is more than 20 years old, the possibility of

purchasing a third vessel is being considered. So, for 23 years now the Shipping Corporation has been fulfilling Government social responsibility towards Rodrigues and its inhabitants and Rodrigues route is cross-subsidised by the surplus which is generated on the R union/Madagascar routes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can go on and on, there are so many other issues. For example, one thing that comes to my mind is the problem that people are facing in Montagne Ory, but the works order has already been issued for the retaining wall, but if I'll go on like that it will take me another one or two hours. So that is the reason why I would like to wind up but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at least, I have been able to do justice to the topic because the impression given was that nothing is being done and that everything is rotten and that is the reason why I felt it important, at least, to paint a picture of what has been done, what is being done and what will be done. I have always believed in one philosophy that if you want success you have to strive, you have to struggle and you have to sweat and you will succeed.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(9.58 p.m)

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I promised hon. Members that I won't be long.

Let me, at the very outset, congratulate you for your election as Deputy Speaker and I also avail myself of this opportunity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to convey my warmest congratulation to the Speaker, to the prestigious office of Speaker. My congratulation goes to my colleague, hon. Mrs Lysie Ribot, for her maiden speech and all Members who have addressed the House before me.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me also extend my sincere congratulations to all the Members of Parliament who have been elected at the last election and especially the young and new MP's who are embarking in the exciting and challenging venture of serving the people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is indeed with a great sense of humility that I am addressing this august Assembly today. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my constituents, the electorate of Stanley and Rose-Hill who have kindly entrusted me the responsibility of being one of the spoke person in this House. I would also like to express a solemn thank to the leader of the MMM from whom I have learned a lot during this election, in the constituency as one of his fellow candidates together with my colleague Lysie Ribot.

I feel privileged to be one of the very few to have witnessed and worked with this man and patriot during an electoral campaign. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now that election is over, it is time for us, we, hon. Members, assembled here, and especially the Government, to resolutely aim at the building up of a better and democratic Mauritius. This august National Assembly is the country's temple of democracy. And when we talk of democracy, we are not simply talking of constitution, elections, institutions and regulations. Democracy is based on faith in people, in the dignity and worth of the individual, and in our shared humanity. It assumes that the basic objectives of our action here should be the welfare and happiness of our people. I am not talking of a democracy which is merely a form of Government, but a kind of society. A society in which each and every Mauritian feels that Government's actions are aimed towards the fulfilment of the needs and expectations of one and all. A society in which the people are given the opportunity to be active participants in the development of their towns and villages whilst being provided access to services and facilities that a modern State is expected to offer to its people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no better instrument than Local Government to achieve this. Local Government is at the very basic root of democracy. It is the most reliable means through which a Government may respond to the needs and expectations of its people. Section 51 of the Local Government Act of 1989, for example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, defines the powers and duties of Local Authorities. There are so many things which a Local Authority is empowered to carry out for the welfare of its people. For example, providing day nursery service, *la crèche*; this service stemmed out from the emergence and development of the free zone in the early eighties whereby women started to join factories massively and as a result of which Local Authorities felt the need to provide day nursery service so as to relieve the people in need. This is, but one example to illustrate how close Local Authorities are with the people. There are many other initiatives which could be taken by Local Authorities, but same cannot be implemented mainly due to lack of funds. I know this fairly well because I myself, started my political career at grass root level as Municipal Councillor and later as Mayor.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know that there is a pressing and urgent need for reform in this sector. And the several attempts, in the past, to bring about reform to that sector have lamentably failed for various reasons on which I do not want to elaborate now. But, I can vouch that all that is needed to initiate valuable reform and to revamp Local Governance in Mauritius is

political will. We had it. The Government to which I belonged brought a comprehensive and marvellous piece of legislation in 2003; with a view of making regional democracy livelier and by empowering Local Authorities so that they can play their role as Local Government bodies in the best possible conditions; while we also make provision for the setting up of new Municipal bodies. But, unfortunately, for no reason at all or for unconvincing reason, that Act was sadly set aside by Government in 2005.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no law is static. A piece of legislation is bound to be dynamic, for example, subject to change, amendment, so as to respond to the requirements of the prevailing situation. That is why, if according to the previous Government, the provisions of the previous 2003 Act did not, in the most humble opinion or the previous Government meet the prevailing requirements at that particular point in time, that Government could well have made the necessary changes and go ahead with that piece of legislation. But, it chose to simply set it aside *d'un revers de main*. That was to my opinion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, an antipatriotic act and as a result five long and precious years have been lost, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Nevertheless, I note that now, Government is contemplating to come forward with major reform in the field of Local Government. Paragraph 218 of the Government Programme 2010-2015 states that-

“A major review of Local Government legislations will be undertaken in order to better meet the aspirations of the population. Consideration will be given to the creation of new Municipal Councils”.

But, this is precisely what we did to the Local Government Act 2003 and which was simply not given a damn and set aside in 2005. Nevertheless, I would say now, *mieux vaut tard que jamais*, but if now Government is fully committed to review and bring reform to this fundamental sector of our democracy, I would invite the Minister to come forward with a White Paper after wide consultation with all the stakeholders and interested parties prior to the presentation of the Bill to the House. We desperately need to be clear on the real long-term objective of the Local Government reform. First, are we Central Government, Local Government practitioners and citizens; getting full satisfaction with the present set up? Are we getting value for money for the funds invested? What is the present level of Municipal productivity and efficiency? The point I want to make, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the

proposed reforms should address the issue of organisational set up so as to maximise output and hence, increase Municipal productivity and efficiency.

My second point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, relates to resources; both financial and human. Setting up a new Municipal Council is not just a question of having more Mayors or mayoral limousines. We need to be able to meet the expectations of the citizens and taxpayers. As we all know, Local Authorities are presently underfunded and are unable to fulfil their mandatory duties and almost no capital project can be undertaken without the NDU. Proposed reform should, therefore, aim at putting an end to the chronic financial asphyxia of the Local Authorities.

Thirdly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to address the issue of accountability and transparency in regard to town planning and management. We should practise an open Local Government and citizens should expect no less than an efficient and transparent Local Council striving for the betterment of our quality of life.

My fourth and last point on this chapter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is about our vision of decentralisation, devotion and the principle of subsidiary if we want to make Mauritius a real City State. We will have to embark for a long devolution journey empowering Local Authorities and community based organisations and reduce the administrative burden of Central Government so that it can focus its time and energy, not on street hawkers, but on real national issues. This is one of the best ways through which a comprehensive Bill which is wide ranging in scope can be drafted and presented. In this way, we will be able to analyse and debate the Bill in the most dispassionate way. Such an initiative will send the right and strong signal to all those stakeholders of Local Government indicating that we really want a new dawn for this sector.

Let it be a law by the local Government people for the local Government people. The hon. Minister himself started his political career as village councillor at district council level. He knows very well that consultations with key stakeholders is the most appropriate means to produce a Local Government Act *digne de ce nom*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that it is high time for things to be set in motion, as municipal and village council elections are due shortly, though I am given to understand that it will not be held this year, if I may rely on the statement the hon. Minister himself made outside this House. Reforms in local government, Mr Deputy Speaker, are long overdue, and *il faut remettre la machine en marche au plus vite*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while it is of utmost importance to review and reform the local government sector, Members of this august Assembly will have also agreed that it is high time to review and reform our electoral system. We have got an electoral system *qui a fait son temps*. The need for reform is now seriously felt. I am of the considered opinion that an electoral reform which preserves the first past the post system, but with a dose of proportional representation added would be most appropriate for the country. The reform for our electoral system has for long been an issue of concern for the previous Government, but for reasons known to everybody, same could not be implemented. However, I am pleased to learn at paragraph 6 of the Presidential Address that Government is contemplating to address this issue of electoral reform. I do hope that this will not remain a slogan. Let there be consultations among all interested parties. Let us find ways and means to devise together a fair and workable electoral system, which best suits the needs of our country and all the components of our population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to say a few words on the issue of education. This is, indeed, an issue of concern for one and all, but I shall stress particularly on the payment of SC and HSC examination fees. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is an issue which should be addressed at the earliest possible, as the eligibility criteria laid down as they stand right now, is simply unacceptable and inhuman. I have personally known several cases where students have been compelled to put an end to their studies due to financial constraints, but yet are not eligible to any help from Government as they do not meet the exigencies of the current payment formula, which is indeed too harsh. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the formula, as it stands today, will not allow the children of a poor widow, for example, to benefit from any Government aid if the mother who is allocated a widow's pension of Rs3,500, earns at the same time some Rs4,000 as an unskilled manual worker in a particular factory, because the total income will exceed the current threshold. This is only one of the many examples, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. How can we promote education and allow needy students to make the most of free education in such circumstances? This is why I insist that this aspect of the problem should be addressed at the earliest possible.

M. le président, je voudrais maintenant aborder un sujet de brûlante actualité ; la jeunesse. Au paragraphe 303, soit le dernier paragraphe du programme gouvernemental, la dernière phrase se lit comme suit –

“Government is committed to making the children and youth of the country accomplished and proud heirs to the worthy legacy they will inherit, a nation united, a society more equitable, in a spirit that is forward looking and modern.”

Je souscris entièrement à cet engagement, malgré qu’il ne soit qu’au stade de l’intention. Je note en passant que, par une heureuse coïncidence, plusieurs initiatives mentionnées dans le paragraphe 303 du programme gouvernemental coïncident avec et rejoignent certaines des 12 mesures prioritaires des 35 propositions de notre projet du gouvernement. Je voudrais donc y apporter ma contribution. M. le président, les jeunes de notre pays traversent actuellement une période de turbulence, exacerbée par les crises financières et économiques, la pauvreté, le chômage, le coût élevé de la vie, l’insécurité et les fléaux tels que le tabagisme, l’alcoolisme, la prostitution, la drogue, le jeu du hasard et la criminalité. Nous avons le devoir, le gouvernement a le devoir de se pencher sur les problèmes auxquels font face ces jeunes et de trouver des solutions durables pour le grand bien de notre pays en général ; les jeunes qui rêvent d’une île Maurice durable, prospère, juste et solidaire, plus propre et disciplinée, plus unie et plus démocratique. C’est dans cette perspective que je considère qu’il faut un ministère transversal pour favoriser l’épanouissement de la jeunesse, en menant des actions pour être à l’écoute des jeunes et répondre à leurs besoins, tout en élaborant une nouvelle politique de loisirs dont les jeunes bénéficieront directement. Toujours dans l’optique de protéger notre jeunesse, je pense que le gouvernement doit prendre en ligne de compte la question de prolifération des maisons de jeux dans le pays. De nos jours, chaque jour qui passe, on nous présente une nouvelle formule pour devenir millionnaire, et cette jeunesse qui est la proie de tant de difficultés pour réaliser ses rêves se laisse prendre aveuglément dans cette spirale infernale de gains faciles. M. le président, les honorables membres conviendront que la question des maisons de jeux est une question pertinente qui pose des problèmes urgents qu’il faut à tout prix revoir au plus vite, car non seulement elle est une menace directe aux valeurs morales, au bien-être familial, à la culture mauricienne qu’est le sacrifice, mais aussi un élément catalyseur de la dégradation de notre société, avec notamment une recrudescence des vols, de la violence et d’autres délits des plus honteux et immoraux. La situation qui prévaut dans le pays avec la prolifération incontrôlée des maisons de jeux est plus qu’inquiétante.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is more useful to view the needs of the youths as largely determined by where and how they live and to recognise that youths differ from one another just

as surely do adults. We should put in place the appropriate structures and social support systems, which will enable the State to better respond to the needs of the youths. Mr Speaker, Sir, the needs and expectations of our youths might be complex and may require a more scientific approach, but we know that our youths like to look beautiful and charming. You simply have to observe the way they dress themselves, and you will have an idea of the care they give to nurture their physical appearance. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must similarly bring them to realise that drugs and alcoholism are the most dangerous threat to their beauty and charm. And it is here that I think there has been a lamentable failure. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, drugs and alcohol nowadays have reached classrooms at schools and universities. Recent incidents involving students bear testimony of what I am saying. I think that this is a matter of urgency, which must be treated in priority, as it is a serious concern for the country at large.

M. le président, je voudrais également m'exprimer sur le cercle vicieux de la pauvreté qui fait des ravages sur des milliers de familles avec inévitablement des effets néfastes sur la jeunesse. De nombreuses mesures dont fait mention le programme gouvernemental nous donnent une indication sur la gravité de la situation.

I quote –

« Redouble efforts to combat poverty; platform to address poverty; eradication of absolute poverty, poverty reduction strategies and programme. *Un ministère séparé a été créé pour le Social Integration and Economic Empowerment.* »

Pour que les objectifs soient atteints, il faudra une coordination de tous ces programmes afin que toutes les parties concernées œuvrent dans la même direction. L'éradication de la pauvreté est un combat permanent qui doit être mené sans relâche. Il faudra s'assurer de la collaboration et de la participation active autant que possible, non seulement des ministères mais aussi des collectivités locales, des établissements scolaires, des universités et des ONG, du secteur privé et des individus, y compris bien sûr les jeunes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I resume my seat, allow me to say a few words on my constituency. A constituency, which has for long been represented in this august Assembly, along with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, my good and respected friend, or even elder brother Jayen Cuttaree - to whom I pay tribute for his contribution both to the constituency and to the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to Constituency No. 19, Stanley/Rose Hill. It is common knowledge that the Rose Hill market no longer responds to the needs of the inhabitants and the state in which it is itself constitutes a threat to food security and safety. We all know that hygiene is one of the major problems at the market. I appeal to the Government and the substantive Minister to look into the matter and to consider the construction of a modern market at Rose Hill. There is also the need of a Health Centre in the region of Camp Levieux and NHDC. I also make an appeal to the Minister of Health to consider the setting up of such an infrastructure in that region.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my colleague, hon. Mrs Ribot, raised a question in her speech regarding water supply in the region of Rose Hill. I, myself, have addressed many questions to the Minister. I see a bit of change for the last few days, but I do hope the situation will continue in this direction.

To end my speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this august Assembly, we have been entrusted with the responsibility of serving the people. I hope Government will perform as a sensible, modern, accountable and responsible Government, in all fairness and transparency, where *la politique de deux poids, deux mesures* will not have its place. As for us here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to lay emphasis on the fact that we, in the Opposition, are resolutely committed to shoulder our responsibility as a responsible Opposition. We shall leave no stone unturned to fight and protect the right of the people of the country, because we love our country and our people. As General Charles de Gaulle rightly said: "Patriotism is when love of your own people comes first".

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Hawoldar: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

Mrs Perraud rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr M. Choonee): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I do not propose to move for the Second Reading of the following Bills today -

1. The Arabic-Speaking Union Bill (No. VII of 2010)
2. The Bhojpuri-Speaking Union Bill (No. VIII of 2010)
3. The Creole-Speaking Union Bill (No. IX of 2010)
4. The Mandarin-Speaking Union Bill (No. X of 2010)
5. The Sanskrit-Speaking Union Bill (No. XI of 2010)

ADJOURNMENT

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 03 August 2010, at 11.30 a.m.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth) rose and seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

BLACK RIVER – SQUATTERS

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to raise an issue concerning the Ministry of Housing and Lands. I shall be very brief. I am conscious that there are several Members who will intervene after me.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the Black River region - and I think everywhere the country knows it - the price of land has become inaccessible to the small man. We all know how the price of property is skyrocketing. I believe this is one of the reasons why some people have no choice than to squat on State land which, I agree, is a criminal offence. In the region of Coteau Raffin live some 18 or 19 families, who are presently squatting on a plot of State land. They have been squatting there for several years and in accordance to the State Land Act, the Ministry has posted notices already on their small corrugated iron sheet houses to ask them to vacate. They have occupied this land since years now. One of them has even been prosecuted before the Bambous District Court and has been fined some Rs4,000. All these squatters have been asked to vacate

that plot of State land in view of the fact that these notices have been posted on their houses. Most of these squatters are poor people living in absolute poverty. They have got many children. Some of them do not even have a fixed job.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am making a request to the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands, who unfortunately is not here, but I am sure the Ag. Prime Minister will take note of my request. I know that even my colleagues on the Government side have been on the site and have talked to the squatters. I too have done so with my friend, hon. Mrs Radegonde. I am requesting the hon. Minister to consider regularising these squatters. In the area of Black River, thousands of squatters have been regularised in the past. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, even if somebody wanted or wants to purchase a plot of private land in that area, it will be impossible, because most of the lands are either State land or belong to the sugar estates or to the oligarchy. Black River is not like other regions, where a property passes from one hand to the other very regularly. Black River is a bit of a special area. Land only belongs to the State and to the sugar estates. So, this is why there have been so many squatters in the past, and there remain some. I am, today, raising the case of these families of Coteau Raffin and I, therefore, request the hon. Minister to lend a sympathetic ear to the plea of these squatters. They have gone to see the Minister, they contacted the officers of the Ministry and the surveyors. They have done what should be done *vis-à-vis* the Ministry, but they have not received any answer yet. I hope the hon. Minister will consider their plea and their plight also because, as I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these people are living in fear, especially as we have learned on the papers today of what has happened to the squatters in Dubreuil. We all know what has happened to squatters there. So, they are now afraid that they might suffer the same fate. I hope the hon. Minister will look into the matter.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member of Black River and Savanne had already raised the issue and I will convene definitely the plea of the hon. Member and his request to the Minister of Housing and Lands.

(10.30 p.m.)

(1) ALBION GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – TEACHERS

(2) BARKLY GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – CPE EXAMS

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the first problem concerns my good friend, the Minister of Education. Last time I raised the issue of Albion Government School. It is a brand new school and I even congratulated the Minister who had been there. There are some practical problems over there concerning teachers, discipline and so on. I think it is a bad start for that new school. Can I appeal to the Minister to remedy the situation?

I would also appeal to him concerning Barkly Government School. There are some infrastructural works which had been started since I raised the issue with him, but there are some problems in that particular area. Barkly is a very delicate region where at the last CPE exams, only two or three schoolchildren succeeded. I appeal to the Minister if he can convene, even in his office, all the responsible persons as well as the PTA. I think it is very important to convene the PTA and the head teacher and teachers of the school.

CITE CHEBEL - SHELTERS

The second problem concerns the Minister of Housing and Lands. Sir, I would appreciate if this request could be transmitted to him. In Cité Chebel, when there was a cyclone, Government - I think it was the then Minister Malherbe - constructed urgently four or five temporary shelters at Chebel. People were sent by the then Minister Chady. The cyclone victims were transferred from Rose-Hill to the temporary shelters in Chebel. In 2000, the MMM/MSM Government constructed houses and when these were completed, there was an understanding that these temporary shelters would be removed and these people – five or six poor families - would be given priority for the allocation of these houses. Unfortunately, I don't know for what reason, the NHDC did not entertain this request. These four or five temporary shelters are in a deplorable state which is a shame to Mauritius. They are called the Kosovo region which is very bad for our image. I am raising this issue so that the Minister would have a site visit, because this

falls under his Ministry, and see what relevant section of his Ministry is not doing its job. At least, there should be a survey, these people should be transferred and not let people in modern Mauritius live in such a condition. These are my two requests, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the problem at Albion Government School. Many things are being done already, but I will call the stakeholders together to find the best solution. It applies to Barkly Government School also.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of the request of the hon. Member and I'll transmit it to the Minister of Housing and Lands.

(10.33 p.m.)

CITE DARGAHED, PAILLES – FOOTBALL GROUND

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): I will raise an issue which concerns probably the Minister of Youth and Sports and the Minister of Local Government, following a request by the youth, especially *les footballeurs* of Cité Dargahed at Pailles. There is, at this place, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a football pitch which has been built and is next door to the Pailles Police Station. Unfortunately, it has not been vested to any authority. The issue is that a sporting club, which is not very far from the football ground, has taken over that football pitch. They have taken possession of all the keys to the entrance. This, of course, excludes other members not only to participate, but to use that pitch *pour des entraînements* or for any friendly matches. There had been a request in the past by the District Council of Black River that it should be vested in it and subsequently vested with the Pailles Village Council. Unfortunately, nothing has been done. It seems that there are some documents which are missing. The appeal from the inhabitants and the youth of this area is that the necessary be done so that this football ground can be vested in the District Council which will, subsequently, vest it with the Village Council so that each and everybody would have access. What is worse is that this club insists that one should be a member of their club to have access to the pitch. Of course,

not every member wants to be a member of this club. They have their own club. My appeal is whether the necessary can be done so that this pitch can be made accessible to all the clubs in the vicinity. Thank you.

The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr S. Ritoo): I will verify with the clubs and the authority to see to whom this football ground pertains to and we will see how we can help them.

(10.36 p.m.)

DUBREUIL - SQUATTERS

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): M. le président, mon propos ce soir concerne le ministre des terres et du logement et madame la ministre de la sécurité sociale dont je déplore l'absence. Nous tous qui avons été ministres savons pertinemment bien que c'est un devoir sacré pour tout ministre d'être présent au moment de l'ajournement et je le déplore.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should raise his issue and other Ministers will respond.

Mr Obeegadoo: I shall do so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I can just deplore the absence of those, anyway.

M. le président, nous avons été réveillés – mon collègue, l'honorable Dr. Satish Boolell et moi – ce matin à cinq heures par des appels de détresse de la part des habitants de Dubreuil dont les maisonnettes, les cabanes, ont été détruites aux petites heures du matin par les autorités. Evidemment, nous sommes pleinement conscients du fait que les autorités ont entrepris ces actions suite à un ordre des tribunaux et que les structures érigées sur les terres de l'État à Dubreuil sont considérées comme étant des structures illégales. Donc, ce n'est nullement par opportunisme politique ou par démagogie que nous soulevons cette question ici, mais c'est par devoir, vu la détresse humaine dont parlait plus tôt mon collègue, l'honorable Alan Ganoo par rapport à une autre région de l'île.

M. le président, que ce soit considéré un acte illégal ou pas, nul ne peut nier la souffrance de ces gens désespérés, extrêmement pauvres, qui n'ont d'autre solution que d'ériger un semblant de logement sur les terrains de l'État. Le problème est d'autant plus grave que le nombre de ces occupants dits illégaux a quadruplé à la veille des élections générales et tout le long de la campagne. Nous nous sommes laissé dire, mes collègues et moi, que certains étaient encouragés à le faire. Je ne dis pas que ce fut sanctionné d'en haut, mais certains furent encouragés et nous savons que c'est souvent le cas à la veille des élections. Quoiqu'il en soit, aujourd'hui, leur détresse est réelle et face au spectacle de femmes enceintes, d'enfants, de vieillards dans les rues de Dubreuil, aucun être humain ne peut rester insensible. J'en appellerai donc aux ministres concernés, malheureusement absents, mais je suis certain que la teneur de mon intervention leur sera transmise. J'en appelle donc à ces ministres pour entreprendre d'urgence une enquête en vue d'identifier les cas méritants parce que tous ne le sont pas nécessairement mais, au moins, les cas les plus méritants, de chercher à leur fournir une assistance immédiate. Éventuellement, on peut considérer la possibilité de leur accorder une portion de terrain. Il y a des terrains de l'État dans la région de Dubreuil et nous ne sommes pas conscients qu'il y ait des développements envisagés. J'en appellerai donc au gouvernement d'apporter une attention toute particulière à ce problème pour s'assurer que les innocents - je répète, les enfants, les femmes, les vieillards - n'en soient pas les victimes.

Merci, M. le président.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll convey the apprehension and concern of the hon. Member to the Minister.

(10.40 p.m.)

SIR VIRGIL NAZ STREET, ROSE HILL – ROAD REPAIRS

Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are two big holes in Sir Virgil Naz Street in Rose Hill that have been left after water and telecom works. I would ask the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure to kindly look into the matter since this region is really a very busy one. Just around we have the *Institut Français de Maurice*, the NPF building, the Police Headquarters and the Family Protection Unit. It is a very busy street.

Would the Minister kindly look into the matter for the convenience of the inhabitants and those who use this road?

Thank you.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into this issue.

BEAU SÉJOUR GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - FOOTBALL GROUND

Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my request will be short and I know that it will add to the very long list of what the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure has to do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the children of Beau Séjour Government School as well as the inhabitants of the region of Beau Séjour have complained about the status of the football ground of the primary school. In fact, I have gone there myself. It is not a football ground, it is full of rocks and it is not flat. I would appeal to the hon. Minister if he could send his officers to look into the matter. I don't know whether it is the Ministry of Public Infrastructure or the Ministry of Education who is responsible for that, but I would appeal to the Minister concerned to ask his officers to make a site visit and look at the football ground because it is not only the children of the primary school who use it, but also the inhabitants of the neighbourhood after school hours.

At 10.42 p.m. the sitting was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 03 August 2010, at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY – FORMER MEMBERS - RETIRING ALLOWANCE

(No.1B/317) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to former Honourable Members of Parliament, he will -

- (a) give a list thereof drawing a retiring allowance, indicating the quantum thereof in each case, and

- (b) state if any one of them is in receipt of any payments for services to the State over and above the retiring allowance.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Accountant General that there are at present 108 former Members of the National Assembly who are drawing retiring allowance as prescribed in the National Assembly (Retiring Allowances) Act.

In reply to part (b) of the question, sixteen of them are in receipt of payments for their services to the State.

MELROSE PRISON – CONTRACT - CONSTRUCTION

(No.1B/323) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the Melrose prison, he will state -

- (a) whether the contract for the construction thereof has been awarded and, if so, when, and
- (b) the initial cost, indicating if there has been an increase therein and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that tenders for the construction of the New High Security Prison at Melrose were invited from the five pre-qualified bidders on 26 January 2010. By the closing date of submission of bids on 20 April 2010, four bids were received from the five pre-qualified bidders. Bid evaluation exercise was carried out at the Central Procurement Board during the period 24 April to 17 June 2010.

On 13 July 2010, the Central Procurement Board informed the Commissioner of Prisons that it had approved the award of the contract to the successful bidder and requested the Commissioner of Prisons to proceed in accordance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act 2006. Accordingly, on 13 July 2010, the Commissioner of Prisons notified the successful bidder as well as the unsuccessful bidders of the decision of the Central Procurement Board.

In accordance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act, the unsuccessful bidders were given seven days from the date of the notification to challenge the award. On 16 July 2010, one of the unsuccessful bidders challenged the award. On 21 July 2010, the unsuccessful bidder was informed that the bid of that company did not comply with the bidding requirements, and was therefore considered non-responsive.

I am informed that once the challenge is resolved, the Commissioner of Prisons will issue the letter of award to the successful bidder.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that, initially, decision was taken to construct three prisons for some 250 detainees each. In that regard, two plots of land situated at Rose Belle were vested in the then parent Ministry in 2001 and 2004 with a view to accommodating the first of these prisons. However, in September 2004, the site at Rose Belle was found to be unsuitable. A new site was subsequently identified at Melrose in 2005 and in 2006, it was decided that only one prison would be constructed to accommodate about 750 detainees. A plot of land of 37 arpents was vested in the Prime Minister's Office in September 2007 to that effect.

I am informed that, in the absence of detailed design and drawings of the new prisons, an estimated project value of Rs400m appeared in the Capital Budget for the construction of those prisons for budgetary purposes from Financial Year 1999-2000 to Financial Year 2008/09. The cost estimate of the New High Security Prison at Melrose was worked out only after completion of the detailed design of the buildings and facilities in February 2009. Accordingly, in the Programme-Based Budget for the period July to December 2009, the estimated project value for the construction of the prison at Melrose stands at Rs1,350m.

I am informed that there has been no increase in the project value for the construction of the new prison at Melrose.

CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO - MARINE PROTECTED AREA - SETTING UP

(No. 1B/324) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the project by the British Government for the setting up of a marine park at the Chagos Archipelago, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: In reply to PQ B/1247 on 01 December last, I informed the House that the British Government launched on 10 November 2009 a public consultation on the proposal for the creation of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago unilaterally and in total disregard of the discussions at the second round of bilateral talks between Mauritius and the UK on the Chagos Archipelago held on 21 July 2009.

On several occasions, the Government of Mauritius conveyed its opposition to the UK proposal for the establishment of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago. It also requested the British Government to stop the public consultation it had launched on the proposed Marine Protected Area and to withdraw the Consultation Document of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office which was unilateral and prejudicial to the interests of Mauritius. The British Government did not halt the public consultation but instead extended its deadline.

On 01 April 2010, the British Government again, unilaterally decided to create a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago. The Marine Protected Area would include a “no-take” marine reserve where commercial fishing will be banned, but exclude Diego Garcia from its coverage.

On 02 April 2010, the Government of Mauritius informed the British Government, by way of a note of protest, of its strong objection to the unilateral creation by the UK of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago and of our decision not to recognize the existence of the Marine Protected Area.

On 13 April 2010, the British High Commission responded to the note of protest by way of a Note Verbale. While taking note of the objection of the Government of Mauritius to the creation of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago, the UK emphasized that the establishment of a Marine Protected Area does not change its commitment to cede the territory to Mauritius when it is no longer needed for defence purposes. It also pointed out that this decision is without prejudice to the outcome of the case brought by Mr Bancoult before the European Court of Human Rights. The UK added that it intends to continue working closely with all

interested stakeholders, both in the UK and internationally, towards implementing the Marine Protected Area.

The creation of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago in disregard of the sovereignty of Mauritius over the territory is totally unacceptable to the Government of Mauritius as it impedes the use by Mauritius of the fisheries and other marine resources of the ocean around the Chagos Archipelago in the exercise of its sovereignty rights. It also prevents the eventual resettlement of the Chagossians who were forcibly evicted from the Chagos Archipelago to pave the way for the establishment of a military base in Diego Garcia.

Following the change in Government in the UK on 06 May last, the hon. Prime Minister had a meeting in London with the Rt. Hon. William Hague, UK Foreign Secretary, on 03 June 2010.

The hon. Prime Minister expressed concern over the decision of the former UK Government to establish a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago despite the undertaking given by the former British Prime Minister that the project would be put on hold and discussed within the framework of the bilateral talks between Mauritius and the UK. He further pointed out that the decision is tainted with illegality.

The UK Foreign Secretary informed the Hon. Prime Minister that he would revert to him as he was not fully conversant with all issues regarding the Chagos Archipelago.

It was also proposed that a meeting be held between Mr Henry Bellingham, Minister for Africa and Overseas Territories at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade to discuss the way forward on the Chagos issue.

In the course of a debate in the House of Lords on 29 June last, on the establishment of a Marine Protected Area around the Chagos Archipelago, it was revealed that the new British Government may not necessarily hold a different view from the previous Government on this issue.

In the circumstances, the Government of Mauritius is already discussing with our new legal adviser on the Chagos question, Mr Philippe Sands, Q.C., on the way forward.

The hon. Prime Minister on his recent trip to the UK, has had two meetings with Mr Philippe Sands to discuss this issue.

RODRIGUES - PORT MATHURIN POLICE HEAD QUARTERS - EXHIBITS

(No. 1B/325) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the exhibits which disappeared from the custody of the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit at the Port Mathurin Police Head Quarters on or about 4 July 2010, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to

- (a) a list thereof, indicating the cases,
 - (i) to which they were respectively connected, and
 - (ii) their date of trial, and
- (b) whether an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, state the outcome thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Monday 05 July 2010 at 08 00 hours, the Police Sergeant, In-Charge of the ADSU Rodrigues noticed that a steel armoire containing exhibits had been forced and the padlocks securing the door had been broken. He alerted the Divisional Commander and other Police agencies. An inventory revealed that several exhibits were missing.

I am tabling the information requested at parts (a) (i) and (ii) of the question.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that an enquiry has been instituted to shed light on the matter. Two Police Officers from the Central CID were sent to Rodrigues from the 07 to 11 July 2010 for investigation and statements from several Police Officers and a night watchman working at a nearby Filling Station have been recorded. Enquiry into the case is still under way.

INTEGRATED RESORTS SCHEME - PROJECTS

(No. 1B/340) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Integrated Resorts Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board of Investment, information, for each of the years 2005 to 2010 –

- (a) the number of projects approved by the Board and operational, indicating the –
 - (i) name of the promoter;
 - (ii) amount of Foreign Direct Investment remitted;
 - (iii) number of residence permits granted;
 - (iv) number of direct jobs created;
 - (v) amount of revenue collected by Government, and
- (b) state whether the terms and conditions of the Scheme will be altered and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the Board of Investment (BOI) that for the period 2005 to June 2010, the Board has approved (24) twenty-four projects relating to the Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS), out of which eight are operational.

Information relating to parts (a) (i), (ii) (iii) and (v) of the question concerning the name of promoters, the amount of FDI remitted, the number of residence permits granted and the amount of revenue collected by Government respectively are being tabled.

However, I wish to inform the House that as regards part (a) (ii) of the question, the total amount of foreign direct investment remitted relating to the IRS for the period 2005 to 2010 stands at around Rs15.3 billion.

Moreover, as at to date, 658 non-citizens have been granted residence permits under the IRS, of whom, 257 are persons who have acquired a residential property and 401 are their dependents.

With regard to Part a (iv) of the question concerning employment creation, I am informed that so far some 832 persons are directly employed under the different projects falling within the IRS.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Government is well aware of the pertinence of the timely implementation of approved projects under the IRS in view of the direct impact that these projects have on the economy, in particular, the inflow of FDI and job creation. However,

I am informed that this Scheme in its present form makes no provision for the BOI to revoke a certificate issued on the ground that an approved project has not been completed.

As the House may be aware, cancelled or delayed IRS projects may have a negative effect on the Scheme and more importantly on the good repute of Mauritius as a destination for investment. This, in turn, may also have snowballing effect on future projects. For instance, developers with high potential projects and who are on a solid footing may have to face cancellation of reservation contracts and thus be unfairly penalised as regards project financing. This would consequently delay their projects unnecessarily.

It is in this context that the BOI proposes to include an additional condition in all its certificates. It will provide the BOI with the right to revoke a certificate issued to a company which has failed to start the construction of its project as presented to BOI within a period of eighteen (18) months as from the date of issue of the certificate.

Furthermore, the fallout from the sovereign debt crisis and its potential contagion that threatens to destabilise economic growth within and beyond the Eurozone has exposed the possible risks to the tourism industry and luxury real estate market in the short term. My Ministry is considering reviewing the existing Scheme and other similar schemes in light of the global economic situation.

In order to improve the quality of project submissions and reinforcing the criteria for proper project design and location for Integrated Resorts Scheme and Real Estate Schemes, the BOI is presently working with the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the introduction of a Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) for IRS/ RES. Once this Policy Guidance is in force, developers of IRS /RES projects would have to follow the design process and standards. The aim of the guidance is to provide a set of performance criteria which should be broadly followed as each site is different and the design solutions may be varied and unique.

In line with Government's vision to promote green buildings and eco friendly projects under the "Maurice Ile Durable", BOI is also working on some guidelines that would aim at encouraging IRS developers to incorporate eco-friendly components within their projects which include sustainable building development and use of renewable energy.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

(No. 1B/341) Mr Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)

asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the labour force, he will state -

- (a) the change in the unemployment rate from December 2009 to June 2010;
- (b) the number of jobs lost, if any, in the textile and tourism sectors during 2010;
- (c) the unemployment rate of persons under the age of 25 and of women as at June 2010;
- (d) the percentage of persons without a School Certificate, unemployed over one year, as at 30 June 2010, and
- (e) whether Government proposes to provide any income support for the hardship cases and, if not, why not.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the unemployment rate calculated on a quarterly basis by the Central Statistics Office shows a 2.1% increase from the end of the last quarter of 2009 to the end of the first quarter of 2010. However, the House may wish to note that the unemployment rate was 9.6 in 2005 and has gone down during the past four years to only 8.4% for the first quarter of 2010.

As regards part (b) of the question, according to records available at my Ministry, the number of jobs lost from December 2009 to June 2010 in the textile and tourism sectors is 224 and 115 respectively. For the same period, the number of vacancies in all sectors notified to my Ministry amounts to 27,082.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed by the Central Statistics Office that as at the end of the first quarter of year 2010, the unemployment rate of persons under 25 years is 26% and that of women of all ages is 13.4%.

The House may wish to note that though the unemployment rate among women is 13.4%, that of men is around 5.8% only.

As for part (d) of the question, according to information obtained from Central Statistics Office, at end of first quarter 2010, only 12% of the total number of unemployed people are without SC and have remained unemployed for more than one year.

Concerning hardship cases referred to in the last part of the question, as the House may be aware, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reforms Institutions already provides an Unemployment Hardship Relief to those unemployed who satisfy existing criteria.

**MUNICIPALITY OF PORT LOUIS – PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS,
KINDERGARTENS & NURSERIES**

(No. 1B/360) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to pre-primary schools, kindergartens and nurseries run by the Municipal Council of Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain, from the Council, information, in each case, as to the number of children who can be accommodated thereat, indicating the criteria for admission thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that the number of children who can be accommodated are as follows -

- (a) twenty in the 16 pre-primary schools and kindergartens with one class and 40 in schools with two classes, and
- (b) twenty five in the six nurseries.

With regard to criteria for admission in these pre-primary schools, kindergartens and nurseries, I am informed that they are as follows –

- (i) residents of Port Louis only;
- (ii) admission on a first-come, first-served basis, and
- (iii) preference to low income earning parents.

MUNICIPALITY OF PORT LOUIS – LIBRARIES – INTERNET FACILITIES

(No.1B/361) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to

libraries run by the Municipal Council of Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain, from the Council, information as to the number thereof, indicating if they are equipped with internet facilities.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that internet facilities are available to members of the public and library subscribers against payment of a nominal fee of 0.50 cents per minute at the Audiovisual Section of the Municipal Library and at the Computer Clubs found at Camp Chapelon, Cassis, Cité Briquetterie, Idrice Goomany Centre, Plaine Verte, Roche Bois, St François Xavier, Tranquebar, Vallée des Prêtres and Vallée Pitot.

ZEP SCHOOLS – CPE EXAMINATION - PASS RATE

(No. 1B/362) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Certificate of Primary Education, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information for each of the last five years as to the pass rate in the *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* (ZEP) schools found in Constituency No.3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, and
- (b) state the measures, if any, being envisaged to improve the results thereof.

Reply: The Emmanuel Anquetil Government School is the only *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* (ZEP) primary school in Constituency No.3 and I am informed that the CPE Pass Rate of this school for the last five years has been as follows -

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
CPE Pass Rate	22.4	19.7	20.1	26.7	23.3

As regards part (b) of the question, I would like to inform the House that several affirmative measures are being taken by my Ministry to improve both the pass rate of pupils at CPE level as well as the attendance of pupils in ZEP schools. These, *inter alia*, include -

- (a) consolidation of school leadership and capacity building;
- (b) monitoring of pedagogy in collaboration with the MIE;

- (c) inbuilt remedial work conducted by class teachers;
- (d) after school remedial work conducted by Community based organisations/private sector partners;
- (e) regular meetings with parents conducted by Head Masters/Parent Mediators;
- (f) setting up of Club des Parents for parental empowerment;
- (g) profiling of needy students;
- (h) implementation of the supplementary Feeding Programme as in all ZEP schools (Supply of bread, cheese and a fruit – apple/orange), in addition lunch is supplied to some 60 needy pupils by an NGO;
- (i) needy cases referred to appropriate agencies/Ministries for further action;
- (j) distribution of school materials by the Trust Fund for the Integration of Vulnerable Groups;
- (k) introduction of creativity classes and learning support after school hours (up to 17 00 Hrs) under the ZIIS (Zone of Inclusive and Integrated Strategy) Project, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Arts & Culture;
- (l) upgrading of infrastructure and school facilities, and
- (m) close monitoring of attendance. The absenteeism rate which was 18.2 % in 2007 has decreased to 15.0 % in 2009. Efforts are being sustained to bring it down further.

The *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* (ZEP) strategy aims at combating social inequalities by providing equitable opportunities to all primary school children of the country. Although progress has been slow in most ZEP schools in terms of pupil achievement as measured by the CPE pass rate over the last years, ZEP schools have, on the other hand, managed to produce some good practices. These encompass holistic educational approaches, school-community partnership, active parental involvement in the educational process and fund-raising models for school improvement projects. Significantly, these good practices do serve as models for non-ZEP schools with whom they are shared.

In the long term, I am confident that these innovative measures carried out in the ZEP schools will positively impact upon the very image that has been traditionally associated with them.

EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE – FISHING VESSELS

(No. 1B/366) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Fisheries and Rodrigues whether, in regard to fishing vessels registered to operate in our Exclusive Economic Zone, he will state the number thereof, indicating -

- (a) their country of origin, and
- (b) the conditions of the registration.

Reply: I am informed that local fishing vessels 24m in length and above operating in our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) are registered by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping. As at to date there are 11 such vessels registered by that Ministry. Foreign Fishing Vessels are registered in principle in their country of origin.

However, local fishing boats more than 12m, but less than 24m in length and operating on the banks are registered by my Ministry and the number is 36. In addition there are 1,443 registered fishing boats less than 12m involved in the artisanal fishery.

The countries of origin of foreign vessels having obtained fishing licences from my Ministry, during the period January 2010 to date are as follows: Spain, France, Seychelles, Mayotte, Korea, Taiwan Province of China, Madagascar and Comoros.

In respect of local fishing vessels of 24m or more in length operating in our EEZ, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping is responsible for imposing conditions for registration it deems appropriate. As regards fishing boats more than 12 m and less than 24 m the conditions for registration are as follows -

- (a) provision of evidence that the boat is chartered or owned by the applicant;
- (b) submission of a certificate of seaworthiness duly issued by an approved surveyor;
- (c) submission of the name and competency of the skipper, and
- (d) provision of documents showing delistment from previous registry if in case the boat was registered in another country.

For foreign vessels the conditions of registration are imposed by their flag states.

AAPRAVASI GHAT – PROTECTED ZONE – COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

(No. 1B/367) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the protected zone around Aapravasi Ghat, he will give a list of the clearances required for the promotion of industrial or commercial development thereat.

Reply: According to the prevailing Outline Planning Scheme for Port Louis and the Planning Policy Guidance – Design Guidance (PPG), a Building and Land Use Permit from the Municipality of Port Louis is required for industrial and commercial development within the protected zone. Some activities also require an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) or a Preliminary Environmental Report (PER) approval.

May I also inform the hon. Member that a new PPG for Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property is currently being worked out for development projects within the protected zone of the Aapravasi Ghat. Under the new PPG, industrial and commercial development projects will additionally require a clearance from the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and from the National Heritage Fund.

The new PPG will promote, inter alia, the following development in the buffer zones of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property -

- offices, premises for cultural activities, small private or state run educational facilities;
- home-industries, service industries, hotels, boutique hotels and guesthouses, restaurants, delicatessens, coffee shops, and

- tourist specialty shops, small convenience stores, defined small market stalls in pedestrianised areas.

As a rule, development in the buffer zones will be restricted to two storey buildings on the street fronts, as a rule, in order to control views and urban form. However, in specific city blocks, subject to specified setback variations, building height will be allowed up to six storeys (G+5).

BEAU BASSIN – MUNICIPAL MARKET – SANITARY INSPECTION

(No. 1A/33) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Municipal market at Beau Bassin, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, information as to –

- (a) the date the last sanitary inspection was effected,
- (b) whether the sanitary regulations and norms are being complied with and, if in the negative, the measures that are being taken to ensure compliance herewith.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin – Rose Hill that sanitary inspections at the Municipal Market at Beau Bassin are effected by both Municipal Health Inspectors and Health Inspectors of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the date on which the last sanitary inspection was jointly effected by Health Inspectors of the Municipal Council and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life is on Sunday 06 June 2010 at 08.00 hrs.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, I am informed that sanitary inspections are conducted on a daily basis by Municipal Health Inspectors and some Health Inspectors are posted on a permanent basis at the market during its opening hours to ensure that sanitary norms and regulations were being complied with.

I wish to inform the House that maintenance works are also carried out on a regular basis and the following works were undertaken recently -

- (i) table tops in fish, beef and poultry sections have been fitted with stainless sheeting and drains have been constructed;
- (ii) automatic closing devices have been fixed to doors;
- (iii) fly proofing have also been installed to all openings, and
- (iv) tiles on all stalls in vegetable section have been replaced.

RAYMOND RIVET ROAD, MONT ROCHES - RESURFACING

(No. 1A/34) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if he is aware of the deplorable state of Raymond Rivet Road in Mont Roches and, if so, will he state whether consideration will be given for the resurfacing thereof.

Reply: The Wastewater Management Authority is actually carrying out excavation works along Raymond Rivet Road in Mont Roches for house connection purposes.

The Wastewater Management Authority will have the trenches reinstated and a decision concerning resurfacing will be taken after completion of all works.

LALL BAHADOOR SHASTRI/CANDOS - DRAINS

(No. 1A/35) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Lall Bahadoor Shastri/Candos region, opposite the Queen Victoria

Hospital, which is a flood prone area, he will state if he is aware of the insufficient drains system thereat and, if so, will he consider the construction of covered drains thereat.

Reply: The National Development Unit was not able to undertake any infrastructural works in that region because of major ongoing sewerage works by the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA). Following a site visit on 08 July 2010 in the presence of hon. Assirvaden PPS, hon. Ms. K. R. Deerpalsing, representatives from the Municipal Councils of Vacoas/Phoenix and Quatre Bornes and NDU's Engineers, the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix has agreed to conduct a survey after consultation with the WMA and to come up with proposals for drains works in the region.

FOOTBALL TEAMS – FOOTBALL GROUNDS & AMENITIES

(No. 1A/36) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to First and Second Division football teams, he will give a list of the football grounds and annexed amenities put at their disposal as at to-date for training.

Reply: The football grounds and other amenities put at the disposal of First and Second Division Football teams as at to date are as follows -

First Division Football Teams

	<i>Football Teams</i>	<i>Football Grounds</i>	<i>Amenities</i>
	PAS Mates	GRNW	Lighting facilities
	ASPL 2000	Champ de Mars	Cloak Room/Toilets
	A.S Riviere Du Rempart	Rohit Boolaky	Cloak room/Toilets Lighting facilities
	A.S Vacoas Phoenix	Solferino/Clozel	Lighting facilities Cloak room/Toilets
	Bambous Etoile de L'Ouest S.C	Medine Sugar Estate	Nil
	Curepipe Starlight S.C	Les Casernes and	Cloak room/Toilets

		Velodrome	Lighting facilities
	Entente Boulet Rouge Riche Mare Rovers	Riche Mare	Nil
	Faucon Flacq S.C	Fuel S.E	Cloak room/Toilets
	Pamplemousses S.C	Anjalay Training Ground	Nil
0	Petite Riviere Noire F.C	Petite Riviere Noire	Lighting Facilities
1	Savanne S.C	Surinam	Lighting Facilities
2	U.S.B.B.R.Hill	Camp Le Vieux	Lighting Facilities

Second Division Football Teams.

	<i>Football Teams</i>	<i>Football Grounds</i>	<i>Amenities</i>
	A.S QuatreBornes	La Source	Lighting,Cloak Room/Toilets
	Sodnac Quatre Bornes Utd	Candos Stadium	Cloak Room/Toilets
	Bolton City Y.C	Reginal Topize, Roche Bois	Cloak room/Toilets Lighting facilities
	Entente Henrietta Blackburn Glen Park Y.C	Glen Park Sports Complex	Cloak room/Toilets Lighting facilities
	Belin S.C	Mapou Leclezio	Nil
	Black Horns Y.C	Swan	Nil
	Cercle de Joachim Curepipe Club Sportif	Velodrome	Cloak room/Toilets Lighting facilities

	Case Noyale F.C	Petite Rivière Noire	Lighting facilities
	La Cure Sylvestre S.C	Port Louis North SSS	Cloak room/Toilets Lighting facilities
0	Mahebourg Quartier F.C	Grand Bel Air	Lighting Facilities
1	Poudre D'Or ATC S.C	Rohit Boolaky	Cloak room/Toilets Lighting facilities
2	U.S Highlands	Belle Terre	Lighting Facilities

NHDC, BEAU BASSIN – BUS SERVICE

(No. 1A/37) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if he is aware of the hardship caused to the inhabitants, mainly female workers and the elderly persons due to lack of proper bus services at new NHDC Complex at Beau Bassin and, if so, will he state the remedial measures Government intends to take to address the issue.

Reply: On 15 June 2007, the inhabitants of the new NHDC Complex requested the National Transport Authority to look into the possibility of extending route 182 up to the locality and also to provide services towards Rose Hill. On 24 September 2007 a road test was carried out with a 50-seater bus in the company of the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit where it was found that from a traffic point of view, large buses could not *manoeuvre* safely along the road leading to the complex in view of its narrowness and the absence of pavements. The extension of the route was therefore not recommended. The route infrastructure has not improved till this date.

After consultation with the Rose Hill Transport Bus Services Limited, it was finally agreed to serve the locality with 29-seater buses. On 23 July 2009 the company submitted an application to operate two 29-seater buses between Rose Hill and Chebel new NHDC Complex. The application has already been published and will be heard soon.

NICOLAY ROAD, PORT LOUIS - DRAINS

(No. 1A/38) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the construction of drains at Nicolay Road, Port Louis, in the vicinity of the mosque, he will state the name of the contractor, indicating –

- (a) the cost thereof;
- (b) the date construction works started, and
- (c) the expected date of completion.

Reply: The Road Development Authority is undertaking the construction of drains along Nicolay Road in Port Louis in the vicinity of the mosque. The name of the contractor is Colas and the cost of the project is Rs1 m. Works have started on 09 July 2010 and will be completed by 14 August 2010.

MAMADE ELAHEE MUNICIPAL STADIUM, CITÉ MARTIAL – UPGRADING

(No. 1A/39) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether he will state if he is aware of the deplorable state of the Mamade Elahee Municipal Stadium at Cité Martial, and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

Reply: The Municipal Council of Port Louis is aware of the condition of the Mamade Elahee Municipal Stadium, at Cité Martial. Due to the constant use of the playground, the Municipal Council of Port Louis has difficulties in maintaining the turfing.

I am informed that the Council has decided, as a remedial measure, to replace the existing grass by synthetic turfing and to upgrade all the existing amenities thereat and which are

estimated to cost around Rs28 m. Due to unavailability of the required fund, the Council is soliciting the financial assistance of economic operators in the city for financing this project.

However, I have suggested to the Municipal Council that with the Rs28 m., it will be as well possible to identify other sites and construct more than one football ground.

I am further informed that the Council will nevertheless undertake some minor upgrading works at its own cost from 10 August to 10 September 2010 during which period the stadium will be closed to the public.

VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. 1A/40) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the football ground at Vallée des Prêtres Government School, he will state when the contract was awarded, indicating –

- (a) the value thereof, and
- (b) whether the works have been completed and, if not, why not.

Reply: The Works Order for the construction of the football ground at Vallée des Prêtres was awarded on 12 April 2008 for the value amounting to Rs4,877,328.25 and the works were completed on 19 February 2009 and handed over to the Ministry of Education & Human Resources. The football ground at Vallée des Prêtres was entrusted to Messrs Tayelamay & Sons, the District Contractor appointed for Port Louis Region under the contract “Maintenance, Repairs & Rehabilitation of Government Buildings (2007-2008)”.

The maintenance period for these works expired on 19 August 2009.

VALLÉE PITOT - CHILDREN’S PLAYGROUND

(No. 1A/41) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the children's playground at Vallée Pitot, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to when it will be put to use by the children of the locality.

Reply: The initiative to implement the children's playground was taken following the decision of the Municipal Council of Port Louis before the general elections.

I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that the opening ceremony of the Vallée Pitot children's playground is scheduled to take place in August 2010, after which it will be put at the disposal of the children of the locality for their use.

NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME - FOREIGN WORKERS

(No. 1A/42) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to contributions made by, and on behalf of foreign workers to the National Pension Scheme, she will state if such contributions are refunded to the foreign workers when they leave Mauritius and, if not, why not.

Reply: As at present, contribution made to the National Pension Fund is not refunded to foreign workers on departure. The payment of benefits for contributory pension in respect of foreign workers is governed by section 20 of the National Pensions which equally apply to Mauritian citizens. Accordingly, foreign workers may claim their contributory pension to which they become eligible to, at retirement age.

The present system of payment appears to be unfair as the foreign worker needs to initiate long administrative procedures if abroad and upon attaining the retirement age, to obtain a very small amount of contributory pension in view of the limited period of contribution which in most cases do not exceed the work permit entitlement period. My Ministry proposes to look into the matter and bring the required amendments to legislation so as to enable foreign workers to be refunded their contributions upon leaving the country.

NGOs – GRANTS IN AID

(No. 1A/43) **Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to grants in aid to Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Non Governmental Organisation Trust Fund, information, for each of the past six years, as to –

- (a) the list of NGOs benefitting from same;
- (b) the eligibility criteria, and
- (c) the amount of yearly grants received by each NGO.

Reply: I am submitting at annexes 1 and 2 relevant information concerning Grant in Aid to Non Governmental Organisations by the NGO Trust Fund which operates under the aegis of my Ministry.

SECONDARY EDUCATION – ENROLMENT RATIO

(No. 1A/44) **Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to Secondary Education, he will give, for each of the years, from 1999 to 2009, the –

- (a) net enrolment ratio for -
 - (i) lower secondary education, and
 - (ii) upper secondary education
- (b) number of students enrolled in the pre-vocational stream, indicating the completion rate, and
- (c) number and names of educational institutions catering exclusively for pre-vocational students.

Reply: As regards part (a) (i) and (ii), Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) for Lower Secondary Education and Upper Secondary Education, Republic of Mauritius (1999-2009) –

(Academic and Prevocational)

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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NER (Lower Secondary: FI to FV)(%)	61.4	61.7	62.5	63.6	65.6	66.5	69.9	71.2	72.4	71.9	72.1
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NER (Upper Secondary: Lower VI to Upper VI)(%)	54.3	57.2	58.6	60.2	60.9	58.6	59.1	62.5	63.2	62.7	64.2
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(Academic only)

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
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NER (Lower Secondary: FI to FV)(%)	57.0	57.3	58	57.9	58.9	58.7	60.9	61.7	63.5	63.9	64.4
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NER (Upper Secondary: Lower VI to Upper VI)(%)	53.4	55.8	57.5	59.6	60.3	58.4	59.0	62.4	63.0	62.5	63.8
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Note:

$$\text{NER for Lower Secondary} = \frac{\text{Enrolment in Secondary aged (11-15)}}{\text{Population aged(11-15)}} \times 100$$

$$\text{NER for Upper Secondary} = \frac{\text{Enrolment in Secondary aged (16-17)}}{\text{Population aged(16-17)}} \times 100$$

As regards part (b), Pre vocational - Enrolment and completion rate, Republic of Mauritius,
1999 – 2009 –

	Enrolment	Completion rate (%)
1999	4,489	Na
2000	4,695	49.4
2001	4,919	45.4
2002	5,966	47.1
2003	7,326	63.5
2004	8,488	70.2
2005	9,845	74.6
2006	10,424	79.3
2007	9,573	77.7
2008	8,495	71.2
2009	8,033	77.6

na – not available

$$\text{Completion Rate} = \frac{\text{Enrolment in Grade III , Year t}}{\text{Enrolment in Grade I , Year t -3}} \times 100$$

As regards part (c), number and names of educational institutions catering exclusively for pre-vocational students in 2009 -

1. Goodlands SSS (V)
2. Riv. Du Rempart SSS (V)

3. Immaculée Conception SSS (V)
4. Gandhian Basic School
5. Colonel Maingard SSV
6. S. Murday SSS (V)

TERTIARY EDUCATION – ENROLMENT RATIO

(No. 1A/45) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to Tertiary Education, he will state –

- (a) the net enrolment ratio, for each of the years from 1999 to 2009;
- (b) a list of all degree-awarding institutions recognized by the Tertiary Education Commission, and
- (c) the latest available statistics pertaining to the number of –
 - (i) full time and
 - (ii) part time students respectively.

Reply: With reference to part (a) of the question, I would like to inform the House that the indicator to measure access to tertiary education, which is used by Tertiary Education Commission and internationally, including UNESCO, is the Gross Tertiary Enrolment Rate (GTER) or Gross Enrolment Ratio Tertiary level and not the Net Enrolment Ratio.

According to the International Classification of Education (ISCED) of UNESCO, tertiary education is defined as level 5 and 6 which includes universities, teachers' colleges, and higher professional schools, requiring as a minimum condition of admission the successful completion of education at the secondary level, or evidence of the attainment of an equivalent level of knowledge and the age group for that level is 20-24. For the years 1999-2009 the calculation of the GTER on the above basis is as follows –

Year	GTER %
1999	13.0%
2000	15.1%

2001	17.7%
2002	19.2%
2003	23.1%
2004	24.2%
2005	28.4%
2006	34.1%
2007	37.3%
2008	41.4%
2009	43.4%

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that -

- (i) It is not possible to list all degree awarding institutions recognised by the Tertiary Education Commission since it recognises all degree awarding institutions which are recognised in their respective country of origin by competent authorities.

For example, one publication used by the TEC, namely the International Handbook of Universities, contains over 20,000 Universities recognised by the TEC.

- (ii) For other foreign degree awarding institutions and Universities not listed in the International Handbook of Universities, the TEC adopts the following procedures -
- a) Referring to established protocols between Mauritius and other countries such as the Republic of France;
 - b) Consulting the Commonwealth Register of Institutions;
 - c) Contacting the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) established by the Council of Europe and the UNESCO to develop policy and practice for the recognition of qualifications, and

- d) Contacting the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) Network established by the European Union for all countries within the European Union.

The Tertiary Education Commission is a member of UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) and has access to the database of UK NARIC on International Comparison of qualifications.

- e) Contacting competent authorities in the country of origin of the degree awarding institutions such as the -
1. Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) of the United Kingdom;
 2. Council on Higher Education and Accreditation (CHEA) of the United States of America;
 3. Council of Higher Education (CHE) of South Africa,;
 4. University Grants Commission (UGC) of India;
 5. National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) of India;
 6. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) of India;
 7. Higher Education Commission of Pakistan;
 8. Tertiary Education Commission of Botswana;
 9. South African Qualifications Authority for institutions in South Africa, and
 10. Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) for institutions in Australia.

- (iii) At the local level, degree awarding institutions recognised by the TEC which are as follows

-

- a) University of Mauritius
- b) University of Technology, Mauritius
- c) Fashion and Design Institute.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I would like to inform the House that as at December 2009 a total of 30,069 Mauritian students (excluding 476 foreign students studying in Mauritius) were pursuing higher studies in Mauritius, out of which 12,294 were full-time students in local institutions, 9,431 were part-time students in local institutions and 8,344 were on distance education in local institutions. An estimated total number of 10,939 Mauritian students were pursuing tertiary education overseas bringing the total number of Mauritian students studying at tertiary level to 41,008, which represents a Gross Tertiary Enrolment Rate of 43.4%.

SAINT AVOL, BRITANNIA – LAND ALLOCATION

(No. 1A/46) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to land situated at Saint Avol, Britannia to be allocated by the Sugar Investment Trust, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Trust, information as to -

- (a) the names and addresses of the beneficiaries;
- (b) the criteria used for the allocation thereof;
- (c) the number of beneficiaries who have not paid their rental, indicating the action taken against them, and
- (d) whether any reallocation of plot has been effected following non-payment of rent by the first beneficiaries thereof and, if so, when, and to whom.

Reply: Let me first inform the hon. Member that the land he is referring to at Saint Avol, Britannia, has already been allocated by the Sugar Investment Trust.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the list of beneficiaries together with their addresses is being compiled and will be placed in the Library. As far as the criteria are concerned, the following were taken into consideration –

- Employment status
- Land ownership
- Proximity of residence to site being proposed for lease
- Experience in agriculture
- Willingness to work in cluster

- Willingness to cultivate strategic crops

I am informed by the Sugar Investment Trust that the latter has allocated land under three schemes since 2006, viz –

- 100 Arpents scheme in 2006;
- 100 Arpents Food Security in 2009, and
- Potato Plantation 2010.

100 Arpents Scheme 2006

Applications from prospective lessees were received, processed and evaluated by the Agricultural Research and Extension Unit, Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security. It was agreed between the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security and the Sugar Investment Trust that priority shall be given to SIT, Option Certificate (OC) holders while processing and evaluating applications. The lease has been drawn up for a period of eight years at a monthly rental of Rs500 per arpent as from June 2006.

100 Arpents under Food Security Fund

Applications from prospective lessees were received, processed and evaluated by the Agricultural Research and Extension Unit, Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security. Those who had scored the highest marks following the interview were offered a lease and were invited to pay their rental.

Potato Plantation 2010

The Sugar Investment Trust as a cane plantation programme. Based on this programme, the Sugar Investment Trust puts at the disposal of small planters some land for a period of four months for potato plantation. This year, some 85 arpents of land is being rented to 48 beneficiaries who have applied for leave of such land. The Sugar Investment Trust has tried its best to accommodate all applications even if the number of applications increases each year whilst the extent available for lease has decreased.

As regards parts (c) and (d) of the question, I am informed as follows –

- under 100 Arpents Scheme of 2006 – eight beneficiaries did not pay their rental. Their plots were retrieved and re-allocated to eight new beneficiaries;
- under 100 Arpents for the Food Security Fund – 12 beneficiaries did not pay their rental. Their plots were retrieved and re-allocated to 12 new beneficiaries;

- (c) as for potato plantation 2010, out of the 48 beneficiaries, 42 have already effected payment and the remaining six will do so by 30 July 2010, and
- (d) information regarding the new beneficiaries is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

DOMAINE LES PAILLES – CASINOS – PRIVATISATION

(No. 1A/47) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the privatisation of the casinos at Domaine Les Pailles, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: Let me at the outset clarify that the Privatisation of the Casinos is not limited to that at Domaine Les Pailles, but involves all the five Casinos i.e Beach Casinos Ltd, Casino de Maurice Ltd, Le Caudan Waterfront Casino Ltd, Le Grand Casino Du Domaine Ltée, and Sun Casinos Ltd managed by SIC Management Services Ltd.

It is recalled that the House was informed in the reply to PQ No. B/522 in May 2009 that SIC had agreed in-principle to the offer submitted by Peermont Group of South Africa. This was however subject to further discussions and negotiations.

Matters have been put on hold pending a final decision as the philosophy of Government is to create a conducive environment and proper regulatory framework which would impose stricter control and enforcement with regard to operations. Government is also envisaging the rezoning of the casinos and gaming houses outside the residential areas and will develop a global and holistic approach that will also tackle the issue of proliferation of gaming activities.

Since taking office as Minister of Finance, I have laid emphasis on the following -

- the need for a thorough examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the Gaming Industry;
- assessing market needs, technological changes and innovation;
- review of all applicable legislation and regulatory framework;
- economic and social impact and introduction of responsible gambling;

- linkages of gaming activities with other economic spheres of activities such as tourism, leisure and entertainment;
- new challenges to be met in the gaming sector;
- coherence with fiscal regime to be implemented, and
- creation of value added by the Strategic Partnership, particularly in terms of expertise, investment and employment.

As the hon. Member is aware, my Ministry is already working on the above issues including relocation of casinos outside residential areas. Once Government is satisfied that a sound and economically sustainable framework can be devised which meets the aspirations of all key stakeholders, the appropriate decisions will be taken.

PELICAN AVENUE, QUATRE BORNES - PAVEMENTS

(No. 1A/48) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to Pelican Avenue in Quatre Bornes, he will state if he is aware of security hazards thereat and, if so, whether consideration will be given for the construction of pavements along the said Avenue from the Sodnac State Secondary School to Hillcrest Avenue.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that with the increasing development in the region, there is a need to provide drains with footpath on both sides of the road along Pelican Avenue from Sodnac SSS to Hillcrest Avenue.

Due to lack of funds, the Municipal Council has not yet considered the above works. However, I have asked the National Development Unit to look into it.

PUBLIC OFFICERS - INTERDICTION

(No. 1A/49) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to Public Officers, he will state the number thereof who, between July 2008 and December 2009, have been interdicted, giving, in each case -

- (a) the reasons therefor;

- (b) their grades, and
- (c) the salaries paid to them during the period of interdiction.

Reply: The information is being placed in the Library.

HOTELS & GUEST HOUSES - LICENCE

(No. 1A/50) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to hotels and guest houses, he will give the number thereof whose operating licence has as at 30 June 2010 –

- (a) not been renewed, and
- (b) been cancelled.

Reply: I am informed that as at 30 June 2010, licences of 27 Hotels and 51 Guesthouses have not been renewed by the Tourism Authority whilst licences of five Hotels and nine Guesthouses have been cancelled by that Authority. The list of non-renewed licences is at Annex I and cancelled licences is at Annex 2.

The main reasons for non-renewal of licences, are non-compliant with security measures and absence of required documents whereas the cancellation of licences was mainly due to –

- Non-compliance with conditions imposed by Tourism Authority
- Licence cancelled upon request of the Licensee
- Missing documents
- Non-payment of Licence fee at the expiry of the delay granted by the Tourism Authority.