



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 10 MAY 2011

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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, GOSK	<i>Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping</i>
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Dr. the Hon. Abu Twalib Kasenally, FRCS	<i>Minister of Housing and Lands</i>
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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>
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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

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<i>Deputy Speaker</i>	Roopun, Hon. Prithvirajsing
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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 7 of 2011

Sitting of Tuesday 10 May 2011

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

At 11.30 a.m

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office –

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (Amendment) Bill (No. VIII of 2011).
- (b) The Audited Accounts together with the Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Prime Minister's Cyclone Relief Fund for the period ended 31 December 2010 (In Original).
- (c) The Civil Aviation (Passenger Fee) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 66 of 2011).
- (d) The Civil Aviation (Passenger Service Charge) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 67 of 2011).
- (e) The Civil Aviation (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 68 of 2011).

B. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities –

The Radiation Protection (Permit Fees for the Importation of Sources) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 71 of 2011).

C. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

- (a) The Finance and Audit (Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 69 of 2011).
- (b) The Digest of International Travel and Tourism Statistics 2009.

- (c) The Virement (Contingencies) Warrant Nos. 1 to 71 of 2010, Virement Warrant Nos. 1 to 83 of 2010 and Retrospective Virement Warrants Nos. 84 to 89 of 2010 (In Original).
- (d) The Census Order 2011 (Government Notice No. 61 of 2011).
- (e) The Census Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 62 of 2011).

D. Ministry of Housing and Lands –

The State Lands (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 59 of 2011).

E. Ministry of Education and Human Resources –

The Annual Report and Audited Accounts 2008-2009 of the Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund (HRKAD).

F. Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare and Reforms Institutions –

- (a) The Statutory Bodies Family Protection Fund (Pensions) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 65 of 2011).
- (b) The National Pensions (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No.70 of 2011).

G. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands –

The Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill (Other Public Place Naming) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 60 of 2011).

H. Ministry of Arts and Culture –

The Annual Report 2008 of the National Art Gallery.

I. Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment –

- (a) The Occupational Safety and Health (Fees and Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 63 of 2011).
- (b) The Occupational Safety and Health (Scaffold) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 64 of 2011).
- (c) The Employment Rights (Registration of Employers and Permits of Job Contractors) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 72 of 2011).

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

LES SALINES WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Les Salines Waterfront Development Project ('Neotown' Project), he will -

- (a) table copy of the 2008 letter of reservation issued by the Mauritius Ports Authority, and
- (b) state -
 - (i) why same was not subject to a bidding process;
 - (ii) the market value of the land, after provision by Government of offsite infrastructure, indicating the cost thereof;
 - (iii) the rental that would be charged as per a standard industrial lease;
 - (iv) if any building restriction applies;
 - (v) if an Environment Impact Assessment Report has been approved, and
 - (vi) the amount of Foreign Direct Investment that the project will attract.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me in the first instance to refer the hon. Leader of the Opposition to my reply to PQ No. B/82 of 26 June 2010 and to PQ No. A/43 of 29 March 2011, together with related documents, including the Lease Agreement between my Ministry and the MPA and to the sub-lease Agreement between my Ministry and Les Salines Development Limited.

May I emphasise that the Neotown project is to be implemented on a site of an extent of 58 arpents and 33 perches on reclaimed land in the Port Area. This site forms part of a larger extent of some 66 arpents 33 perches. I am informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority (the MPA) that as far back as in 2002 Messrs Stauch Vorster Architects, a South African Consultancy firm, was commissioned to produce a Master Plan for the development of the site.

The main findings are -

- (a) the site should be seen as a catalytic initiative that can kick start a regeneration of a wider city, Port and natural economy;
- (b) the site offered a lot of potential for the development of world class waterfront facilities;
- (c) the harbour is fundamental to the economic well-being of the entire Mauritian economy and must strive to be internationally competitive.

I am further informed by the MPA that publicity was given to the Master Plan and a presentation was made in the presence of the then Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Paul Bérenger.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order now!

(Interruptions)

Order I said! Hon. Bhagwan!

Dr. Kasenally: It is only subsequently that proposals were received from different interested parties, numbering 9, Messrs Patel Engineering Ltd. being one of them. It is to be noted that Messrs Patel Engineering...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! If this continues, I will suspend the sitting.

Dr. Kasenally: It is to be noted that Messrs Patel Engineering Ltd. were already then engaged in Mauritius in partnership with a local firm on a sewerage project at Baie du Tombeau. Whilst eight of the promoters requested land for specific projects such as construction of hotels and commercial units on relatively small plot sizes, Messrs Patel Engineering Ltd. proposed to develop the whole site as an integrated project which is in line with the guidelines of the Les Salines Master Plan prepared by Messrs Stauch Vorster Architects (SVA). Messrs Patel Engineering Ltd. also proposed to develop the infrastructural works at Les Salines site such as road network and public areas at its own cost. It should be noted that Messrs Patel Engineering

Ltd. reckons long experience in infrastructural development, construction and real estate since 1969. It is in February 2008 that my Ministry was assigned the responsibility to handle the proposal for the grant of a lease to Messrs Patel Engineering Ltd. for a major project on reclaimed land in Les Salines, for which it already had a letter of reservation.

Regarding part (a) of the question, I am tabling the said letter of reservation dated 21 February 2008 from the MPA addressed to Messrs Patel Engineering Ltd.

Regarding part (b)(i) of the question, I am informed by the MPA that there is an established procedure thereat for allocation of land within the Port area and in respect of which the Authority has overall superintendence and administration of all land in the Port and is responsible for its proper allocation. It has never had recourse to any bidding process for allocation of land.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a matter of fact, during the period 2000 to 2005, no less than 17 companies have been allocated prime land without bidding process whatsoever being resorted to. I am, Mr Speaker, Sir, tabling a copy of the 17 lessees. It is precisely in line with this practice that the letter of reservation in favour of Messrs Patel Engineering Ltd., which I have just tabled, has been issued.

The procedures for allocation of land in the Port area are as follows –

- (1) the request for allocation of land in the Port area for Port related projects received at the MPA are submitted to the Engineering/Finance/Administration Departments for a preliminary assessment;
- (2) a letter acknowledging the receipt of the project proposal is issued to the promoter;
- (3) the project is submitted to the Port Development Committee for consideration where the proposal is examined in the light of the following main criteria –
 - (i) whether the project is a Port related project and is vital to be in the Port;
 - (ii) whether the site selected for the project is in line with the Master Plan (Land Use Plan);
 - (iii) the benefit to the Port and the economy;
 - (iv) job creation, and
 - (v) any negative impact on the Port activities/operation.

The views of all the departments on the project are discussed at the Port Development Committee level.

If a decision could not be reached due to lack of information, the promoter may be requested either to submit the missing information or make a presentation of the project to the Port Development Committee.

If allocation of land is approved by the Port Development Committee, a Paper is submitted to the Lease Committee. Otherwise the promoter is informed accordingly.

Once the project is approved by the Lease Committee, a Board Paper is prepared for approval by the Board and the parent Ministry.

As regards part b(ii) of the question, the market value of the land was assessed by the Valuation Office, at Rs3.9 billion for an extent of (66 arpents 33 perches) on an “as is” basis, giving a value of Rs3.5 billion for the extent of 58 arpents 33 perches).

The rental has been assessed by Valuation Office at Rs975,000 per hectare per annum.

Furthermore, Article 4 of the Lease Agreement between the Government of Mauritius and the lessee i.e. Les Salines Development Ltd. of Patel Engineering provides for the annual rental to be assessed by the Valuation Office to reflect the market rental value, I repeat the market rental value at the 11th year. It is therefore premature at this stage to assess the future value of the land.

Nevertheless, it is estimated at this point in time that the market value of the land after provision of both on-site and off-site infrastructure, will by far exceed the present assessed value of the land of Rs3.5 billion on an “as is” basis.

I wish to point out that in accordance with Article 4 (L) of the Lease Agreement, the promoter is responsible to carry out all on-site infrastructure, whereas off-site infrastructure i.e. road and communication facilities are available.

As regards the provision of electricity, water and waste disposal, the promoter in accordance with Article 4(o) of the Lease Agreement is responsible to liaise directly with the Utility providers, given that the CEB, the CWA and the WMA already have established mechanism and procedures to provide such services. Government, in practice, will not incur any expenditure in this respect.

At any rate, there is a Joint Monitoring Committee which comprises, *inter alia*, of Ministries of Finance, Public Utilities, Public Infrastructure, Environment, my Ministry and the promoter to ensure that the project is implemented in strict accordance of the Lease Agreement provision of off-site service for major projects is a standard practice.

In any event if the cost is prohibitive or unreasonable, the matter will be referred back to the Joint Monitoring Committee.

As regards part b(iii) of the question, a standard industrial lease, in accordance with the provisions of the State Land Act, as amended by the Finance Act 2008, provides that rental shall be charged at 4% of the market value of the land with a reduction of 75% for the first year; 50% for the second year; 25% for the third year and full rental as from the fourth year.

This is an established practice in regard to Industrial Site Lease which enables the promoter to pay full rental only after the fourth year as it is expected that the business would then generate revenue.

As the Neotown Project is specific in nature and magnitude, and not comparable to standard industrial projects, in this specific case a similar principle has also been applied, where the promoter (Les Salines Development Ltd) will pay full rental, as assessed by the Valuation Office, as from the 11th year. The rental will be adjusted every three years in line with Cumulative Price Index (CPI). The project is to be implemented on a phased basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while annual rental has been estimated at approximately Rs411,000 per *Arpent* for the Neotown Project, the average annual rent on land leased to other promoters is in the region of Rs200,000, that is, Rs411,000 compared to Rs200,000 per *Arpent* on land which is provided with all basic infrastructure unlike the site at Les Salines which is bare land devoid of any onsite infrastructure. For example, Le Suffren is currently paying a rental of Rs300,000 per *Arpent*.

In reply to part (b) of the question, Les Salines Development Company Ltd proposes the Neotown development as a new modern self-contained project for financial, social and cultural functions with iconic building rising up to 40 storeys and overlooking the harbour.

Les Salines Development Company Ltd has submitted its proposed Master Plan which has been approved by my Ministry. Based on the Master Plan submitted by the promoter, the

maximum height allowable is 40 floors or up to 120 metres. Clearances will be granted on submission and determination of detailed plans by the Planning Division of my Ministry.

Mr Speaker Sir, in respect of part (v) of the question, I am informed that an EIA application has been submitted on 30 March 2011 and is still under consideration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in respect of part (vi) of the question, according to documents and correspondence submitted by the promoter, it is expected that over Rs16 billion will be invested by the promoter.

Mr Bérenger: What the MPA did, they did. I am interested in what took place as from 2008 when Government took over that land. Once the decision had been taken to go for the so-called integrated project - leave the MPA to the past - why did not the Government go for international and national request for proposals for the sake of transparency and getting the best operators, especially that Mr Patel has boasted that it was an international request for proposals where a couple of people from the western world also participated and in one line?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered that question. By the time my Ministry got it, the MPA which had examined all the proposals, as it has always been doing, had already granted a letter of reservation. We are in *un état de droit*. Once we have signed a commitment, we cannot just discard it and go against what is the established principle. I reiterate that this has been done for many projects, for example, Le Suffren. There was a lot of containers...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Carry on!

Dr. Kasenally: ...three projects by IBL.

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Minister answer the question. There are 15 persons who are answering the question there. Why?

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, Patel was chosen without an international request for proposal. Was an enquiry carried out on Patel Engineering and Patel Realty? I will table three documents: one, showing that Patel Engineering's share has gone down by 80% over the last year. Second, that 25 places were raided by Indian income tax officials in December last for tax evasion and thirdly, that Patel Engineering got a contract for road building which it could not

deliver and lost its deposit because it decided not to go for that tender. I table the three documents.

Dr. Kasenally: I will start from the last one. In fact, it is a project of Rs130 m. Indian rupees. In fact, Patel postulated for that, but they were wrong in their accounting and they realised that they were going to lose a lot of money. So, they withdrew. Because they withdrew after the deadline, the Rs130 m. were forfeited. However, there are two other major projects on road with the same company, the NHII, which have been retained. These are projects over Rs600 m.

Mr Bérenger: I did not know the Minister held the brief for Patel Engineering, but I am glad to see that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask how much will be spent on water, electricity, sewerage and roads? The Minister said: no Government funds. But CEB, CWA, RDA and so on are public bodies. Is the Minister prepared to confirm that just in the case of water, the Central Water Authority has requested, in a letter dated 12 October, Rs120 m. to provide water to that site? Is the hon. Minister aware that in the case of CEB, the request is for 58 MW additional to be produced by the CEB, which means billions of rupees – not millions? So, is the Minister in presence of, at least, guesstimates at this stage?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, first, I will reply to the innuendoes of the Leader of the Opposition that I hold a brief for Patel. As a Minister of this Government, I make it a point to be informed through the internet and everywhere. I do not hold any brief for anybody. I think it is a matter of regret that this remark was thrown at me.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer!

Dr. Kasenally: However, as far as utilities are concerned, I have already said that there is a mechanism. But anyway, for all these projects, the promoters pay electricity which is going to bring revenue.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Kasenally: As far as the CEB is concerned, I am informed that this has been taken into their expansion plan and they will be paying commercial rate which will bring a tremendous amount of revenue to the CEB. This has been the practice. For example, in the region of Bel Ombre...

(Interruptions)

... a road was diverted and it costs the *modique* sum of Rs128 m. It is the same for CWA. It has been the practice everywhere, but I have replied in my answer that we will come to that bridge, because there is a Joint Monitoring Committee which is looking into that.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the value of the land is concerned, the Minister has admitted that Rs3.5 m. is basis, that is, without the roads, electricity, sewerage and everything else, and that this value will climb tremendously as we go along. Will the Minister agree that it will be three/four times that value and how did he react when Patel boasted that he had got for a steal, for peanuts, land worth Rs15 billion according to him?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not going to comment on the marketing strategy of Mr Patel.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let me listen to the answer of the hon. Minister, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Dr. Kasenally: When Mr Patel is facing the world media or whatever it is...

Mr Speaker: I don't think the hon. Minister is trying to – are you concerned with what Mr Patel said?

(Interruptions)

That's the point.

Dr. Kasenally: I am not going to comment on his teleconference exuberance.

Mr Speaker: A Minister is not answerable for what somebody else has said in the press or elsewhere.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the lease itself is concerned, the Minister gave a document in which year by year, over the first ten years, the rental value is given. It starts zero for the first year with a deposit of Rs25 m. and it builds up to, on year ten, Rs14 m. The Minister has confirmed that the standard lease is 4% of market value of the land with concessions for the first three years and then, fourth year, full market value plus adjustment every three years as per inflation. According to the document tabled by the Minister, the special lease for this project for Patel Ltd builds up over 10 years to Rs96.2 m., let's say Rs100 m., according to his figures. I have had an expert to work out as per an ordinary lease - I am going to table that - what it would amount to. It amounts to Rs1,324,000,000.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Let the hon. Leader of the Opposition make his point.

Mr Bérenger: Rounding figures, therefore, it is a hundred million rupees that they are going to pay over 10 years. They should have paid, according to a normal lease, Rs1,300,000,000. Why this *cadeau* of Rs1,200,000,000 to Patel Ltd?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no *cadeau*. If they could only have looked at all the documents that I have deposited two weeks ago, they would see that I have mentioned that the development will be in a phased manner and will be on developable land. I have already mentioned the magnitude of this project which is perhaps unique in the Indian Ocean and is expected to be completed after 10 years. There has been a committee of the Valuation Department, the MPA and my Ministry which had worked out on this rental value, which is a normal practice. It is not the usual industrial lease and besides, I must say that this land is private land of the MPA. At the end of the 10 years, probably it will not be Rs3.5 billion, nobody knows, it may be even over Rs15 billion. It is then that we are going to get the full commercial values. They are just building hotels in a phased manner and therefore we have to give some incentives. In fact, a similar procedure was used in the Cape Town Waterfront when the Government of South Africa got directly Dubai World to do it and the same principle was

applied over a period of similar time. Their rental is reduced now, but we will get the full commercial rate where we will be, in fact, recouping everything.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as building restrictions are concerned, is the hon. Minister aware of the post from Mr Patel, if I can quote –

“Another concession we asked for is no height restriction, no FSR restriction - that is, a concentration of building on the land - no zoning restriction. We will build what we want, including commercial centres - and he adds, making fools of Government - the only thing that we are not permitted to build is places of worship.”

I have gone through the lease. Can the hon. Minister point out in what section of the lease agreement are any restrictions put on building of this project?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I am not going to take into consideration what Mr Patel says in his teleconference exuberance. What I am sticking to is the lease agreement and it is mentioned in it that all projects will be monitored and approved by my Ministry. I have already said it. This question is creeping up day and night. But I have already mentioned it. They have got only to look at the lease agreement, but they should not take things out of context and use it otherwise.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the EIA is concerned, is the hon. Minister aware that the possibility for public comments has been restricted to two weeks? The public has been given two weeks to react to the laying in the Ministry concerned; two weeks for that kind of project. Is the hon. Minister aware that when I, through his office, tried to get a copy – I did not want to go there and look at it, I want to get a copy - I was refused, as Leader of the Opposition, a copy? When I requested also, through his office, that the public comments be made available to the Leader of the Opposition, I was informed that public comments are private, confidential and cannot be communicated. Is the hon. Minister aware of that?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order!

Mr Bérenger: Is the hon. Minister aware that even on the website they stopped downloading. They took measures so that we could not download.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, this falls within the purview of the Ministry of Environment and I have been told that it was on the website.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Kasenally: I will also say that there has been a request to extend it by two weeks and I understand the Ministry of Environment will consider it favourably.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the amount of Foreign Direct Investment which will come in is concerned, we are given the impression that Patel is going to come in with Rs16 billion. Is the Minister aware that, in fact - he has said publicly again - all he means to bring in is less 20 crores, that is, less than Rs200 m. for the infrastructure and then he is going to sublease land - left, right and centre - hotel and this site? So, others are supposed to come in. Is he aware that he has outlined his plan? Instead of Patel bringing in FDI, what he intends to do is to go for residential first. He says: "as I did in Bangalore in India, go for residential, get money and use that money mostly from Mauritians to develop the other stages of this project."

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have got now a document from Patel where he clearly puts in what form of investment he will bring. I am laying it on the Table. I am not going to stretch my imagination of what Patel has said again. I stand guided by your ruling, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I'll stick to it and sit down now.

Mr Speaker: There is a Monitoring Committee where all the matters have to be approved by the Ministry.

Mr Virahsawmy: Sir, on a point of order, I would like to intervene to say that the ...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister should raise his point of order at the end of the Question Time.

(Interruptions)

No, please! The hon. Minister must raise the point of order at the end of the Question Time.

Mr Bérenger: Is the Minister aware that again Mr Patel has boasted that through this deal he expects around 4,000 to 6,000 crores over time of additional revenue from that project

for Patel Industries Ltd, that is, he expects over time more than Rs70 billion of revenue to Patel Industries Ltd.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, these are things which Mr Patel has been saying in his conference. I don't think I will indulge myself in it, but one thing I must say is that this major project is going to bring a lot of pluses to the economy and will percolate through the various strata of society, bringing up to 10,000 of direct employment compared to what has been done so far by the private sector, just investing into real estate which brings four or five jobs per project.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan and then the last question from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Bhagwan: Would the hon. Minister confirm to the House, the country and the nation whether one Indian national under the name of R.B. who, apparently, does not have to ring the bell to seek appointment with Ministers, acted as *intermédiaire* and *courtier* in this mega scandal project at Les Salines? Can the Minister inform the House...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Has the hon. Member finished?

(Interruptions)

Order! Minister, please sit down!

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Minister, please sit down!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House whether he or his colleagues of the Government have met that person, Mr. R. B. at any time in connection with that project?

Mr Speaker: May I intervene at this stage, in question No.1B/82 this question was put by hon. Bhagwan and answered by the Minister.

Mr Bhagwan: He did not reply.

Mr Speaker: He replied. Last question from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that Mr Patel has boasted that he got all this for a steal, *du pain du beurre* and being given the *cadeau*, one billion and two hundred million rupees and that, in fact, Mr Patel had made fools not only of Government, but the way that he has commented on Government and on Mauritius, being given all this, will the Minister advise Government to cancel that deal and go for open bidding...

(Interruptions)

Or at least review the terms of the lease agreement....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

I said order!

Mr Bérenger: ... or at least review the terms of the lease agreement which contain one billion two hundred million rupees *cadeau* to Patel Ltd ?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not want to hurt....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is no need. Please carry on!

Dr. Kasenally: I do not want to hurt, but there are certain *verités* ...

Mr Speaker: Answer the question!

Dr. Kasenally: There are *certaines verités* which are cruel. Take the *du pain du beurre* that we are mentioning, what did we do with the Illovo deal?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Can the Minister please answer the question? There is a question, answer the question.

Dr. Kasenally: Yes, I am answering the question. There is no question of cancelling the project. We are determined because it is a mega project, maybe we will review certain things ...

(Interruptions)

...but there is going to be no retreat, no surrender on this project.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

(Interruptions)

Can I carry on with the proceedings? The Minister has a point of order? Yes!

Mr Virahsawmy: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order, I would like to correct one statement which is not ...

Mr Speaker: No, the Minister cannot correct.

Mr Virahsawmy: I would like to point out....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order! Can the Minister please sit down? He cannot raise a point of order on a matter of explanation. If he has some explanation to give, he should please rise up and state what he has got to say. It cannot be a point of order.

Mr Virahsawmy: On a point of personal explanation, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to point out that the EIA was published on the website of the Ministry, it is still on the website of the Ministry and it has never been blocked. If the Leader of the Opposition does not know how to download a document, I cannot be held responsible for that.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister! The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/272 and B/276 have been withdrawn. Hon. Khamajeet!

FLACQ HOSPITAL - POST MORTEM OPERATIONS

(No. B/266) **Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to *post mortem* operations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if consideration will be given for the carrying out thereof at the Flacq Hospital mortuary, from 9.00 hrs to 22.00 hrs, as obtains at the Victoria Hospital, to deal with cases in the northern and eastern district regions.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question No. 1B/222 on 06 July 2010 where I informed the House that post-mortem examinations were being carried out at Victoria and SSRN Hospitals and that such examinations would resume at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital on completion of Phase I of the hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can understand the difficulties encountered for families in the eastern region. The mortuary at Flacq is found in a small and detached concrete building and, therefore, there is not enough adequate space.

However, consideration is being given for the extension of post-mortem examination facilities to Flacq Hospital and Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital which will have to take into account the existing infrastructure unfortunately in these hospitals, the requirements for new equipment and additional staff.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should also add that the Police Department has a project for the construction of a new and modern Medico-Legal Centre in the region of Moka to cater for cases island-wide. The Centre would provide the facilities that are lacking at that moment.

Mr Khamajeet: Being given that a new wing of the Flacq Hospital is under construction, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if *post mortem* facilities could be accommodated in the new building which is actually under construction?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it appears that they did not provide for *post mortem* examinations at that hospital under construction. But, what I have been saying is that consideration will be given for the possibility of extension for *post mortem* facilities at Flacq Hospital and also at Nehru Hospital. We will see what are the possibilities of doing this. As I said, I sympathise with the families for the difficulties that they have to face in the eastern

region. We will certainly look into that. But I also added that we are providing for a new medico-legal centre in the region of Moka to cater for cases island-wise.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, since we are talking about *post mortem* operations, would the hon. Prime Minister offhand have the number of *post mortem* operations that have to be carried out annually in the two centres where they provide *post mortem* operations?

Mr Speaker: No, this does not arise from this question.

Dr. S. Boolell: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister to look into the possibility that *post mortems* fall under one Head. I am sure that the Prime Minister must be aware that the mortuaries belong to the Ministry of Health and that the organisation of the autopsies falls under his Ministry which leads to a lot of confusion. Would the hon. Prime Minister kindly ensure that the mortuaries should fall under Police so that things might get a little bit faster with the relevant staff because right now the staff is Health and the Police is Police and there is a delay consequently.

Mr Speaker: No, this is a general question. The hon. Member has to put a specific question.

Mr Khamajeet: Being given that the usual scenario is that the Police transfer the corpse for *post mortem* to Candos Hospital, to bring back the corpse to their residents, the bereaved family, especially those who are economically vulnerable, has to make arrangements for transport. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if Police can arrange to send the corpses back at the earliest possible?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I think you are referring to the empty buses that we have got in Port Louis! I know! *Pane payer!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now! Please.

The Prime Minister: I will look at that and that is why I said in my answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there are difficulties and I sympathise with the families for the difficulties that they get. We know, Mauritius being Mauritius, people will want to get the bodies as quickly as possible.

In some religions we have to do the rites straightaway and this creates problems for a country like ours. That is why I also said that we are having this new complex. I am saying it indirectly, answering to the question that hon. Dr. Boolell asked about trying to make it under one unit and not just different units taking care of them, although doctors have to work under the Ministry of Health. We are looking at that because it will provide for appropriate infrastructure. We must have a place where we can have a large storage of dead bodies in case a catastrophe happens for example. We could also have the latest technologies for all the types of crime, equipment and teaching facilities, training centres and also conferencing facilities with other countries if there is a major disaster in Mauritius. We do not have this. Mr Speaker, Sir, each of these hospitals can only store seven bodies at one time. If we have a major catastrophe tomorrow, we need to have a bigger space. In that context, I also think that it's already a tragedy if somebody has lost a close relative, friend, father, mother or whatever. We should try to see if the Police could not help with the transport, especially people, as the hon. Member said, from the lower economic rung of the ladder.

NON-CITIZENS - IMMOVABLE PROPERTY - PURCHASE

(No. B/267) 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 non-citizens, he will state the names and nationality thereof who have been issued with certificates authorising them to hold, purchase or otherwise acquire immovable property in Mauritius, since 2006 to date, indicating in each case the -

- (a) location and value of the immovable property, and
- (b) terms and conditions imposed therefor.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, since 01 January 2006 to 06 May 2011, that is, for a period of over five years, my office has issued 24 authorisations under the Non-citizens (Property Restriction) Act for acquisition of immovable property by non-citizens.

The Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, which came into effect in October 2006, amended section 3(3) of the Non-citizens (Property Restriction) Act, to provide for the Board of Investment to issue authorisation for an investor to acquire immovable property, a right to an immovable property or part thereof for business purposes, including IRS and RES

developments. Since October 2006 to 06 May 2011, the Board of Investment has issued 144 authorisations in this connection. Such authorisations are issued in the name of a company locally incorporated by the foreign promoter/s of a business activity, and not in the personal name of the non-citizen/s.

However, to ensure proper coordination and control on acquisition of property under the Non-citizens (Property Restriction) Act, I requested, in June 2009, that the Board of Investment seeks the final approval of my Office upon such applications. Consultations are being held with the relevant stakeholders to review the legal framework in relation to the purchase of immovable property by non-citizens in Mauritius. There have been representations which have been made to my office in that context.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to the extent that the acquisition of the property mostly pertains to purely private transactions of the foreign citizens in respect of private land, it would not be in order for me to disclose their names and identity, more so that many of them would be investors who would expect that their privacy will be respected insofar as their investments are concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards to part (b) of the question, the general terms and conditions imposed on the non-citizens acquiring immovable property in Mauritius are as follows -

- (i) the property should not be used for purposes other than those in respect of which the authorisation has been granted;
- (ii) all the necessary clearances should be sought and obtained from the relevant authorities, and any conditions imposed should be strictly complied with;
- (iii) the property should not be transferred or sublet or disposed of without prior approval, and
- (iv) the non-citizen should not engage in property speculation.

I should also add perhaps that, on the website of the Board of Investment, all the criteria are listed for those who want to go into business activities as non-citizen investors.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Prime Minister just mentioned about the Board of Investment having objective criteria. What I am interested to know is whether, at the level of the Prime Minister's Office, there are such objective criteria, so that people can know if they have a chance to be able to acquire property.

The Prime Minister: I can read the objective criteria of the BOI, but it's rather long; the hon. Member can have it on the website. But they must go through that first hurdle, and then it comes to the Prime Minister's Office. We may have reasons to believe that this should not go forward - and this has happened, I must say - and, therefore, we don't approve it. It's as if another rung in the ladder for that, to make sure that there is no abuse of the system.

Mr Uteem: With respect to the Neotown project, was the certificate issued by the Prime Minister's Office or the Board of Investment?

Mr Speaker: No, I am sorry. The Neotown project is over.

Mr Uteem: This relates to a non-citizen who has been given permission with respect to immovable property.

Mr Speaker: No. The hon. Member is talking about the Neotown project. This issue is over. The hon. Member should rephrase his question.

Mr Uteem: My question was about the names and nationality of non-citizens who have applied and got the necessary certificate to invest in immovable property. So, I am asking a specific question. The hon. Prime Minister does not want to divulge all the names but there is, at least, one name known to the public, which is the promoter of Neotown, who won the award which we just discussed in the PNQ. So, I want to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the certificate in respect of that promoter was issued by the Board of Investment or by the Prime Minister's Office.

The Prime Minister: It went through all the procedures; first of all, through the BOI, and then I'm sure they must have come to the Prime Minister's Office to get the final approval. But, as I said, I only started to look at that in June 2009, because there had been representations made to my office that some people are not doing what they are supposed to do. There were objections to it, I must say. At the time, the Ministry of Finance thought that this would be another hurdle instead of making things easier. But having looked at all the facts, we decided that we should have, at least, a look at what is happening.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in his answer, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned that he cannot divulge the names, and I can understand the reasons for that. But would the hon.

Prime Minister be able to indicate to the House whether the 24 people who have bought immovable property are focused in a certain region of the country?

The Prime Minister: Generally, they tend to go for certain regions, I must say, but it's not necessarily so for all of them. They are of different nationalities also. The majority comes from France, and the next group comes from Britain and South Africa. But there are also others, that is, Belgian, Indian, Swiss, Russian, Italian, Namibian, United States, Saudi Arabia and Sweden.

Mr Ganoo: Some time back, an inquiry was conducted into the cases of non-citizens who have been able to acquire property by means of a trust, and I understand that even a Steering Committee was set up, presided by hon. Sayed-Hossen. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us what has been the outcome of this inquiry or of this committee? Have any cases been detected? Has, in fact, the law been contravened or flouted, and what does Government intend to do with regard to these cases, if any?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member asked for a specific question. I will answer it, but I know we have taken some actions in certain cases.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister consider setting up a special Monitoring and Compliance Committee within his office to check how it happens that many of the foreigners who have bought lands since 2006, or even before, have still not yet started their project, given that they have been imposed the condition of purchasing the land for business purposes? I would like to know whether there have been any cases of insider dealing or if it is just a question of pure speculation, which is now pricing a lot of people out of the housing market in Mauritius.

The Prime Minister: If they do that, then the whole contract becomes null and void. That is part of the conditions that are attached in the requirement if they want to invest in Mauritius. But I will certainly monitor that, especially on this account the hon. Member is talking about. I believe, Mr Speaker, Sir - I am saying off record, by memory - that there were some cases like this.

RODRIGUES - POLICE OFFICERS – TRAINING & EQUIPMENT

(No. B/268) 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 police in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to -

- (a) the number of Rodriguan police officers who have benefited from overseas specialised training over the last five years;
- (b) the last time a full survey of the equipment was carried out to examine the condition thereof, and
- (c) if the police officers regularly carry out shooting exercises, in Rodrigues, after completion of their foundation courses and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that six Rodriguan police officers have benefited from overseas specialised training over the last five years.

Also, 98 Rodriguan police officers attended 23 different training courses conducted in Mauritius by the Police Training School.

A Rodrigues Divisional Training Unit was set up in May 2005 to provide continuous training to Rodriguan police officers to keep them abreast of developments and the new techniques of policing. Since 2006 to 06 May 2011, 14 training courses were held at the Training Unit by the local trainers, as well as police trainers from Mauritius.

In regard to part (b) of the question, regular inspections are conducted in Police Stations and Police Posts. The last inspections in Rodrigues were conducted in July 2010. For this year, inspections have already started, and the exercise will be completed, I believe, by the end of this month.

In regard to part (c) of the question, all police officers are trained in firearms and conduct firings during Probationers' Course. For the time being, no shooting exercise is carried out in Rodrigues, as there is no firing range. However, officers posted to the Special Mobile Force in Rodrigues are regularly trained in Mauritius during their respective Tour of Duty. Furthermore,

Rodriguan Officers posted to the National Coast Guard are trained in firearms handling in the mainland Mauritius as and when required.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that Police have commissioned a study for the setting up of an Open Firing Range in Rodrigues. In July 2010, an Indian Army Officer specialised in the construction of firing range proceeded to Rodrigues and has identified two sites which were found suitable for an Open Firing Range. These recommendations are being examined by the Police.

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, just allow me to thank the hon. Prime Minister and the Commissioner of Police for their prompt action with regard to the transfer of some Rodriguan Police officers from the Police Band. Despite the fact that there are training courses for Police in Mauritius, will the hon. Prime Minister assure us that two or three Police officers from Rodrigues will have the opportunity for further specialised overseas training at least yearly? If we look at the Police routine orders, there are at least every week or every month, Police officers going overseas for specialised training.

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that they go every week or every month, but they do go. Yes, I will look into it because it is important that people from all parts of the Republic of Mauritius get an equal chance.

Mr François: With regard to the fleet of vehicles to Rodrigues, certainly Police officers appreciate the last fleet received, but the 4x2 vehicles are not adapted to Rodrigues as there are lots of track roads and untarred roads. Will the hon. Prime Minister see to it with the Commissioner of Police that the next fleet of vehicles to Rodrigues contains mostly 4x4 wheel drives, including a water tank for the Police officers for practical reasons and for a better Police service to the community?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly pass this on to the Commissioner of Police, Mr Speaker, Sir.

ICAC - MR H. B. - STATEMENTS

(No. B/269) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether he will state if he has received a letter from Mr H. B., informing him that he has made statements to the Independent Commission Against Corruption against the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, in relation to the acquisition of landed property and, if so, indicate the actions he proposes to take, if any.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have received the letter referred to in the question.

However, as the House is aware, any matter that relates to the alleged acts of corruption falls under the responsibility of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

I have on several occasions, Mr Speaker, Sir, in this House reiterated my absolute respect for institutions which should be allowed to discharge their duties in a totally independent manner without any kind of external intervention. It would, therefore, not be appropriate for me to make any comment, whatsoever, on this matter.

But I take comfort, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the ICAC is now being increasingly solicited by many parties to enquire into cases of alleged corruption. This can only reinforce the trust and credibility that I have always placed in ICAC also in the discharge of its duties.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the allegation is against the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, who is a senior Minister of Government, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he had the opportunity to discuss this issue with his Minister of Finance?

The Prime Minister: I see absolutely no reason why I should go and discuss private matters that some persons want to refer to. He is free to refer to it and that is what is being done.

Mr Bhagwan: Being given that mention has been made - public mention also - of the letter about *les transactions concernant des millions de roupies qui ont été effectuées en devises étrangères à l'extérieur concernant l'achat d'un terrain. Est-ce que le Premier ministre peut nous dire si, à son niveau, he has conducted an inquiry with the Registration Unit of the Registrar-General's Office to see whether there have been cases of ingérence?*

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is regrettable that people make allegations. Wild allegations!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I speak for all the Members of the National Assembly. It is not right that any Tom, Dick and Harry make an allegation, wild allegations.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: And, therefore, we have to go and investigate.

(Interruptions)

Especially him! What allegations he hasn't made on so many people! I don't know what credibility I should give, in fact, to that. But let ICAC investigate.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, you have put your question and you have got your answer. Keep quiet! Next question, hon. Radegonde!

PMO - MRS K. R. - SENIOR ADVISER

(No. B/270) 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 Mrs K. R., Senior Adviser at the Prime Minister's Office, he will –

- (a) state -
 - (i) her qualifications;
 - (ii) her salaries and terms and conditions of appointment, and
 - (iii) the make and model of the car put at her disposal, and

- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of times a chauffeur-driven car from the Police Transport Branch has been put at her disposal, over the past four months.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mrs K. R., Senior Adviser in my office, holds a BA General from the University of Punjab, India, and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education, awarded jointly by the University of Brighton, UK, and the Mauritius Institute of Education.

Regarding part (a)(ii) and (iii) of the question, the terms and conditions of her contractual appointment are in accordance with PRB recommendations. No car has been put at her disposal by the police on a permanent basis.

However, and in regard to part (b) of the question, for security and safety reasons, and for ease of access and of parking, a police chauffeur-driven car is put at her disposal whenever, in the performance of her duties, she is required to carry out site visits, and perhaps she has to remain on the spot and at the venues for official functions I attend.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether Mrs K. R. is entitled for a duty-free car as per her terms and conditions of contract employment?

The Prime Minister: Yes, as I said, it is according to PRB; she is entitled and she has made use of it.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister state whether it was the practice to provide her with a chauffeur-driven car from the Police Department despite her entitlement for a duty-free car?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Can I hear the question?

The Prime Minister: It is the practice when they have to go on site.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Please, keep quiet! I could not hear the question when it was being put. Next question!

ROSE HILL - TOWN CENTRE - DRUGS & PROSTITUTION

(No. B/271) 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 Town Centre at Rose Hill, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of drugs and prostitution thereat, especially at night, since November 2010 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the town of Rose Hill is policed by the Rose Hill Police Station, with the support of the CID, ADSU, Divisional Traffic Police and ERS. Since 2005 to 05 May 2011, 250 crack down Police operations have been carried out in the town centre of Rose Hill and 50 contraventions related to prostitution and 19 to drug have been established.

From November 2010 to 05 May 2011, 20 crack down operations have been carried out. Three cases of drugs have been established and no case of prostitution.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the police have adopted a two-tier strategy of Supply Reduction and Demand Reduction to combat the drug problem. The Supply Reduction strategy revolves around the repression of drug through the enforcement of law. The Demand Reduction strategy focuses on the concept of Prevention, Rehabilitation and Treatment.

The pre-emptive strategy focuses more on the enforcement of the law through the conduct of the following operations -

- (i) special mobile patrols carried out by Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit (ADSU) personnel in collaboration with the Central Investigation Division (CID), the Divisional Support Unit (DSU), the Emergency Response Service (ERS) and the local Police to prevent drug activities, both during day and night;
- (ii) regular stop and search exercises are carried out to detect such cases;
- (iii) as I mentioned, crack down/joint operations are mounted against drug traffickers with the support of other units of the Force such as, the Special Supporting Unit (SSU) and the Special Mobile Force, whenever reliable information are received;
- (iv) with the implementation of the National Policing Strategic Framework, a Force Crime Intelligence Unit (FCIU) and Divisional Crime Intelligence Units (DCIUs)

have been set up to collect, collate, analyse these data and disseminate criminal information;

- (v) field Intelligence Officers are also operating with ADSU teams to gather information relating to drug and other activities, and
- (vi) intensive surveillance is discreetly maintained over high profile drug targets and their movements are closely monitored by ADSU officers.

Since the introduction of the National Policing Strategic Framework of which community policing is a major pillar, much emphasis is laid on prevention, whereby the police work in partnership with several stakeholders, including Ministries and NGOs to sensitise the population through campaigns. ADSU officers participate in seminars, workshops and lectures. Interaction between the Police and members of the socio-cultural groups is encouraged with a view to sensitise all components of our population against the ill-effects of drugs and its impact on the family and the society at large. The ADSU also conducts regular radio and TV interventions on the Anti-Drug information and sensitisation campaigns. Eight community forums have been conducted in the town centre of Rose Hill.

Mr Nagalingum: Is the hon. Prime Minister in a position to say if there have been cases of murders associated with drugs and prostitution in the town centre of Rose Hill?

The Prime Minister: I would need a specific question because some cases are probably in court already.

Mr Nagalingum: Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us if there is any enquiry conducted towards juvenile prostitution rings in the centre of Rose Hill?

The Prime Minister: I just mentioned that there is a full collaboration with all the stakeholders, including that. That is why, if the hon. Member had listened – I am sure he has - we had such huge number of crackdown operations. 250 crackdown Police operations had been carried out and 20 crackdown operations between November last and May.

(Interruptions)

With results! After the 250 crackdown operations, there were 50 contraventions related to prostitution and 19 to drugs and concerning the recent one, there were only three cases of drugs which have been established, which means that there is a lot of collaboration. The Police

work also on information they receive, even from any member of the public, and they try to analyse it and then they go and do this crackdown operations.

Mr Bhagwan: Despite all the actions being taken by the Police - we are residents of Rose Hill, not only here, but other people on the other side also - things are worsening day by day.

(Interruptions)

Night by night! They are working daytime also. Even school children are being influenced. Can I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister for the Police to use whatever means it can because this problem of prostitution is getting inside the town, in all the main streets in Rose Hill, even near the Clinic Bon Pasteur, even inside the Montmartre. This is happening and there are school children and so on. Can I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister to ask the Commissioner of Police to work with the NGOs, the Local Authorities to find additional methods to cure this problem which is happening, not only in Rose Hill, but even in the centre of Quatre Bornes and elsewhere?

Mr Speaker: We are talking of Rose Hill.

The Prime Minister: I see the hon. Member is well informed. I wonder how he knows all this! I suppose people tell him!

(Interruptions)

But seriously, I take on board what he is saying. I would appreciate if privately he would give me some information. I will give it to the Police.

(Interruptions)

I know he has a 4x4, but I did not know that he drives so much at night that he knows all these places. Be careful! He knows how the Police work. I am saying this for his own sake. People watch those people who come and go!

(Interruptions)

ELECTORAL LAWS & REGULATIONS - AMENDMENTS

(No. B/272) 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 electoral laws and regulations, he will state if

consideration will be given for amendments to be brought thereto, before the forthcoming elections, with a view to introducing and implementing -

- (a) a code of conduct to govern the political parties and the candidates, and
- (b) the Electronic Voting System.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers. Hon. Mrs Ribot!

BEAU BASSIN/ROSE HILL MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - VACANCIES

(No. B/277) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the vacancies that exist on the establishment of the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to the number thereof in the category of -

- (a) scavengers, and
- (b) municipal inspectors, indicating when same will be filled.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill that various vacancies exist at the Council.

In view of the budgetary constraints being imposed on various sectors, the efficiency and effectiveness of service deliveries in Local Authorities are being critically examined and a decision will be taken shortly to fill these vacancies.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister for how long these vacancies have existed at the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill?

Mr Aimée: From information I have, it is about six months.

Mrs Ribot: Can we get the time frame, Mr Speaker, Sir, as to when these vacancies will be filled?

Mr Aimée: Very soon, Mr Speakers, Sir.

NHDC HOUSING ESTATES - SYNDIC

(No. B/278) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the NHDC Housing Estates, he will, for the benefit

of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Corporation Ltd., information as to where matters stand in relation to the appointment of an expert to set up a programme to render the syndic operational.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the NHDC that the exercise for the appointment of an expert in syndic is ongoing. I am further informed that an expression of interest exercise was floated by the NHDC on 5 February 2011, following which a request for proposal was carried out on 01 April 2011. As at the closing date, that is, on 04 May 2011, only one proposal had been received.

An Evaluation Committee has been set up by the NHDC thereafter, should the proposal be found, that is, meeting the established criteria, the expert will be appointed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned earlier in my previous intervention on syndic, the Government, irrespective of difficulties and legal responsibilities and liabilities of co-owners, is continuously assisting the inhabitants of the NHDC housing estates. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, inhabitants of the NHDC housing estates are co-owners of their housing units and are as such bound to constitute a syndic to look after the maintenance and upkeep of *la partie commune* in accordance with *règlements de copropriété* as provided in Article 664 of the Civil Code. However, syndic is not still in the *moeurs* of our citizens. In fact, it is a very difficult nut to crack. The very objective of appointing an expert in this field is to motivate and sensitise owners to form part of the *conseils syndicaux* thus ensuring that the housing estates are well managed and maintained.

Mr Bérenger: In case that one proposal has come in and he or she does not qualify as an expert to advise on this matter, will assistance be sought from outside - overseas or the UNDP?

Dr. Kasenally: We will keep that in mind, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: According to the terms of reference worked out by the NHDC is the expert to advise on how to get syndic going all over the island or is he or she supposed to help set up syndic himself or herself?

Dr. Kasenally: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this person will go on the field, *sur le terrain*, and every housing estate where there is no syndic, we will try to motivate and we will have a team of people from the NHDC and my Ministry - an advisor - to look into that because we are

very concerned about the state of affairs of the housing estates. We will try everything to help the people to look after their own houses.

CAMP JEANETTE - FLOODING

(No. B/279) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to Camp Jeanette, Chemin Grenier, in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River, he will state if he has received representations to the effect that flooding occurs thereat during heavy rainfall, thus causing inconveniences to the inhabitants thereof and, if so, indicate the remedial measures that will be taken, if any.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, following representations received, a site visit was effected by officers of my Ministry and it was noted that the existing drain at Camp Jeanette Road is inadequate. The project proposed for the rehabilitation of the existing drain and its extension is included in the priority list for 2011.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister to confirm to the House whether the extending absorption will adequately address the problem of still water during heavy rainfall?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned that, in fact, we are going to rehabilitate certain existing drains, but we have got a problem of outlet and that had been a very big problem. That is why there have been a few regular visits conducted by the officers of my Ministry. We are trying to work out at least a plan of how we can get an appropriate outlet for the drains.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that we have a problem of outlet, may I request the hon. Minister to consider the advisability of recommending a comprehensive survey to integrate Camp Jeanette catchment area and to find a long term and sustainable solution to the problem?

Mr Bachoo: This is exactly what we are doing and, in fact, we had a few meetings with hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee and the Minister of Local Government. We are looking into the issue and I do hope that we will find some solution.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister talked about rehabilitating existing drains. Can I very humbly suggest to him that perhaps the solution should be to create new drains because the

existing drains are clearly insufficient to provide for rain water when there is heavy rainfall? The solution would be to enlarge or create new drains along the main road at Camp Jeanette.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the only problem is the outlet: how we are going to get the water out of the drain and, if need be, we have to enlarge and extend it. I have no problem with that.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request again the hon. Minister to try to liaise with the relevant authorities, that is, the NDU, the District Council so that this project can go ahead to avoid future flooding because it is really causing much hardship, I mean, it is a danger to the inhabitants of Camp Jeannette?

Mr Bachoo: I have already answered. I am looking into it.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 4 - DRAINS & ROAD TARRING

(No. B/280) Mrs 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 Constituency No.4, Port Louis North and Montagne Longue, he will state the amount of money spent, since 2005 to 2010, for the -

- (a) upgrading and construction of new drains, and
- (b) tarring of the roads.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information sought is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has received representations from inhabitants of Vallée des Prêtres with regard to the poor quality of work regarding those drains? What measures his Ministry intends to take to make good especially the problems related to water evacuation during heavy rainfall?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already appointed a consultant. In fact, the reports are ready and part of the work has already started. I can assure the hon. Member that I am personally looking into that region.

TERRE ROUGE FOOTBALL GROUND - LIGHTING & CHANGING ROOMS

(No. B/281) Mrs A. Perraud (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Terre Rouge football ground, he will state if consideration will be given for the provision of lighting facilities and changing rooms thereat.

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

I am informed that a project of upgrading of the Terre Rouge football ground was recently undertaken by the National Development Unit at the total project value of Rs4.4 m. The upgrading works which consisted of reconditioning of the ground with top soil and grassing, construction of French drains and a separate fencing to create two playing grounds were completed in November 2010

I am further informed that consideration may be given to the provision of lighting facilities and changing rooms at the football ground subject to availability of funds in the next financial year.

CHILDREN (AUTISTIC) - MEASURES

(No. B/282) Mrs A. Perraud (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to autism, she will state the number of children suffering therefrom, indicating -

- (a) if screening and early detection thereof is carried out on children;
- (b) the measures she proposes to take, together with all the stakeholders, to provide additional help to the autistic children and to their parents.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, as at date, some 35 children have been diagnosed with autism in our hospitals.

Concerning part (a) of the question, it is not the practice worldwide to carry out screening for autism. However, autism usually becomes apparent after the age of two with either delay in speaking or behavioural problems. Such suspected cases picked up by parents themselves or detected during routine medical check-ups at school are referred to the appropriate regional hospitals where they are seen by Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Speech Therapists, Occupational

Therapists, Audiologists and Paediatricians. Counselling services are also provided to parents and family members of the patient.

As regards part (b) of the question, my Ministry is already working in close collaboration with stakeholders concerned, such as the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institution and 'Autism Intervention Association' with a view to -

- (i) creating more awareness in the population on this disability through holding of workshops and distribution of pamphlets and brochures for the benefit of the public, and
- (ii) preparing materials for circulation among health professionals to help early identification of cases of autism.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether she is aware that two weeks ago an organisation called '*Autisme Maurice*' has been informed by her Ministry that a diagnostic panel is being set up. Is this diagnostic panel being set up and can it be asked to perform a screening exercise towards autism in Mauritius?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just stated that there is no screening which is being done as such for autism, but whenever a suspected case is detected, automatically we constitute a panel so that everybody, each medical officer can come in and express his opinion on this case.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that autism involves parents, education, social integration and health, would the Minister take the lead in looking after these diseases and head a team from these Ministries to ensure that these autistic children have a fair living and an equal opportunity in society?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already stated in my reply that my Ministry together with all stakeholders concerned are taking this question of autism into consideration and I am regrouping all NGOs - not only for autism, but also for other diseases - working in the same field to take them on board the Ministry so that everybody can work in the same direction.

Dr. S. Boolell: In view of the fact that autism includes the component of education and that there is only one school - I think in the Beau Bassin area - which has been identified to take

on board autistic children, could the Minister be the representative of the autism towards education to make available educational facilities for these children islandwide?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been given to understand from the Ministry of Education that children suffering from autism who are admitted in Government primary schools, integrated units or schools run by NGOs providing special education and registered with that Ministry, are offered support services by Psychologists, Speech Therapists and Occupational Therapists.

LE CORNU, SAINTE CROIX – DRAIN WORKS

(No. B/283) Mrs 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 region of Le Cornu, Sainte Croix, he will state where matters stand in relation to the carrying out of drain works thereat.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker Sir, the NDU Consultant has already been requested to submit proposals for remedial works following site visit effected on 26 April.

FLACQ - MITD - LAND ACQUISITION

(No. B/284) Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to land made available near the Flacq Fire Station, earmarked for the training needs of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MITD, information as to -

- (a) the date of the acquisition;
- (b) the extent thereof, and
- (c) if any project related to training has been identified and, if not, why not.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the details sought are as follows -

- (a) the land was acquired on 17 February 2005;
- (b) 12,663m² (3 *arpents*) were acquired, and

- (c) a project was approved in February 2005 by the ex-IVTB Council to set up a training centre at an estimated cost of Rs34m. However, due to non-availability of funds, the project could not be implemented.

Following the setting up of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) in 2009, there has been necessary follow-up on the project.

In fact, two French Consultants conducted a study and recommended the introduction of BAC-Pro as the *Brevet de Technicien* (BT) course which is presently being run, is being phased out.

The recommendations of the Consultants have been examined and it has been decided to implement them, in the first instance, as a pilot programme.

The MITD is proposing to use the land acquired at Flacq for the implementation of the new training programme. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has already been contacted to make provision to the Training Programme under the Public Sector Investment Programme. Procedures have already started at the level of the MITD to implement the BAC-Pro project on a pilot basis as from 2012.

Mr Khamajeet: Being given that the Flacq area has many hotels and the training needs are badly felt in this sector, can I ask the hon. Minister if he could decentralise the activities of the Sir Gaëtan Duval Hotel School at Ebène to Central Flacq?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is already under consideration. In fact, we are going in that line.

Mr Speaker: I suspend for one and a half hours.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

FLACQ HOSPITAL - DIALYSIS CENTRE

(No. B/285) **Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Dialysis Centre at the Flacq Hospital, she will state -

- (a) the number of -
 - (i) cases being treated, and
 - (ii) beds available thereat
- (b) if patients from the catchment area of the Flacq Hospital are being referred to other health institutions for dialysis and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken for them to be treated thereat, and
- (c) the number of vans and ambulances attached thereto.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, a total of 125 patients are presently undergoing dialysis treatment at Flacq Hospital, where 21 dialysis machines and 21 beds are available.

As regards part (b) of the question, as at to date, 19 patients from the catchment area of Flacq Hospital are being referred to other dialysis centres - one to SSRN Hospital and 17 to the privately owned AURAM Dialysis Centre.

To enable treatment of these 19 patients at Flacq Hospital, my Ministry has already taken action to acquire five more machines.

Concerning part (c) of the question, three 15-seater minibuses are available for the transportation of dialysis patients from their place of residence to Flacq Hospital, SSRN Hospital and AURAM Dialysis Centre, and back. In addition, one ambulance is also provided for bed-ridden patients as and when required.

Mr Khamajeet: Can I ask the hon. minister whether she is aware that the same building has empty space with lift facility, which can be used to alleviate the suffering of those patients who are currently being treated elsewhere?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The hon. Member surely knows that, at Flacq Hospital, some works are actually being carried out, and we have to look at the whole building at the same time to know where to put what. So, this exercise is actually being done. As soon as this is completed, I am sure it will be easier for us to have our dialysis patients undergoing treatment at Flacq

Hospital than elsewhere. But, for this, we need equipment. That's why I have said that we need equipment and that we are purchasing five more machines, which will be put at Flacq Hospital.

INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND GAMES, SEYCHELLES – FUNDS ALLOCATION

(No. B/286) Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the forthcoming Indian Ocean Island Games to be held in the Seychelles, he will state the -

- (a) total budget allocated for the preparation and participation of the Mauritian delegation;
- (b) number of athletes and of persons accompanying them;
- (c) number of officials of his ministry accompanying the delegation, and
- (d) amount of money raised as at to date by the Club Maurice Company Ltd., excluding the Rs3.5 m contributed by the Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, an amount of Rs38 m. has been allocated to the 15 concerned Sports Federations for the preparation of athletes for the Indian Ocean Island Games. Moreover, an amount of Rs25 m. has been earmarked for their participation, which includes costs of air tickets, participation fees, cost of specific equipment, insurance cover, pocket money etc.

With regard to paragraph (b), in accordance with the *Règlements Généraux*, a maximum of 257 athletes, 51 coaches and team managers, 12 medical/paramedical staff, 17 referees, 12 presidents of National Sports Federations concerned with the Games, 10 youth participants and two youth cadres will comprise the delegation. This amounts to a total of 349 athletes and officials.

With regard to paragraph (c), I have so far appointed the *Chef de Délégation*, *Chef de Mission*, the *Responsable Délégation Homme et Responsable délégation Dame* as per the rules of the Games. The final list of accompanying officials is still being worked out.

As regards paragraph (d), the Club Maurice Company has, at to date, raised about Rs4 m., in addition to the Rs3 m. in cash already contributed by the Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd.

Mr Khamajeet: Can I ask the hon. Minister as to the number of people on the list *hors quota*?

Mr Ritoo: We have not yet finalised any delegation or quota.

Mr Khamajeet: As regards the Club Maurice Co. Ltd., can I ask the hon. Minister what is the targeted amount that he expects to collect?

Mr Ritoo: We have targeted approximately Rs10 m.

Mr Khamajeet: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there is any mechanism set by his Ministry as regards the Club Maurice Co. Ltd. for the distribution of funds to federations?

Mr Ritoo: As per request from any specific sports federation, we have a committee at the level of the Club Maurice Co. Ltd, where the Finance Officer of my Ministry is present, and they consider, depending upon the demands of the specific sports federation, whether it is abroad or local training.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, le ministre peut-il nous indiquer les fonctions et responsabilités de chaque membre de son ministère qui accompagnera le Club Maurice aux Seychelles ?

Mr Ritoo: I stated that I have not yet finalised the list. But, actually, only the *Chef de Délégation*, *Chef de Mission*, the *Responsable Délégation Homme et Responsable délégation Dame* have been finalised, which is according to the rules.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has considered the possibility of discussing this question of *accréditation* with the CNOM? There might be other persons - officials - who would be keen to participate in the games, as it was before in the previous games. What is the process that has been established for these people to be registered with the Ministry, so that the possibility of accreditation to assist the different games is possible?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, if there are any Mauritians willing to accompany and have accreditation, they can still make an application or ask the Ministry. We have a Secretariat at the Beau Bassin Complex regarding the IOIG. They can still make a request there, and we will try to see with the *Comité Organisation des Jeux des Iles* in which way we can help them to get the *accréditation*.

Mr Khamajeet: Can I ask the hon. Minister up to what date the Club Maurice Co. Ltd. is expected to start distribution of its collected funds?

Mr Ritoo: As for the money that we have received, the Club Maurice is already helping the federation. Recently, eight athletes went to Bulgaria for 75 days of training, and we have already given them part of the money.

Mr Speaker: I have to remind the House that hon. Members have to ascertain the facts before putting questions. The hon. Member is asking the Minister when collected funds will be distributed. The fact is that the distribution has already started. So, whenever some hon. Members come to this House, they have to ascertain the facts before putting questions, because the time of the House is very precious, especially at question time.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre peut nous dire si la délégation voyagera sur un vol spécial ou sur un vol régulier, et quel sera le coût d'un billet d'avion ?

Mr Ritoo: We have chartered one Air Mauritius flight to go to Seychelles because, in fact, Air Mauritius does not cover the route Mauritius/Seychelles. The remaining of the delegation will be travelling through Air Seychelles.

FREE TRAVEL SCHEME - COMPANIES/INDIVIDUAL OPERATORS

(No. B/287) 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 Free Travel Scheme, he will -

- (a) give a breakdown of the amount of money paid to each of the bus companies/individual operators, since its implementation to date, in each financial year, and
- (b) state if Government proposes a review thereof.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the relevant information regarding part (a) is being laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

As far as part (b) is concerned, the review of this scheme is not on the agenda, as in overall terms the current approach based on payments to operators is cost-effective and offers significant advantages over other alternatives that were explored. We have also improved upon the current scheme, which has generated substantial efficiency gains.

In my reply to PQ No. B/229 on 19 April 2011, I had stated the different measures of control put in place to sustain the effectiveness of the scheme.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the formula that has been put in place has never been revised since its introduction. Is the hon. Minister aware that as regards payment to buses for students who travel, on many occasions, students don't go to school and even then, the bus operators are being paid? Is this not a case of wastage of public funds?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have gone through different systems and, as I have just mentioned, this is the best system which is available to us. On an average, we have been working upon 75% of attendances. Secondly, there was a consultant, Mr Andrew Mellon from International Development Partners, who was appointed in 2006. He has, himself, concluded that this is the best method available to us. But if we can have a better method than this, definitely we are going to explore into it. But for the time being, this method is working very well.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister if this report can be made public?

Mr Bachoo: I will have a look at it. I don't have any problem in making it public.

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, in Rodrigues, during any mechanical breakdown, bus owners are confronted with the problem of obtaining rapidly spare parts which are not available on local markets. In their first contract, they were given 10 days to remedy the problem. Now, they are fighting to have, at least, five days to remedy the problem but in vain. Will the hon. Minister see to it with the concerned authority that an agreement is reached on that issue to avoid conflicts at the time of payment?

Mr Bachoo: We have got a table, in fact, which has been approved by Government and if any amendment needs to be brought, I have to make the request to the NTA to have a look at it.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the payment mechanism to all the operators are reviewed on an annual basis, quarterly or every two years? What is the frequency of review and on what basis?

Mr Bachoo: Normally, it is definitely based on the cost of living, that is, whenever tariffs are revised, at the same time, we have to revise the payment that we have to make to the companies. On a yearly basis, we have to sign the Memorandum of Agreement between

Government and the bus companies. For this year, in fact, we have just signed it a few weeks ago.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS – NATIONAL MONUMENTS - SYLLABUS

(No. B/288) Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to sites declared as National Monuments, such as the Bassin des Esclaves, at Pamplémousses, and the Vagrant Depot, he will state if same are included in the syllabus of the primary schools, and if not, if consideration will be given therefor with a view to promoting same at school level.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker Sir, the National Curriculum Framework for the Primary sub sector advocates an understanding of the history of the Republic such that pupils from an early age are exposed to what has become part of the national heritage.

The basic concept of National Monuments has thus been introduced at standard IV of the primary level in the subject “History and Geography”. Sites such as Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne Cultural Landscape that have now been inscribed as World Heritage sites are illustrated in standards V and VI textbooks at primary level.

However, as there are more than 160 approved National Heritage structures and sites in Mauritius, it will not be possible to include all such monuments/sites in the textbooks. Nevertheless, national monuments such as *Bassin des Esclaves* and the Vagrant Depot are expected to be highlighted by the educators at standard V level while covering topics relating to Indian immigration and heritage sites, slavery and heritage tourism. Furthermore, as part of what is known as the “hidden curriculum”, pupils are being exposed to such sites during educational field visits.

Mr Seetaram: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the promotion of national monuments, does the hon. Minister consider it compulsory for students, be it at primary or secondary level, to have educational tours and be aware *de visu* of those national monuments and national sites, so that they know about their history and the history of their country?

Dr. Bunwaree: It is already an obligation for primary and the early stages of secondary. It is already there, we can look more deeply into it.

BUSES - REGISTRATION PLATES

(No. B/289) **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 buses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Corporation, information as to if the registration plates thereof have been replaced to comply with the new regulations in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the -

- (a) number thereof;
- (b) cost thereof, and
- (c) name of the supplier, indicating if –
 - (i) he is registered, and
 - (ii) the new registration plates fully comply with the new regulations and, if not, the financial implications thereof.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the NTC that as from February 2011, ABC Motors Ltd had delivered buses which were fitted with new registration plates. However, my Ministry had observed that the plates were not according to specifications and instructed the National Transport Corporation to request ABC Motors to fix plates in conformity with the regulations.

I am informed by the NTC that ABC Motors Co. Ltd is replacing free of charge, the registration plate to conform with the specifications.

With regard to the existing plates, the NTC had started painting rear plates yellow. As they were not according to specifications, my Ministry instructed the NTC to stop this practice immediately and replace the plates with those which meet the specifications.

I am informed that the NTC is calling for quotations from different suppliers to replace the registration plates of its fleet.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister who took the decision to change old plates to new ones in the old buses?

Mr Bachoo: Well, this is Government's decision, but, as I mentioned earlier, it is more or less optional. For the time being, we are not compelling the old buses to change, but this is the

decision taken at the level of my Ministry. We have to set the example first but, unfortunately, the officers have wrongly done their job. That is the reason why we have given instructions that they have to correct the mistake which they have committed.

Dr. Sorefan: May I know from the hon. Minister what action has been taken against those officers?

Mr Bachoo: Well, they have made a mistake and they are going to have it corrected. I don't think I'm going to take any action, but we have warned them not to repeat such mistakes.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are too many mistakes at the NTA. That's why the NTA is going bankrupt. The Minister should take action.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is making comments, he is not putting questions. It is the NTC and not the NTA. Next question, Dr. Sorefan!

VACOAS/PHOENIX MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - MAYOR - OVERSEAS MISSIONS

(No. B/290) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Mayor of the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to the number of overseas missions he has effected, if any, accompanied by officers and/or councillors, since his appointment to date, indicating the cost thereof in each case.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that Mr Kirtishsing Jawaheer who assumed the office of Mayor of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix on 16 December 2010 has, as at date, not proceeded on any overseas mission.

Dr. Sorefan: May I know from the hon. Minister whether the Mayor went to Reunion Island with his two councillors and his driver and whether he will confirm that there was a lady councillor in that delegation?

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can't answer that question because this is a private journey abroad that has nothing to do with Government and the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix.

Mr Bhagwan: Regarding this notorious Mayor...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member must not give adjectives to the gentleman.

Mr Bhagwan: Well-known!

(Interruptions)

Can the hon. Minister inform the House, because of his efficiency, he is working too hard, he is performing so well...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry! The question is about overseas missions, not about efficiency.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Minister whether that Mayor is still in office or has he been asked to take leave?

Mr Aimée: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mayor is still in office, but he has asked for 15 days' sick leave approved by his doctor.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister of Housing and Lands! Where is the Minister of Housing and Lands? I don't know where he is. Well, I will call him at the end of Question Time. Next question, hon. François!

(PQ No. B/291 – see after PQ No. B/299)

RIVIERE COCOS - ECO-VILLAGE PROJECT

(No. B/292) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development whether in regard to sustainable development in Rodrigues, he will state where matters stand as to the implementation of an Eco-Village Project at Rivière Cocos.

Mr Virahsawmy: We will launch tenders for recruiting consultants by 13 May 2011 for the implementation of the Eco-Village project in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The appointed consultants will hold consultation with all relevant stakeholders at Rivière Coco and would be responsible for the preparation of a Master Plan, detailed design and bid documents and supervision of works.

In the context of the implementation of this project, I have been invited by hon. Von-Mally to visit Rodrigues and I propose to do so very soon.

RODRIGUES - MAGISTRATE - POSTING

(No. B/293) **Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the posting of a magistrate, in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Chief Justice, information as to –

- (a) the conditions attached to the posting, and
- (b) if consideration will be given for the –
 - (i) posting of a second magistrate, and
 - (ii) creation of a second court room.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by...

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. It was decided that questions relating to the Judiciary would be replied to by the Prime Minister, so that it be clear that there is no Minister responsible for the Judiciary. In this case, I see that the question is put to the Attorney General who is going to reply. Has there been a change?

Mr Speaker: I take the point of the Leader of the Opposition and I will look into the matter. I will allow this question. I will look into it, and give my ruling.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the honourable Acting Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court that, in regard to part (a), the conditions attached to the posting of a magistrate in Rodrigues, according to existing regulations, are as follows -

- (i) Incremental allowance at the rate of 50% of the salary is given instead of a disturbance allowance.
- (ii) Air tickets: a district magistrate domiciled in Mauritius and posted in Rodrigues for a minimum tour of service for a continuous period of at least six months is entitled to the following -
 - (a) one free air ticket to and from Rodrigues for the magistrate, his spouse and up to three dependent children under the age of 21;
 - (b) two return tickets from Rodrigues for medical treatment in Mauritius in respect of himself or any member of his family provided a Government

Medical Officer certifies that such medical treatment is not available in Rodrigues and cannot safely be postponed until the end of his tour of service and that the patient needs to be accompanied.

- (iii) Quarters: rent free furnished quarters are provided.
- (iv) Transport: the magistrate is entitled to free transport by sea of his personal effects and a vehicle is provided for his local transport on the island.
- (v) Vacation leave: the magistrate is entitled to -
 - (a) 50 percent more vacation leave than as per his eligibility in respect of that period, and
 - (b) the additional leave granted under paragraph one above be accumulated over and above the normal entitlement.

However, save in exceptional circumstances, the magistrate is not allowed to enjoy vacation leave during his tour of service.

In regard to part (b) (i) and (ii) of the question, I am informed that it is not proposed to have a second magistrate posted in Rodrigues, nor a second court room for the time being.

Mr François: May I know why?

Mr Varma: This is the information which has been given to me, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr François: May I ask a question to the hon. Attorney General? I do not know whether he will be able to answer. Our citizens need to have confidence in our legal system. Is the hon. Attorney General aware that the present Magistrate in Rodrigues, whose tour of duty has been extended, has been provisionally accused of abuse of authority? This is leading to a loss of confidence by the court users in our legal system.

Mr Varma: I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr François: Despite the fact that there is no provision for a second court room, actually in Rodrigues the court users are spending a lot of time in court over a long period of time. May I suggest to the Attorney General that a second court room be accommodated upstairs of the Court House by relocating the ICAC Office or the Probation Office in the cadastral or MHC building, which is just next door? We are spending too much time in the court in Rodrigues.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the administration of justice does not fall under the Attorney General.

Mr Speaker: On the point of order raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, being given that the Prime Minister is answerable to the House for the Judiciary, similar questions will have to be put to the Prime Minister.

LABOUR FORCE - UNEMPLOYMENT & WAGES

(No. B/294) 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 labour force, he will, for the years 2009 and 2010 and the 1st quarter of 2011, state the -

- (a) causes of the unemployment rates and the wage trends;
- (b) movement in the overall wage rate index for -
 - (i) Government, and
 - (ii) the manufacturing sector;
- (c) change in labour productivity for the -
 - (i) whole economy;
 - (ii) manufacturing sector, and
 - (iii) export-oriented industry, and
- (d) outlook for the rest of the year 2011.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker, Sir, the main factors underlying the unemployment rates for 2009, 2010 and the first quarter of 2011 were firstly, the global recession, as a result of which the growth rate of the economy has gone down to 3.1 percent in 2009 and stood at 4.4 percent in 2010. However, the Mauritian economy and labour market have been very resilient to the fallouts of the global recession. For example, the unemployment rate in the US rose from 5.8 percent in 2008 to 9.3 percent in 2009 and 9.6 percent in 2010. In the UK, it went up from 5.6 percent to 7.5 and 7.8 percent respectively during the same period. Whereas in Mauritius the

unemployment rate only edged up from 7.2 percent in 2008 to 7.3 percent in 2009 and 7.8 percent in 2010.

In addition to the global recession which exerted pressure on job creation, there was a significant increase in women's participation rate in Mauritius, increasing from 42.4 percent in 2008 to 44.2 percent in 2010. This contributed to increase the labour force faster than job creation. It is a positive development as it has been the policy of Government to encourage more women to join the labour force.

In contrast to many other countries, particularly our main trading partners in Europe, which have seen large job losses, Mauritius has continued to create jobs, although at a lower rate than the increase in the labour force.

The resilience of our economy and job market, the increase in female participation rate and the continued job creation reflect the results of our policies that have supported continuing important flows of FDI. Had we been operating in a buoyant world economy, our job creation would likely have exceeded the increase in the labour force. It should also be pointed out that the unemployment rate is still below the pre-global recession level of 8.5 percent in 2007.

Mr Speaker, Sir, reflecting the strength of our economy and Government action including both general wage increases and the PRB, wages have risen significantly in recent years. In 2009, the wage rate index rose by 11.1 percent relative to their level in 2008. In 2010, average wages were 3.9 percent higher than in 2009.

These increases have been much higher than the minimum legally mandated salary compensation due to a competitive and relatively tight labour market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (b) of the question, General Government wages were 2.8 percent higher in 2010 compared with 2009 and manufacturing wages increased, over the same period, by the same percentage. In 2009, General Government wages rose by 15.1 percent whilst manufacturing wages rose by 6.3 percent. Data on these indicators are not yet available for the first quarter of 2011.

As regards part (c) of the question, the figures are not published for the first quarter of 2011 but are available for 2009, 2010 and there are estimates for the year 2011. Labour productivity in the economy has risen by 2.6 percent in 2009 and 2.1 percent in 2010 and is

projected to rise by 2.3 percent this year. For the manufacturing sector, the gains have been larger with an 8.7 percent increase in 2009 and a 4.1 percent increase in 2010 with further gains of 2.1 percent projected in 2011. Regarding export oriented enterprises, the data show an improvement of 8.6 percent in 2009, 8.5 percent in 2010 and 3.7 percent expected in 2011.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these data indicate that we have been able to increase the general welfare of the population whilst maintaining the overall competitiveness of the economy as confirmed by the IMF in its recently released Article IV report.

As regards part (d) of the question, for the year 2011, barring any major external shock, the unemployment rate is expected to be unchanged with improvements in both wages and productivity. This combination of increase in employment and productivity will further consolidate the growth prospects for 2011.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. vice-Prime Minister confirm, therefore, that the unemployment rate has increased, the wage rate index has only grown very slowly and in spite of this low wage policy, there has not been any saving of jobs and on the contrary jobs have been lost because unemployment has increased?

Mr Jugnauth: This is not correct. First of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just given comparative figures. There has been, true it is, an increase in the rate of unemployment. But, as I compare with other countries, here, relatively speaking, I say, this has been slight when we look at countries like United States, United Kingdom, France, the Euro area and the major advanced economies, the G7. I can circulate the figures, but we need to be given, at least, one example in the major advanced economies, G7. It rose from 5.4% to 5.9% to 8% and to 8.2% and expected also to continue to increase because of the economic situation that has prevailed; the financial crisis. There has also been the Euro Crisis and, therefore, this also explains why the rate of unemployment has slightly increased here. But, with regard to the wage rates, I have given the figures. I don't want to repeat again. The hon. Member must have listened that it has increased in all the sectors that he has mentioned.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: The question was that there has been a very slow growth in the wage rate in spite of the increase in labour productivity and this has not helped the figure of unemployment to fall. Will the hon. Minister confirm that the IMF Article IV report has contradicted him, in the sense that it has clearly said that there is now a growing upturn in the

global economy in spite of his image of gloom and doom and this is evidenced by the pickup in our tourism sector and of our textiles industry and in spite of all the pickup, unemployment has increased? Can the hon. Minister give us a reason for that?

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the first part of the question, let me repeat again. Both the figures for the wage rate index and for the productivity have increased with regard to the different sectors that have been asked. Secondly, with regard to the IMF Article IV report, let me just quote one line to say how wrong the hon. Member is. The IMF has observed that -

“The fiscal stimulus packages combined with monetary easing and various measures aimed at preserving private sector jobs contributed to the rekindling of growth to 4% in 2010.”

This is exactly what contradicts what the hon. Member is saying.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Minister of Finance is completely wrong in assuming that...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! The hon. Member must know the procedure. He has asked a question and the hon. Minister has replied. If he has any further questions, please go on. It's not a debate. It is Question Time.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Sorry! The question was very clear that the growth in productivity and the growth in wage rate is much lower...

Mr Speaker: No. The hon. Minister has answered this question.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: The question is about the growth rate. We are talking of unemployment rate here. The question is about labour force, we are not talking of growth rate. So, in spite of the increase in growth rate, job has been lost. Has not his ERCP programme failed miserably in view of the increase in job losses?

Mr Speaker: This is another repetition of the question.

Mr Jugnauth: Let me say again that because we have analysed the measures that have been taken under the ERCP, I can say that since August 2010 the 100 measures that have been announced, have been able to save 3500 jobs as at now.

Mr Speaker: Any other further questions on this one? It's a different question and not the same.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Yes. Will the hon. Minister, therefore, confirm that the outlook is bleak in the sense that unemployment will continue to rise and, therefore, the wage restraint is going to continue especially after what the IMF report has recommended?

Mr Speaker: That is a hypothetical question. When the time comes, the hon. Member will put the question. He is asking the hon. Minister to forecast what is going to happen.

Mr Jugnauth: What I can say is that the outlook is very bleak for the Opposition.

MAURITIUS NATIONAL LOTTERY - TRADE LICENCES

(No. B/295) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Mauritius National Lottery, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, for each of the financial years since its coming into operation to date, information as to the -

- (a) annual turnover;
- (b) amount of tax paid, and
- (c) amount of fees paid -
 - (i) for trade licences, and
 - (ii) to the local authorities, by the selling outlets, indicating the names thereof.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the GRA as follows -

Regarding part (a) of the question, the turnover of the Mauritius National Lottery for 2009 was Rs410.9 m. The company became operational in November 2009. In 2010, turnover was Rs3.2 billion.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am informed that contributions to the Consolidated Fund are as follows -

- Rs683.6 m. for 2010, and
- Rs180.6 m. for the first quarter of 2011.

Concerning part (c) of the question, I am informed that the issues mentioned do not fall under the purview of the GRA and, therefore, the latter has no information on these items.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, je voudrais savoir du ministre si les revendeurs du loto paient une licence aux autorités locales?

Mr Speaker: Une licence payée au GRA?

Mr Guimbeau: Aux autorités locales.

Mr Speaker: Mais le ministre a dit qu'il n'a pas d'information sur les autorités locales. Il ne peut pas répondre. D'après moi, il faut poser la question au ministre des administrations régionales.

Mr Guimbeau: In the question, it is specified 'to the local authorities'. I did ask the question to the hon. Minister. It is here.

Mr Speaker: He replied that, as regards part (c) of the question, about the fees and the licences to local authorities, he is not the responsible Minister and he has no information. So, that question has to go to the Minister of Local Government. Next question!

GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY BOARD - MEMBERS

(No. B/296) **Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the composition of the Board thereof, indicating the substantive post held by each member and the respective fees and other benefits drawn.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker, Sir, the information sought is being tabled.

Mr Guimbeau: Can I ask the hon. Minister to give a reason why the former Chief Executive, Mr Clive Auffray, has been forced out from the GRA?

Mr Jugnauth: You are wrong. He has not been forced out. He has resigned from his post.

Mr Guimbeau: He has been forced to resign, if I understand.

Mr Speaker: No! The hon. Minister has given a reply and the hon. Member has to be happy with the answer. Next question!

MAURITIUS NATIONAL LOTTERY - ADVERTISING - EXPENDITURE

(No. B/297) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Mauritius National Lottery, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Gambling Regulatory Authority, information as to the total amount of money spent on advertising on -

- (a) television;
- (b) billboards;
- (c) newspapers, and
- (d) radio, since its coming into operation to date.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the GRA that it does not have information on such detailed expenditure.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre des finances trouve normal la propagande autour du jeu de loto, qui est considéré comme étant un impôt sur les pauvres? Est-ce que le ministre trouve normal la propagande autour du jeu de loto sur les radios ainsi que dans les journaux?

Mr Jugnauth: The question is to give information on how much money has been spent on a different number of items. Now, whether this is normal to have advertising and so on is a different matter altogether.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am reading here an interview from Marc Valeur, *un psychiatre français, et je cite -*

« Le jeu excessif doit être considéré comme un problème de santé publique, où ça entraîne des suicides et des dépressions. »

Is the hon. Minister aware of what is going on with the loto?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, again, I must say the hon. Member should come with a specific question with regard to advertising policy.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am coming back to the GRA. *Comment est-ce que le ministre peut expliquer le Gambling Regulatory Act 2007, section 63, Obligations of Operator, I quote -*

“The Operator shall, for the purposes of this Act -

(e) advertise and promote the Mauritius National Lottery.”

It is in the Act, Mr Speaker, Sir. On the other hand, the GRA sends a letter to other operators stating -

“You are being directed not to broadcast or cause to be broadcast any advertisement relating to your activities between 6 and 8. You are given a moratorium of 72 hours from the receipt of this letter to comply.”

Mr Speaker: Let me clear the matter. There is a statutory obligation on the GRA to look into all these matters. The question of the hon. Member is whether the amount of publicity which is being given by whatever company he is citing is in order, and whether the MRA is doing its work properly to restrain. That is the question.

Mr Guimbeau: D’un côté le GRA dit de *promote and advertise the Loto*, et de l’autre il écrit aux autres opérateurs de jeux de hasard et leur dit de ne pas le faire durant certaines heures. *Which is which?*

Mr Jugnauth: First of all, let me clarify, being given I have the opportunity to do so. From what I read in the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act, section 63, Obligations of the Operator, it is stated -

“The Operator shall, for the purposes of this Act -

(e) advertise and promote the Mauritius National Lottery”

The hon. Member is saying that there is a directive from the GRA to prevent or to restrict the Mauritius National Lottery from advertising from such and such time. I am not aware of this letter. Let me have a look at the letter, and then I can look into the matter with the GRA and see whether there is any contradiction in terms of what is in the law and what directive has been given by the GRA.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, d’un côté, le GRA dit de *promote* le Mauritius National Lottery, et de l’autre côté, j’ai une lettre écrite qui dit aux autres opérateurs de jeux de hasard ...

Mr Speaker: Excusez-moi. Il faut dire d’où provient la lettre. L’honorable membre est en train de montrer la lettre, et on ne sait pas d’où cela vient.

Mr Guimbeau: This is a letter from GRA written to other operators.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member means it was written by the GRA to other operators.

Mr Guimbeau: Yes. In this letter, the GRA says -

“You are being directed not to broadcast or cause to broadcast any advertisement relating to your activity between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. every day”

Why is there restriction on one side and, on the other side, it says that you have to promote and advertise? No time limit!

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Member is referring to two different operators. This one is the Mauritius National Lottery, which is an operator. I just heard that there has been a directive; I have to see the letter. According to the hon. Member, there has been a directive to other operators. We are talking about two different things. I have to look into the matter to be able to come and explain why. It is not through me that this directive comes, but from the GRA. So, I need to seek their explanations about why the situation is like that.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, nous savons que ce sont tous des jeux de hasard, que se soit le Loto, la loterie verte. Nous parlons des jeux de hasard. Il ne peut pas y avoir deux lois.

Mr Speaker: Ecoutez-moi, l’honorable Guimbeau. Vous avez spécifié un cas et vous dites que, d’après ce que vous avez appris, il y a deux e de voir les choses. Le ministre vous

demande de déposer la lettre sur la Table de l'Assemblée ; il va voir avec le GRA ce qu'il en est, et viendra peut-être avec une réponse à l'Assemblée.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, le jeu de hasard est un fléau social et va à l'encontre certaines pratiques religieuses.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! The question is relevant.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, le jeu de hasard est un fléau social et va à l'encontre de certaines pratiques religieuses, tout comme l'alcool. Je demanderai au ministre, aujourd'hui, s'il peut venir de l'avant et abolir toute forme de publicité ayant trait au Loto et à tous les jeux de hasard, tout comme il a fait pour l'alcool et la cigarette.

Mr Jugnauth: This is a proposal which is on the extreme. This is my first reaction. But I am not saying that we should go to the other extreme, and that we should allow advertising anywhere, any time, any place. There has to be a right balance. But, of course, if the GRA or hon. Members feel that there is an excessive advertising or it is too aggressive and so on, I can ask the GRA to look into the matter.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, je me réfère encore une fois à M. Marc Valeur, psychiatre, qui dit que les jeux de hasard font autant de mal que l'alcool et la cigarette, et que cela provoque des suicides et dépressions. C'est pour cela que je demande au ministre des finances et le gouvernement de venir de l'avant et d'abolir toute forme de publicité.

Mr Speaker: L'honorable Guimbeau, excusez-moi! Vous ne pouvez pas perdre le temps de la Chambre. L'honorable ministre a répondu.

(Interruptions)

Ecoutez-moi!

(Interruptions)

Order, I said! Otherwise, the hon. Member will be taken for contempt! I know what the hon. Member has said in the press. I am coming to that later on. I am telling the hon. Member that he cannot lose the time of the House. He has put the question and the hon. Minister has answered.

That's enough! The hon. Member cannot repeat questions. It is prevented by the Standing Orders. Does the hon. Member have another question?

Mr Guimbeau: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Carry on!

Mr Guimbeau: I am not losing the time of the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am just doing the job that I am paid for.

Mr Speaker: Sit down! No further questions! Next question, hon. Uteem.

WORKERS - DISMISSAL

(No. B/298) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the workers whose employment have been terminated for economic, technological, structural reasons or for reasons of similar nature, since the coming into force of the Employment Rights Act 2008, he will state the -

- (a) number thereof ;
- (b) sector of activities concerned, and
- (c) number of court proceedings initiated challenging such basis for dismissal, indicating in each case, the outcome thereof.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, under section 37(6) of the Employment Rights Act 2008, a written notice has to be given to the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment where an employer –

- (a) intends to reduce any number of workers or to close down his enterprise for reasons of an economic, technological, structural or similar nature, and
- (b) terminates the employment of a worker for any other reason.

On the basis of the notification received, the employment of 6,932 workers has been terminated since the proclamation of the Employment Rights Act 2008, and the Act was proclaimed on 02 February 2009.

As regards part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the required information.

As regards part (c) of the question, I have to inform the House that only in cases where laid-off workers challenge the reasons put forward by the employers to terminate their employment, and my Ministry, after having conducted an in-depth enquiry, is of the view that the laid-off workers have *bona fide* cases, that the cases are referred to the Industrial Court for determination.

Since the coming into operation of the Act and up to 30 April this year, the case of 369 workers laid-off for economic reasons have been lodged in the Industrial Court. Proceedings in all these cases are still ongoing at the level of the Industrial Court. No cases have been received for technological, structural or for reasons of similar nature.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that there is a prevalent practice among big companies now to move workers to other members of the group of companies which are performing less favourably, and then, after a short while, terminate their employment on economic grounds? Has this state of affair been communicated to the hon. Minister?

Mr Mohamed: Actually, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me, in reply to what the hon. Member has asked, confirm one thing. The figures I have just given speak for themselves. Ever since the proclamation of the Act, it is clear that certain employers have made use of the term 'economic reason' in order to make certain people redundant, and all sorts of schemes and measures are sought after and devised by certain employers, in order to make people redundant. At the level of the Ministry, we try to enquire into each and every of them. As a matter of fact, to explain the efficiency of the Ministry, we have, since January 2010 till to date, dealt with 8,000 cases. At the level of the Ministry, we managed to recover more than Rs80m. for the workers. Obviously, the hon. Member is right that there are all means and ways that employers are trying to use to be able to make people redundant and, at the same time, avoid paying compensation that is owed.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given the number the hon. Minister has quoted, that is, about 7,000 workers lost their jobs, and only around 369 cases were referred to the court, is he aware of the practice of employers putting pressure on workers not to file any complaint and receive some compensation rather than get nothing? Because if the worker's employment is terminated on economic ground, he gets nothing, he just gets back onto the Workfare

Programme. There is a means of pressure exercised by certain companies to just flag this reason of economic ground for dismissing workers and then compensating them for a lesser amount than otherwise he would be entitled to?

Mr Mohamed: I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the hon. Member has identified a problem which I have seen myself as Minister of Labour. The hon. Member is totally right that there are some operators who make an abuse of the system and they call it economic reasons in order to avoid to pay compensation. But what I can assure the hon. Member is that not only have we identified that there are certain cases of abuse by certain employers and because there are certain cases of abuse, there is an obligation in the law, as I have said at the beginning of my answer, to send a notice to the Minister to inform him that the company in question is trying to make people redundant for economic reasons, technological or otherwise. What I do, as Minister of Labour, and what is the practice at the level of the Ministry of Labour, is that each and every letter that we receive, we do not just take note of it. We refer it to the Director of the Ministry and the Director orders that each and every one of those cases is investigated. The reason why we do that is because we try to avoid the number of abuses; at least, what we try to do is to reduce the amount of abuses by employers. But let me say it, again, that the hon. Member is right, we have seen exactly the same problem and we are trying to bring in corrective measures through instructions and the firm attitude of our officers adopted in investigations.

Mr Baloomoody: From the figures supplied by the hon. Minister himself, it looks like only five percent of the cases investigated by the Ministry goes to court. Does the Ministry have experienced officers, especially in accounting, to look into the books of these companies, to ensure that, in fact, the reason given is valid? Do we have the appropriate staff at the Ministry to enquire into the reason given by the employers?

Mr Mohamed: As the hon. Member is aware also, being a member of the Bar, once upon a time, when people were made redundant, once again, the Ministry used to receive a letter and then there was a Board that existed called the Termination of Contract Service Board. That was there in order to investigate and to come up with the ruling as to whether or not the redundancy was justified. Nowadays, what happens is that this enquiry is carried out to the best of the ability by officers of my Ministry who do a formidable job by trying to look into the situation and then referring the matter to Industrial Court, if need be.

Let me also add that I have recently received many representations by trade unions who have asked that there should be some sort of amendment made to the Employment Rights Act in order to have a filtration process whereby this abuse made by certain employers could be reduced. Those suggestions are very interesting and are indeed being studied. Our objective thereby is to avoid this abuse because we believe that we should not allow any employer, not even one, to come and put forward the economic reason as the reason for redundancy because this would be an easy way out for them not facing the responsibility of paying compensation. We are seriously studying the proposals made by the unions.

CSR FUND – SOCIAL PROJECTS

(No. B/299) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Corporate Social Responsibility, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporate Social Responsibility Fund, information as to the amount of money collected, since its introduction to date, indicating the social projects which have been funded therefrom.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Empowerment Foundation that it is not within its ambit or that of the CSR Committee to operate a Corporate Social Responsibility Fund.

In fact, Sections 50K and 50L of the Income Tax Act, as amended in July 2009, make it mandatory for every company to set up a CSR Fund equivalent to 2% of its book profits. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of corporate entities to set up, operate and manage their respective CSR Funds, within the framework of guidelines issued by the CSR Committee.

The House may note that such guidelines provide for intervention in the following areas -

- (i) socioeconomic development;
- (ii) education and training;
- (iii) health;
- (iv) leisure and sports;
- (v) environment, and

- (vi) catastrophic interventions and support.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in respect to CSR expenditure, companies may -

- (i) seek the approval of the CSR Committee for the implementation of their corporate programme, or otherwise effect the expenditure directly in accordance with CSR guidelines or submit same to MRA at the relevant time. Only companies effecting CSR of more than Rs2 m. through special purpose vehicles are mandatorily required to seek approval of the programme from the National CSR Committee;
- (ii) implement or fund an approved national programme, and/or
- (iii) finance an NGO accredited by the CSR Committee.

In addition, the Budget of 2011 provides for 50% of the CSR Funds to be directed towards three National Programmes, namely Social Housing, Welfare of Children from Vulnerable Groups and Eradication of Absolute Poverty.

Again, such funds are not meant to be collected by the National CSR Committee or the NEF, and unspent amounts are remitted to the MRA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that notwithstanding the active engagement of CSR companies in the management of their CSR funding, for practical reasons, the NEF was last year called upon to open a CSR account for the implementation of social projects within the approved guidelines and in respect of which funds are provided by a number of companies.

I am advised that to date, an amount of approximately Rs46 m. has been credited to an NEF/CSR account, from which so far some 26 projects under the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme have been funded, covering a wide range of initiatives such as backyard gardening, layers and goat rearing, training for unemployed women and construction of toilet blocks for deprived families. The details of these projects are being tabled.

Mr Lesgongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to eradication of absolute poverty, we understand that Government has identified 229 pockets of absolute poverty. Can I know from the hon. Minister in how many areas have works started under the Corporate Social Responsibility Fund?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the to date, but I will be happy to provide the information, should it be sought. But, at the end of year, the intention is to have worked in every pocket of poverty. However, I would like to remind the hon. Member that we no longer work under the concept of pockets of poverty as our survey now is nationwide and whether it is pocket of poverty or scattered families, our responsibilities are the same.

Mr Ganoo: I think I have asked this question once to the hon. vice-Prime Minister, but can I ask him the same question again. Does not he think that it would be better in the interest of everybody to have an elaborate legal framework to manage the funds collected for this purpose?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is in the Income Tax Act and the CSR guidelines. As for transparency I am giving the information right now. I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the way the CSR has been set up in this country is very innovative. I am not aware of any other country which has run the same sort of programme and, therefore, we are learning as we go along. We must also understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, that much information is going to be provided 18 months after the relevant period. We are, right now, into the period when lots of the returns are being submitted to the MRA. So, it is still infancy. We are happy to make it better and make things more transparent, more open and more understandable. But since it is a very innovative programme, we need to know also where we are going first.

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Minister satisfied in terms of control, in terms of adherence to the social responsibility guidelines? Let us take the case of Mauritius Telecom. The CSR of Mauritius Telecom amounts to about Rs50 m. according to what I have heard. It is up to this company to decide how to spend that amount of money. In the choice of the possibilities, who decides what choice to be made? I mean, if there were official guidelines monitored by an independent body, wouldn't it be safer?

Mr Duval: I accept the point but, Mr Speaker, Sir, let us understand how this works. There are guidelines. This is basically a tax issue and, therefore, it is up to the MRA at the end of the day to decide whether an amount that had been spent on CSR, like any other tax expenditure incurred by any company, is justified, and the MRA needs to be satisfied, in the same way any other expenditure a company makes has to be allowed by MRA. At the end of the day, this is a tax issue, and it is up to the MRA to decide. However, there are various safeguards along the way like the CSR Committee which will issue guidelines and certificates. It is also good to

understand that 50% of the expenditure needs to be on the three priority areas; the rest is up to each company to decide. They may spend the whole hundred per cent on the priority areas, but they have to spend, at least, 50% of their CSR on it.

Mr Bérenger: Surely, this is at the beginning of the process. This is not a tax issue. The MRA will see whether the money has gone to the designated areas, but the choice is made by the companies - which NGOs, which bodies they are going to finance. This is where you have a lot of stories of political interference. Some of the responsible people in some companies not going by objective criteria *favorisant un tel ou un tel, tel groupe ou tel groupe*. You have a lot of such information around. It should not be left to the MRA; it cannot do that. There should be a monitoring independent body that looks into that.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of any political interference. If there is, the hon. Leader of the Opposition should come forward and say. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, it's good to know that, only a few days ago, the representative of the European Union in Mauritius commended our NGOs. In fact, he said that it is one of the countries where he is most happy with the NGOs. This has to be stated...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: On a point of order, I never criticised NGOs. The Minister got me wrong.

Mr Duval: That is not a point of order. I am saying, therefore, that, firstly, it is good to know that the NGOs are doing, within reason, a fantastic job. That is one thing. The MRA is responsible for the actual checking that the expenditure is according to the guidelines. Rightly so, and for companies there is some scope for choice - that is the whole point of it - so that, in fact, companies can put their passion, their money, their skills, their own interest into managing the project, otherwise you might as well take the two percent and have it spent by the Civil Service. This is the whole point of the CSR. We need to make sure that it is operating properly. There are issues as to how, in fact, we get fairly distributed, but it is also up to the NGOs to be proactive. That is also the point of the CSR. The NGOs have to come forward, have to better themselves. We are going to have another *espace rencontre* probably in June or July to help the interaction and we are going to have an e-journal. As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a competitive process and NGOs must be competitive in getting the funds. If there are issues to do with

favouritism and all that, obviously, it must be investigated, provided the information is given, *mais on ne peut pas* throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, would it be possible for the CSR Committee to set up a facilitation desk for NGOs which do not have the logistic support to have access to funds rather than just promoting those which have computers?

Mr Duval: Fair enough! There is now staff at the CSR Committee to help.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Li Kwong Wing, can you now call your question No. B/291? The Minister of Housing is in the House.

FOREIGNERS/FOREIGN COMPANIES – STATE LAND - LEASE

(No. B/291) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State land with seafront, he will state the names of the foreigners/foreign companies who/which have obtained leases therefor, since 2005 to date, indicating in each case the -

- (a) extent of land;
- (b) rent charged per acre;
- (c) date of issue of the letter of intent and/or reservation;
- (d) nature of the project, indicating if -
 - (i) works have started and, if so, since when and if not, why not, and
 - (ii) the conditions attached to the lease have subsequently been altered;
- (e) rent is being paid, and
- (f) the amount of investment proposed.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I apologise most sincerely for my absence. I hope it never happens again.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the required information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as the exercise is completed.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister inform the House, what is normally the period that is granted between the letter of reservation and the start of the projects?

Dr. Kasenally: First of all, after we get the Letter of Intent, the plans are submitted and then a letter of reservation is given. I think it should be about six months. After the letter of reservation is given, the plans are submitted and approved. The lease is worked out and approved and then they are given about two years to complete the project.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Is the Minister aware that there are many foreign companies or foreigners who have been given letters of reservation and after five years they have still not yet started the projects?

Dr. Kasenally: Yes, some of them have had their letter of reservation or Letter of Intent removed.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Is the Minister also aware that some of these companies are not even paying their rental and, therefore, since the conditions are not met, are measures taken to terminate their leases?

Dr. Kasenally: They only start paying rental after the lease is drawn, but if the conditions in the letter of the reservation or intent are not observed, action is taken to withdraw these two letters.

CSR COMMITTEE - FUNDS

(No. B/300) **Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Corporate Social Responsibility, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporate Social Responsibility Fund, information as to if the Corporate Social Responsibility Committee has submitted six-monthly reports on funds utilised by the Fund and, if so, whether consideration be given for same to be circulated to all the stakeholders.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to reiterate that there is no such thing as a Corporate Social Responsibility Fund from which information can be sourced as to the status of projects financed therefrom. However, I am informed that by the NEF that, in accordance to the monetary mechanism put in place, all corporate entities, accredited NGOs and accredited special purpose vehicles that have sought prior approval at the CSR Committee for their projects are required to submit six-monthly reports to that Committee.

As pointed out in my reply to the previous question, according to CSR guidelines, not all CSR companies are required to seek the approval of CSR Committee prior to implementation, that is, if they just follow the guidelines.

The House may note, however, that the MRA requires all companies with an annual CSR value of Rs500,000 and above to file a CSR certificate issued by the National CSR Committee upon submission of their income tax returns.

In practice, companies have up to 18 months after the end of their relevant financial year to comply.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, based on the foregoing, the compilation analysis of the data collected for the period January to June 2010 has been finalised and information pertaining to NGOs was tabled in reply to PQ No. B/740.

I am now tabling information pertaining to disbursement of funds and the areas of intervention by corporate entities and special purpose vehicles that have sought prior approval of the CSR Committee. The exercise for the period July to December 2010 is ongoing.

I also understand that, to address the question of sharing information amongst stakeholders, the CSR Committee will launch a monthly e-journal as from June 2011.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, is it possible for NGOs to have the information concerning which ones have had funds and under which programmes so that we know at least at the NGO level? Has there been any evaluation of the CSR program with NGO support and which ones?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member must have missed it, but the information was circulated by my colleague in the PQ I mentioned in my answer.

HIV & AIDS - ORGANISATIONS - GRANTS

(No. B/301) **Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to HIV and AIDS, she will give a

list of the organisations which have benefited from grants from her Ministry to fight against same, indicating the respective quantum thereof, since 2005 to date.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is being compiled and will be laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, est-ce que je pourrais savoir du ministre quels sont les critères établis pour l'allocation de ces fonds?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are several criteria because there are several organisations which benefit from these funds. We have got PILS, Dr. Idrice Goomany Centre and 13 organisations benefiting from funds from NATReSA. Each has different criteria, and I'll be circulating the information.

Mr Ramano: Est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre s'il y a des officiers compétents présents lors de la tenue de ces fonctions par les différentes ONG?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: We are working strictly with all NGOs, because we are all working towards the same objectives and we take the NGOs also on board when taking policy decisions on these issues.

Mr Baloomoody: Regarding HIV/AIDS, can I ask the hon. Minister whether, by pinpointing the HIV/AIDS affected patients as a burden to Government, is she not discriminating the HIV/AIDS patients, in fact, even more, insulting those who are affected by HIV/AIDS?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Member whether he is making a statement or not? I am given to understand that the hon. Member has taken from whatever a private radio has said and he has picked up from thereon to state...

Mr Speaker: The only way to answer this question is that what was said on the private radio did not come from you or not. That is the only way to answer the question. Can you answer whether it came from you or not? If it does not come from you, you are not responsible?

Mrs Hanoomanjee: It does not come from me, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: That is the way. Next question!

MAURITIUS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION - MANAGING COMMITTEE

(No. B/302) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Football Association, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Association, information as to if any legal action has been initiated against its present Managing Committee and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Mauritius Football Association that the Club Entente Henrietta Blackburn/Glen Park Young Cadets has entered a case in the Supreme Court against it on the ground that the election of the Managing Committee held on 09 December 2009, was against the rules and regulations of the Association and against the provisions of the law.

As the matter is *sub judice*, I cannot comment any further.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, le ministre peut-il nous dire si, au niveau de son ministère, une enquête a été initiée afin de déterminer si, effectivement, la MFA n'a pas été en *compliance* avec la section 4 (2) (g) du *Sports Act*, comme le confirme d'ailleurs le *Registrar of Associations*?

Mr Ritoo: We have to set up a committee at the level of my Ministry to look into this matter.

Mr Speaker: There is one thing that I would have to draw the attention of the House to. Whenever *sub judice* rule is evoked in the House, I must get a copy of the case which is pending for me to decide whether the *sub judice* rule applies or not.

Mr Seeruttun: Concerning the present Managing Committee of the MFA, is the hon. Minister aware whether this present committee is operating lawfully or unlawfully?

Mr Ritoo: As I said, this matter is *sub judice* and I cannot answer. However, at the level of my Ministry, we are inquiring on this issue.

Mr Seeruttun: True it is that this matter is *sub judice* and there is an action before court...

Mr Speaker: No, it is not for the hon. Member to agree whether it is *sub judice* or not. It is for the Chair to decide.

Mr Seeruttun: As per the reply, I am not pointing out the case itself, the legal action. My question is simple: is the hon. Minister aware that this present Managing Committee of the MFA is operating right now lawfully or unlawfully?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would prefer to wait for the court's ruling first, then I can comment on this issue.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, le ministre est-il au courant que le *Registrar of Associations*, dans une lettre adressée au Club Henrietta/Glen Park, a dit qu'effectivement la MFA n'est pas en *compliance* avec les *rules and regulations* du *Registrar*, les statuts de la MFA, et en conformité avec le *Sports Act* ?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I replied to the hon. Member some time back that not only the Mauritius Football Association, there are other federations which are not in compliance, but on the eve of the Indian Ocean Islands Games, I cannot just penalise the athletes. We are actually in the process of finalising the amendment to the Sports Act and once it is finalised we will see how the other federations will be taken on board.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, le ministre trouve-t-il normal que, par rapport à sa politique de relance du football, la MFA est en train de sanctionner de façon arbitraire des clubs comme Henrietta/Glen Park, Union Sportive de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill. Récemment...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry! This is a specific question about legal action which has been initiated against the present Managing Committee and, if so, give details, that's all. Now the hon. Member is coming on the policy. He has to come with another substantive question. *Allez-y, je vais voir si c'est relevant !*

Mr Quirin: Le ministre peut-il nous dire s'il s'est entretenu récemment avec le président de la MFA concernant tous ces cas de suspension arbitraire ?

Mr Ritoo: I did not discuss anything with the president of the Mauritius Football Association because this has never been brought to my notice.

Mr Seeruttun: The hon. Minister has just stated that, in fact, the committee is not in compliance with the rules, not only the MFA, but other institutions also. That is to say that this present committee has not complied...

Mr Speaker: To which committee the hon. Member is referring to?

Mr Seeruttun: The present Managing Committee of the MFA has not complied with the relevant rules, that is, the election rules; that is to say it would be unlawful. Being given that the Minister has just stated that this committee has not been in compliance, it is crystal clear that they are acting unlawfully?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot reply about this case. I'll wait for the ruling of the case.

Mr Speaker: I think we would go to the next question. Hon. Quirin!

INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND GAMES – SEYCHELLES - MAURITIAN SUPPORTERS

(No. B/303) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the forthcoming 8th Indian Ocean Island Games, he will state the arrangements made, if any, to assist the Mauritian supporters travelling to the Seychelles.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, no special arrangements are being made for the Mauritian supporters or group of supporters who will travel to Seychelles in connection with the Indian Ocean Islands Games 2011.

As the hon. Member is aware, the Games are scheduled from 05 to 14 August 2011. The programme, finalised by the Organising Committee (COJI) in Seychelles, has already been published in the local press.

As has been the practice for previous Games, Mauritian spectators and supporters willing to attend same, will have to make their own arrangements, including travel and accommodation.

As per information obtained from the Organising Committee, very limited seats are available for the public to attend competitions at different sites. It is also understood that no decision has yet been taken by COJI with regard to the sale of tickets to the public.

Information pertaining to the Games is available on the website of the CJSOI. Also my Ministry has set up an IOIG Secretariat at the Beau Bassin Sports Complex to provide relevant information to sports federations and the public at large.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, dans un élan patriotique, le ministre peut-il nous dire s'il a pris contact avec Air Mauritius afin que les *supporters* mauriciens puissent bénéficier d'un tarif préférentiel et aussi s'il y a des vols additionnels qui ont été prévus durant cette période des jeux ?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we contacted Air Mauritius, but unfortunately it does not cover the Mauritius/Seychelles route. The Ministry is chartering a special Air Mauritius flight to convey athletes to Seychelles. The rate of Air Mauritius is much more expensive than that of Air Seychelles.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has discussed with the relevant authorities - Seychelles Authorities or the COJI - with regard to the distribution of the limited tickets? How Mauritians would be informed, how to obtain these tickets and whether there would be reservations through the Ministry, the federations? Can he enlighten us on that?

Mr Ritoo: I think I just replied, Mr Speaker, Sir, that my Ministry has set up an IOIG Secretariat at the Beau Bassin Sports Complex to provide relevant information to sports federations and the public at large regarding air tickets.

Mr Quirin: Le ministre, lui-même, en tant que ministre des sports, ne peut-il pas renseigner la Chambre par rapport à la demande accrue effectivement ? Déjà il y a les *supporters*, M. le président, qui se posent des questions, que ce soit par rapport au déplacement, c'est-à-dire les vols, les billets d'avion, les tickets d'entrée sur les sites de compétition. Je pense que le ministre devrait pouvoir nous donner de plus amples renseignements.

Mr Ritoo: M. le président, à ce jour, nous n'avons reçu aucune demande au niveau du ministère. S'il y a des spectateurs...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is just asking for the Minister to give general information to the public so that they know where to go. If the hon. Minister is not in a position to say it now, he can come with a statement later on to explain to the general public about these issues which have been raised.

Mr Ritoo: Of course, if there are people who are willing to go and attend the IOIG games, I will come with a statement in due course, but for the time being we don't have any request.

Mr Khamajeet: With regard to the number of tickets for supporters, I understand that the hon. Minister does not have the figure. Can I know the number of accreditation cards that could be made available for Mauritians?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, accreditation cards are not given to parents or spectators. Accreditation cards are given to officials. For the time being, we don't have any request from any member of the public who wants to have any accreditation card. It is only the officials and the athletes who receive accreditation cards.

BOOKMAKERS - HORSE RACING - LICENCE

(No. B/304) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the number of -

- (a) cases of horse racing bookmakers who have been sanctioned for late or non-payment of unclaimed prizes, since 2007 to date, and
- (b) licences revoked or cancelled for non-compliance with the conditions of licence, indicating in each case the condition/s that was/were breached.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Gambling Regulatory Authority that no horse racing bookmakers have been sanctioned for late or non-payment of unclaimed prizes to the National Solidarity Fund since 2007 to date.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that two horse racing bookmaker licences have not been renewed for indebtedness to the Mauritius Revenue Authority, of which one was found guilty by the Court of Law.

CEB - CONSUMERS - CLASSIFICATION

(No. B/305) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the electricity consumers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central

Electricity Board, information as to if a review of the classification thereof has been carried out, and if so, indicate the -

- (a) basis of the review, and
- (b) number thereof concerned therewith.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that there has been no review of the classification of consumers, which is based on the General Notice No. 516 of 1964.

However, the Central Electricity Board regularly carries out a tariff audit to verify whether the activities of customers are in line with the applied tariffs, and to ascertain whether the customers have changed the nature of their activities without informing the CEB.

A recent survey has revealed that some customers, presently billed under the industrial tariff, are actually carrying out commercial activities.

The CEB will adjust the tariffs of the customers concerned.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he is aware that the officer in charge of the SEHDA has written to the officer in charge of the CEB on behalf of the Printers' Association, stating that they are not agreeable to that change in tariff with regard to the printing sector, especially when they have used the Government Notice of 1964 with regard to the classification of printers from industrial consumers to commercial consumers?

The Deputy Prime Minister: This matter is being looked into, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether due consideration is being given to that request from the SEHDA?

The Deputy Prime Minister: There is a committee which is looking into these representations.

PETIT VERGER GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - AMENITIES

(No. B/306) **Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Petit Verger Government School, he will state if consideration will be given for the -

- (a) replacement of the furniture in several classes;
- (b) resurfacing of part of the ground;
- (c) provision of additional facilities to the science laboratory, and
- (d) installation of a gate to prevent access to unauthorised people to the school playground.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the following items have been provided to the school during the last three months -

Items	Date Issued
• 5 half steel cupboards	8 April 2011
• 50 junior chairs	04 February and 20 April 2011
• 60 junior tables	04 February 2011
• 50 senior chairs	20 April 2011
• 25 senior tables	09 May 2011
• 10 steel cupboards	24 March 2011

As regards part (b) of the question, my Ministry will initiate procedures shortly for the laying of paving blocks in the schoolyard.

Insofar as part (c) is concerned, I am informed that an assessment of the additional facilities required at the Science Laboratory is being undertaken, and action, as appropriate, will be taken by the zone Directorate, in collaboration with the Parent and Teacher's Association and other stakeholder organisations, to provide any equipment, materials or exhibits which would be needed.

With regard to part (d) of the question, I am further informed that a gate has already been installed since mid-April to prevent unauthorised access to the schools' playground.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Minister. In fact, some of the works have been completed and, therefore, I would like to appeal to the hon. Minister to speed up matters with regard to those unfinished remaining works.

Dr. Bunwaree: We will try to do as quickly as possible.

VAUXHALL LANE, ST PIERRE - DRAINS

(No. B/307) **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 Vauxhall lane, in Circonstance, St Pierre, he will state if consideration will be given for the construction of drains thereat.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I wish to reply to PQs No. B/307 and B/308 together.

For the time being, major drain projects in the region of Quartier Militaire, la Laura, Malinga, Dagotièrre, St. Pierre and Valetta are being implemented.

The problem at Vauxhall lane in Circonstance and Kailash Mandir at Valetta will be taken care of thereafter.

KAILASH MANDIR, VALETTA - DRAIN WORKS

(No. B/308) **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 project for the carrying out of drain works, behind the Kailash Mandir, at Valetta, he will state where matters stand.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/307)

SHIVALA ROAD, VALETTA - EXTENSION

(No. B/309) **Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Shivala Road, at Valetta, he will state if he will consider liaising with the Moka/Flacq District Council for the extension thereof.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Moka-Flacq District Council that only part of the Shivala Road at Valetta is presently tarred with premix asphalt, and the remaining area of 600 m² need to be constructed and tarred.

I am informed that the required works will be undertaken by the Council before the end of July.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES - REFUSE COLLECTION SERVICES - SCAVENGING FEE

(No. B/310) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to refuse collection services provided by the local authorities, he will state if his Ministry is proposing to levy a scavenging fee of Rs50 per month per household with an increase over the subsequent years and, if so, indicate -

- (a) the estimated revenue expected to be raised over the next four years, and
- (b) if Government has requested the Central Electricity Board and the Central Water Authority to collect same.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is no.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister then inform the House whether his Ministry solicited the help of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, the CWA and the CEB, with a view to collect this scavenging fee of Rs50?

Mr Aimée: No, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is saying now that there is no intention of this 'tax saleté' being set up. But being given that he has stated as a fact that there is a projected decrease in grant from Central Government over the next three years to local authorities, can we know the quantum of that projected decrease?

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I said 'no' from the very beginning. I cannot answer on what is said outside this august Assembly. For example, in this House, everybody can say anything, because they are under immunity.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Does the hon. Minister have the figures for the decrease? If he does not have, he can say 'no' and needs notice of the question.

Mr Aimée: I said no.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, has the hon. Minister informed the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities that he is proposing to levy a monthly scavenging fee of Rs50 per month per household, which will be doubled next year, and that this measure will bring - it was computed at the Ministry itself - additional revenue of about Rs190 m. in 2012, Rs290 m. in 2013 and Rs390 m. in 2014 to the local authorities? Where did I get these figures?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Ganoo: These figures must have come from the Ministry.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Minister answer!

Mr Aimée: I said 'no', Sir.

JAPAN - VEHICLES - IMPORTATION

(No. B/311) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to importation from Japan, he will state the number of imported vehicles which landed on the same day as the four reconditioned ones on which radioactivity was recently detected, indicating -

- (a) if the said vehicles have been decontaminated and returned to Japan,
- and
- (b) the reasons why imports therefrom were not banned earlier.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that, on 14 April 2011, a total of eight reconditioned vehicles landed from the vessel MSC Lesotho, out of which four were detected with removable radioactive contamination on their outer surfaces.

The four contaminated vehicles were immediately re-stuffed in a sealed container in the port area, in a secure site, and present no risk of exposure to radiation.

Decontamination of these vehicles was feasible but not considered as an option, as such procedures normally lead to generation of radioactive waste.

Arrangements are being made by the importer to ship back the four vehicles to Japan on board vessel MSC Rania H1119 R, which is expected to transit in Mauritius between 15 and 17 May 2011.

As regards part (b) of the question, on 25 March 2011, Government set up a Ministerial Committee, under the Chairmanship of the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, to look into the importation of vehicles and foodstuffs from Japan, and the following decisions were taken -

- all vehicles, that have left Japan at the time of the disaster, between 11 and 31 March 2011, be inspected for radio active contamination;
- vehicles shipped after 31 March 2011 be accompanied by a Certificate of Conformity issued by an accredited laboratory from Japan, with regard to water and radio active contamination. The Radiation Protection Authority should verify the certificate prior to the issue of import permits by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce;
- other items, including spare parts be subjected to verification for radiation, contamination on arrival;
- the RPA should identify a secure site for storage of any item found to be contaminated and exercise control over imports by carrying out sample checks for radiation contamination;
- all foodstuffs imported from Japan should be banned until further notice, and
- all agricultural commodities originating from the affected prefectures should be banned and others to be subjected to rigorous control.

A Standing Technical Monitoring Committee be set up under the Chairmanship of the Radiation Protection Authority and comprising representatives of all relevant authorities to keep strict watch over the imports originating from Japan.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to assure the House and the country that there has been no risk whatsoever to this country to date.

Mr Bérenger: May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister who detected that radioactivity presence and is the Radiation Authority really equipped to do such work?

The Deputy Prime Minister: If you look at surface contamination, yes they are equipped and they were ready. For the information of the House, 600 vehicles have been inspected and it takes between 5 to 7 minutes to put the equipment about a few millimetres from the surface and detect the radioactivity. The contamination is dangerous only if handled food and eating without washing hands.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister confirm that this batch of four cars formed part of the bigger batch of about 40 vehicles which landed on that same day and at the same time at the Customs?

Secondly, what is the protection offered to the Customs officers, not the officers of the Radiation Protection Authority, who come, of course, protected? What about the other employees in the port and the customs areas? Are they safe?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, a specific answer to the question of how many landed on that day and my information is eight, four of which were contaminated.

For the information of the House, these four came from about 250 kilometres from the site. The other four came from 450 kilometres from the site.

The second answer is yes, there have been meetings with the MRA officers as well as the Cargo Handling Corporation officers to tell them about the danger. The danger really, I say again, is handling, not washing hands and eating. The danger is from ingestion rather than from inhalation or anything else.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has referred to the committee that has been set up after the incident occurred in Japan. In the meantime, there had been vehicles imported in Mauritius. In respect to those vehicles that had already been imported after the date of the nuclear incident, has there been any monitoring with not only the cars themselves, but also people who bought these cars? Has there been any medical *suivi* made to find out whether there has been contamination because, by that time, probably there would be no radiation left?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the accident happened on 11 March. On that same day, 300 vehicles left Japan; all these 300 that arrived in Mauritius have been screened and there has been no risk. Following that, another 300 have come at different times, and out of the other 300, only four have been found to be contaminated.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Deputy Prime Minister what was the measured value of the radiation detected on the four vehicles that were sent to Japan so that we know what is the acceptable value of radiation by the Mauritian Authorities?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am reassured that the level is very low. It is only the dust on the cars that is contaminated and is very low. It is almost background level, but a little bit more than background level.

MAURITIAN EMBASSIES/HIGH COMMISSIONS - TRADE COUNSELLORS & ADVISERS - HOUSING ALLOWANCE

(No. B/312) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the housing allowance payable to the Trade Counsellors and Advisers appointed to the Mauritian Embassies/High Commissions abroad, he will state the quantum thereof, indicating in each case -

- (a) how it is calculated, and
- (b) if the quantum differs for those who are owners of their accommodation as opposed to those who rent same and, if so, indicate the names of those who are owners together with the total amount thereof received, since their appointment to date, in each case.

Dr. A. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are six Advisers of which three are Economic and Trade Advisers, two Trade Advisers and one Adviser on Cultural Matters, posted in our Embassies and High Commissions. These Advisers are provided with rented accommodation within a ceiling set by the PRB in respect of officers earning corresponding salaries in our diplomatic missions. In case they opt to occupy accommodation owned by them, they are paid 80% of the rent and utilities ceiling to which they are entitled.

One Adviser is paid a fixed accommodation allowance, which is lower than the rent and utilities ceiling payable to him.

With regard to part (b) of the question, consistent with the policy on rent payable to Advisers, Mr Lee Cheong Lem, Economic and Trade Adviser, who is owner of the accommodation he occupies, is paid 80% of the rent and utilities ceiling applicable since October 2006. A total amount of euros 135,520 has been paid to him from October 2006 to 30 April 2011.

Mrs Navarre-Marrie: Mr Speaker, Sir, by giving such substantial housing allowance to an Adviser, is not the Government just subsidising the purchase of the house for him, especially as he is lobbying to stay for a longer period?

Dr. A. Boolell: The criteria have been defined by the PRB and this is what is being applied.

Mr Baloomoody: May I ask the hon. Minister who fixes the rent for those who are owners of their residence?

Dr. A. Boolell: I said, Sir, in my reply, it is the PRB.

Mr Baloomoody: Who fixes the rent at 80% of the rental value? Because I can put a high rent just to get 100% rent.

Dr. A. Boolell: This has been tightly scrutinised and the rent is justified.

Mr Uteem: In view of the fact that a lot of money is being paid on accommodation for these Advisers, would it not make more sense for the Government to invest in houses there which can be used for different Advisers?

Dr. A. Boolell: This is a very fair question. This matter is being looked into by a committee set up by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Bhagwan: Is the Minister aware or has his attention been drawn to the fact that for the same house there is sub-rent, half of the house is rented to somebody else?

(Interruptions)

I am very serious, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Yes, I know. The hon. Membr is always serious.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister also inquire as to whether at the time of the general election when that person came here for canvassing, he was receiving rent and the house was sub-let?

Dr. A. Boolell: I will not subscribe to your imagination.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10 (2)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I 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.

(4.11 p.m)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

STANDARD HORSE RACING BOOKMAKER SOFTWARE

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to make a statement as regards issues raised in this House when my colleague, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, in his capacity of Ag. Minister of Finance in my absence, was answering supplementary questions to PQs B/178 and B/181.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the GRA project referred to in PQs B/178 and B/181 related to the Procurement of a Standard Horse Racing Bookmaker Software linked to a Central Electronic Monitoring System. The new server was to replace the existing one to which all bookmakers operating on horse racing bets, both on course at the Champ de Mars and off-course, outside the Champ de Mars, are connected.

Procurement procedures for the project were initiated by the GRA in November 2008 and on 17 June 2010 the GRA Board took the decision to award the contract to ABA Software Ltd.

The cost of that new replacement server was Rs40.25 m., excluding some Rs4 m. paid to the project consultant, namely PricewaterhouseCoopers. When the GRA communicated its decision to my Ministry (MOFED), the latter ascertained that the system being proposed was not an integrated one, but a stand-alone system.

Concurrently, the GRA informed my Ministry that it intended to implement another project, this time another server to connect bookmakers operating on football bets around the island. This would have been another stand-alone system, not an integrated system.

The GRA was proposing to come afterwards with yet another project for a system connecting other licensees including operators of tote systems, gaming machines, AWP machines and lottery organisers.

The three stand-alone projects would have cost more than Rs250 m.

Clearly, it would have been a waste of financial resources by adopting such a segregated and piecemeal approach. The more so as under Section 109 of the GRA Act, it is clearly stipulated that the “*Authority shall set up and maintain a central electronic monitoring system to ensure*”, amongst other objectives listed, “*a continuous on-line recording, monitoring and control of lottery games, gaming and betting transactions*”.

It is worth noting that since the implementation of the present server in 2006, the Mauritius Revenue Authority does not have online and real time access to that server so that it can perform its revenue collecting duties properly. There is a reconciliation exercise performed between figures in the current Horse Betting Control System and the returns that are filed by bookmakers at the Mauritius Revenue Authority in order to ascertain that the system is working as intended and also to ascertain completeness of returns filed by bookmakers at the MRA.

In a management letter dated 04 November 2009, the Director of Audit highlighted that the risk that bookmakers were filing the wrong returns at the MRA could not be neglected and that the correctness and accuracy of the amount of tax payable by bookmakers to Government could not be ascertained.

Following that letter, a management meeting was held 06 November 2009 between the Assistant Director of Audit, Mr Dodah, accompanied by Mrs Mootocurpen, Auditor, and the Chief Executive and other officials of the GRA. The issues raised by the Director of Audit were discussed. It was also pointed out to the GRA that all the data available in respect of horseracing bookmakers on the current GRA server be made available to the MRA on a monthly basis. The GRA took the undertaking at that time (that is 06 November 2009) to make available to the MRA data collected on the current horseracing bookmakers server on a monthly basis.

However, it was only on 05 April 2010 that the GRA wrote to the MRA whereby it undertook to provide the MRA with a monthly report on DVD. The GRA provided such a DVD only once in August 2010, but that DVD was unreadable by the MRA. It is worth noting that had this arrangement worked, it would still not have addressed the concerns expressed by the Director of Audit as far as tax return and collection from the horseracing bookmakers are concerned.

In the light of the above, my Ministry deemed it fit to request the GRA to set aside the stand-alone Standard Horse Racing Bookmaker Software project and come up with an integrated system which will connect all gambling licensees to one central server as stipulated under Section 109 of the GRA Act.

The proposed integrated system will, not only enable the GRA to exercise better control on licensees, but will give online and real time access to the MRA and will interface with MRA's IT system. Section 109 (4) of the GRA Act stipulates that "*the Director General of the MRA shall have on-line access to the central electronic monitoring system of the GRA*".

It is worth highlighting again that none of the three IT projects that were being proposed by the GRA catered for on-line access to the MRA.

The ultimate objective is to ensure that all GRA licensees fully comply with the provisions of the law as well as considerably reducing the risks of any kind of tax evasion by the operators concerned.

It must be highlighted that it is of paramount importance for GRA and MRA to work in close collaboration in order to fully monitor and control gambling activities in the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following explanations I have just given to the House, I hope hon. Members, particularly the third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes...

Mr Bérenger: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. We now that statements should be pure statements of fact and policy and nothing controversial. The hon. Minister is now referring to a Member in a very controversial manner.

Mr Speaker: No. I have checked on this and I must tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that there were certain questions which were put by the hon. Third Member of Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes and that the hon. Minister is putting the record right.

(Interruptions)

Yes, but it is not controversial by the fact that the hon. Minister is referring to what was said in the House. It is not going to be controversial. I checked on it.

Mr Jugnauth: Let me repeat the last part. Mr Speaker, Sir, following explanations I have just given to the House, I hope hon. Members, particularly the Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes, have got the assurance that the decision of my Ministry to set aside the stand-alone Standard Horse Racing Bookmaker Software project was motivated by legal, institutional and efficiency considerations and that there has been no “undue pressure of money from bookmakers to stop the system from being implemented”.

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: I suspend for half an hour.

At 4.18 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.54 p.m with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (Amendment) Bill (No. VIII of 2011) was read a first time.

(4.53 p.m)

*Second Reading***THE ILOIS WELFARE FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL****(NO. VI OF 2011)***Order for second reading read.*

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Ilois Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill (No. VI of 2011) be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ilois Welfare Fund was introduced on 01 February 2000 so as to cater for the welfare of the Chagossian community and their descendants. It is a major law aimed at integrating the people of Chagossian community into the mainstream of the Mauritian society.

This is, in fact, a straightforward Bill which is meant to amend the word “Ilois” and replacing same by the word “Chagossian” with a view to make more precise reference to the place of origin of the people in whose favour the Act was promulgated.

Allow me to recall the main objectives of the Welfare Fund which are -

- (a) to advance and promote the welfare of the members of the Chagossian community and their descendants in Mauritius, and
- (b) to develop programs and projects for the total integration of the members of the Chagossian community as well as their descendants.

The Act makes provision for the Board to have the support of elected members of the Chagossian community who have valuable input to provide towards the advancement of the objectives of the Fund.

The representatives of the Chagossians do a tremendous work regarding the welfare of the community. They are present to facilitate the activities organised by the Board, namely recreational, educational, sports and others and ensure that everything is done in the best possible conditions.

The proposed amendment in this Bill is yet another measure which is being taken by the Government to help the Chagos Community in their long march towards justice.

It will be recalled that the first Trust Fund was set up in 1980's. This was a milestone in terms of financial compensation to the Chagos community and was basically set up to appropriate the compensation given by the British Government. This Fund was used for the promotion of the social and economic welfare of the Chagos community in Mauritius and to acquire land in favour of this community.

Seventeen years later, Mr Speaker, Sir, in 1999, the Trust Fund was amended into the Ilois Welfare Fund. The new Bill was set up to provide for the Fund to operate as a corporate body with additional members of the Chagos community and members from various Ministries namely Education and Health so as to ensure full support for welfare and integration of the Chagossians.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the above, one may question the relevance of a simple change of name of the Fund. One may, of course, put the famous question: "*what's in a name*"? Will it in some way or other change the purpose of the Bill and the realisation of its objectives?

The importance of the use of proper words has been tackled by various linguists and psychologists. In 1950s, the American anthropologist and linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf asked whether the language we speak shapes the way we think and see the world. If so, then language is not merely a means of expressing thought, but a constraint on it, too.

The use of the word "ilois" has been thrust upon us by the British. It is used to designate people living in different islands which were attached to Mauritius, namely Agalega and, of course, the Chagos.

M. le président, le terme « îlois » n'est pas spécifique aux Chagos contrairement à Chagossien, qui est un terme indiquant spécifiquement l'origine de la personne. En utilisant le terme « Ilois », les britanniques ont voulu passer sous silence le fait qu'il existait aux Chagos une population autochtone de ces îles, les Chagossiens.

Notre démarche est exactement l'inverse, nous voulons affirmer que les Chagos ont une population indigène, d'où l'utilisation du terme Chagossien. Ce terme aurait pu être Chagossois ou Chagosséen. Mais le peuple autochtone des Chagos a choisi le nom de Chagossien, choix que nous respecterons, M. le président.

Il faut voir dans l'utilisation du terme « îlois » une perpétuation de la pensée coloniale dont nous avons tous, du moins nos ancêtres, souffert. Dans le cas de nos compatriotes des Chagos, les récentes décisions de la justice tendent à faire confirmer que le système colonial a commis de véritables « *crimes contre l'humanité* » à leur égard. D'abord, sous la forme de la traite négrière et de l'esclavage pratiqués par des colonialistes au 18ème siècle, puis lors de la « *déportation* » de ce peuple, organisée par les britanniques à partir de 1965.

Malheureusement, M. le président, nous constatons qu'aujourd'hui encore une fois, Londres s'est engagé dans ses stratégies perverses. Ainsi, pour éviter le retour des Chagossiens, l'archipel des Chagos est officiellement devenu, le 31 octobre 2010, la plus grande zone marine protégée au monde.

Bien évidemment, le gouvernement mauricien ne se laissera pas impressionner par ces ruses. Comme vous le savez, le Premier ministre l'a répété à plusieurs reprises, les procédures ont déjà été enclenchées pour combattre la supercherie britannique.

En attendant le gouvernement mauricien continue à montrer sa solidarité et son indéfectible soutien pour la reconnaissance et le respect de l'histoire des Chagossiens et de leur combat pour retrouver un jour leurs îles. C'est ainsi que le 3 novembre est décrété depuis l'année dernière comme le Jour de la Déportation. Cette journée a été marquée par une cérémonie avec dépôt de gerbe au pied de la stèle qui fut érigée au Quai D en souvenir de l'arrivée des Chagossiens. Cette date a été choisie en accord avec les représentants des Chagossiens car elle représente la date où le premier bateau en provenance des Chagos est arrivé à Port-Louis.

D'autre part, la décision du Premier ministre de relever le plafond budgétaire pour le fonds à R 4 millions soit une augmentation de plus de 100% au cours de cette année financière montre l'engagement de notre gouvernement visant à mieux intégrer les personnes d'origine chagossienne dans la société mauricienne. Cet engagement, M. le président, va au-delà des seules considérations pécuniaires.

Le premier ministre l'a répété souvent, la seule façon d'émanciper des actes de la misère sociale, c'est à travers l'éducation et pour montrer son implication auprès des Chagossiens des discussions sont en cours pour étudier la possibilité d'accorder une bourse d'étude au tertiaire à un enfant descendant des Chagossiens à travers le *Chagossian Welfare Fund*. Les discussions sont présentement en cours entre le ministère de l'éducation et mon ministère. Le projet de loi

que nous proposons d'amender est une preuve supplémentaire de la considération que le gouvernement mauricien montre envers ces citoyens déracinés de leur terre natale. Il démontre également que ce gouvernement considère que les Chagossiens sont des mauriciens à part entière avec leurs histoires, leurs spécificités et une culture propre au Chagos qui fait la fierté de l'île Maurice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all do agree that the word Ilois as it appears on the carrot legislation does not clearly reflect the place of origin of the people of the Chagos islands and their specific culture. Being given that the Chagos Island is a place where the people formally known as Ilois originate, the Chagossians have requested that the word Ilois be amended to be replaced by the word Chagossian so as to make precise reference to the place of origin. The time has now come to make the relevant amendment to the existing legislation, Mr Speaker, Sir. We, in Government, feel strongly and are convinced that the people of Chagos have a legitimate right to be known as Chagossian and the amendment proposed today makes unambiguous reference to the place to which they belonged and from where they have been uprooted. It would give better legitimacy to the status of the Chagossian community that will give them the strength to establish themselves within the Maurician society while recognising their differences.

Cette démarche M. le président, vise surtout à rétablir les droits et la dignité des Chagossiens afin de leur permettre de mieux s'affirmer dans la société.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Aimée rose and seconded.

(5.02 p.m)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger): M. le président, dans le passé l'expression Ilois, Iloise faisait l'unanimité. On a mis sur pied dans les années 80 le Ilois Trust Fund devenu plus tard le Ilois Welfare Fund. C'est à la demande de la communauté Chagossienne qu'aujourd'hui nous remplaçons l'expression Ilois, Iloise par Chagossien. La raison est qu'au fil des années depuis l'époque du Ilois Trust Fund et du Ilois Welfare Fund, des décennies même, la communauté de Chagossiens et de Chagossiennes, avec beaucoup de courage, de détermination, a affirmé de plus en plus son identité, est retournée à ses sources, a trouvé le courage et l'assurance nécessaire pour se dresser contre les anciens colonisateurs.

C'est aujourd'hui à la demande de cette même communauté de Chagossiens et Chagossiennes que nous avons remplacé l'expression Ilois, Iloise par l'expression Chagossien et Chagossienne. Je suis fier pour ma part d'avoir toujours été aux côtés de la communauté Chagossienne depuis 1971, presque depuis le début du déracinement de la communauté. Je tiens, moi aussi, à saluer l'excellent travail qu'abat le *Ilois Welfare Fund* composé surtout de sept représentants élus.

Depuis l'époque du *Ilois Trust Fund*, vous avez, vous-même, M. le président, été associé à la création du *Ilois Trust Fund*. Depuis ce temps-là, les élections se font démocratiquement sous le contrôle du bureau du commissaire électoral et les représentants élus de la communauté Chagossienne au *Board* - hier *Ilois Welfare Fund*, aujourd'hui, *Chagossian Welfare Fund* - font un travail formidable. On pourrait faire encore plus surtout du côté de l'éducation. Nous sommes donc totalement en faveur de ce changement d'appellation réclamé par la communauté Chagossienne elle-même. C'est devenu du domaine public l'amendement qui allait être apporté à l'*Ilois Welfare Fund* pour en faire le *Chagossian Welfare Fund*. Une suggestion a été faite par une organisation s'appelant the *Seven Decrees South East Group*, qui a suggéré que l'occasion doit être saisie pour changer la composition du *Board* et inclure un représentant des enfants de Chagossiens et Chagossiennes nés ailleurs qu'au Chagos, nés à l'île Maurice et ailleurs. J'en ai discuté avec Olivier Bancoult et avec d'autres personnes. Ils ne sont pas contre mais le souhait serait qu'on s'arrête à la première génération. Donc, je souhaiterais pour ma part que le *Chagossian Welfare Fund* se penche sérieusement sur cette proposition et que le *Board* qui inclut donc sept représentants démocratiquement élus, soit inclus aussi un représentant de la première génération des descendants des enfants de la communauté Chagossienne.

Je tiens à terminer en félicitant à nouveau le représentant de la communauté Chagossienne, en particulier Olivier Bancoult, pour le courage, la volonté, la détermination extraordinaire dont il a fait preuve dans le passé et jusqu'à présent.

Merci, M. le président.

(5.05 p.m)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Dr. A. Boolell): Mr Speaker, Sir, let me right from the outset congratulate the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, who has deemed it fit on behalf of Government, to bring a simple amendment to the Ilois Welfare Bill but, of course, an amendment

which has far-reaching merits. What are we doing today, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that we are upholding the dignity of a community whose resilience is exemplary to the Mauritian community at large and when you look, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the genesis to this amendment, it stands to reason that we have to pay tribute to all Chagossians and, at the time, when the Ilois Welfare Bill was introduced, a request was made in a very legitimate manner that we should have a fresh look at the word Ilois because the connotation is a negative one and to some extent, it is controversial. At that time, we thought that, let's allow time to be a healing factor. If the need is felt, we will bring the necessary amendment. There has been exchange of correspondence and precisely today that is what the Minister is doing. In fact, when I look at the Bills which are on the agenda for debate today there is a common thread. We are talking of upholding dignity, ancestral values and reparation towards a community which has been uprooted, not only once, but twice; from Continent of Africa where they were treated as *les noirs des îles* by the French colonialists and then uprooted from the islands of Chagos Archipelago, which are our territory, Mr Speaker, Sir, in inhumane conditions and this in itself is a crime against humanity. I think the House has to take note that this, in itself, is a crime against humanity and the reason as to why this Government has started to step up its political, economic diplomatic lobbying.

I am not going to go into the measures taken by this Government to highlight what is being done to empower the community, Mr Speaker, Sir. They have their specificities which have to be recognised. Much has been done by the elected members of the Welfare Fund, to ensure assimilation within the mainstream of the Mauritian community. I am glad to say, without fear or prejudice, that our friends, be they from the Chagos Refugees Group and the *Comité Social des Chagossiens*, fully support the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago. You will recall that not only have we seen to it that resources have to be disbursed to ensure that they meet the commitments given in respect of the Ilois Welfare Fund but, as has been highlighted by Minister Dookun-Luchoomun, there's a premium that needs to be put up in education, and there is no better empowerment than education. I am glad that the money is being used judiciously, to ensure that education today becomes the very essence that will enable the second or third generation for that matter to be fully empowered.

I don't have to remind ourselves that, in fact, the eldest person in the Mauritian community hails from the Chagossian community. The lady is celebrating her 109th anniversary. There is also another lady who celebrated her 100th anniversary on 03 May 2011. It shows the

resilience of this community, the hardship that they had gone through, and I am glad that Government has thought it fit to increase the fund earmarked from Rs1.4 m. to Rs4 m. Of course, more can be done, but then they are Mauritian citizens and they are entitled to the privileges, to the rights and obligations of Mauritian citizens in respect of funds which are being disbursed by the Ministry of Social Integration, to ensure that there is proper integration and assimilation within the Mauritian community.

We were proud, Mr Speaker, Sir, when, at the AU Heads of State meeting, the Prime Minister forcefully raised the case and the plight of our Chagossian friends; the hardship that they went through, the uprooting of the community. We made it a point to highlight the plight of our friends in all international, regional and subregional meetings. We were glad because in the delegation led by the Prime Minister, was our friend Olivier Bancoult. We had the opportunity to interact with Heads of State to highlight the tragedy of our friends from the Chagossian community. Of course, this is a battle that we have to win, and we stand united on this issue. There is no dissenting voice on the importance of being earnest in respect of our sovereignty. The reason as to why, right from day one, when Government sworn in, we saw to it that accessibility to Ministers, to the Prime Minister has become the norm, the standard and the right of brothers and sisters from the Chagossian community.

Today is a great day. In fact, it's a historical day, if I may say so, and I am glad that this issue transcends political barriers. When it comes to issues of national interest, we have no choice, but to forge a common stand and defend those who are weak and vulnerable. With regard to our brothers and sisters from the Chagossian community, we are talking of 790 natives; 4,000 Chagossians who hail from the first generation, either from the father or mother Chagossian; 5,800 belong to the second generation - those whose grandmother/grandfather is a Chagossian. In fact, there is approximately 10,590 Chagossians.

I read an article written by Mr Henri Marimootoo in 'Week-end'. Of course, it is thought-provoking. I am glad that there is a need for fair representation. The rights of brothers and sisters are legitimate and we are here to empower them; the Prime Minister is here to give them full support. As Mauritian citizens, we stand together and united over an issue which is dear to all of us. Thank you very much.

(5.15 p.m.)

Mrs M. Martin (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me from the outset to congratulate the Minister responsible for Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions for bringing this amendment. Like the other orators, I do not propose to be lengthy on the subject, but I would like to say that, today, according to the objective of this amendment, that is -

‘by deleting the word “Ilois”, wherever it appears, and replacing it by the word “Chagossian” to make more precise reference to the place of origin of the Chagossian community.’

I do believe that this simple change of name has a highly symbolical value. It has a highly symbolical value for more than 10,000 Chagossians living in Mauritius, which form the Chagossian community, and it has a symbolical value for the nation as a whole.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if we go back briefly to the history of the Chagossian community, we can see that the history of the Chagossians has been *jalonnée*, as we would say, with difficult times, with struggle, with pride and determination. This determination has brought the Chagossian community and its members where they are today. We all know the struggles that the Chagossian community has had to bring, has had to lead, and they have done so partly on their own, but partly as well with the Government, which has helped them in any way possible, to bring about a certain development and a certain advancement to help the Chagossian community as a whole.

When we talk about the struggles of the Chagossian community, one must say that it has struggled with the help of many, many amongst us. The hon. Minister just mentioned a well-known Mauritian journalist who is known for his articles on the Chagossian community, and who has helped at large to make known the Chagossian cause to the world. But here, in this House, we also have Olivier Bancoult who is a leading figure of the Chagossian community, and like him, the Prime Minister as well has brought this struggle to help the Chagossian move forward and attain a sense of dignity *et un sens d'appartenance à la société mauricienne* as a whole.

I was saying that this change of name is highly symbolical. It is symbolical, especially when we talk about the importance of valorisation. Today, what Government has done by changing the Ilois Welfare Fund to the Chagossian Welfare Fund is to give the Chagossian

community - sharing along with them - an opportunity to be able to choose their own identity and their own destiny, and to affirm that together with the Mauritian Government. What this change in name has done as well is to uphold the pride of the Chagossian community. What this change in name has done is to give an opportunity for the world as a whole to identify one section of the Mauritian community, and give them their whole identity within the island of Mauritius, because each of us comes from different ethnic backgrounds, and each one of us is proud of his or her ethnic background in the *arc-en-ciel de Maurice*. We all should be given the dignity in order to be able to bring about what we call the 'Mauritian *arc-en-ciel*' where equal opportunity will be available for all.

Today, this Government, through its understanding, and through the dialogue that has been made between the Chagossian community and Government, has brought about this amendment. This collaboration of the Government goes further because it is the gesture in consolidating the *appartenance* of the Chagossian community and it is another engagement further in order to help them in assisting them wherever necessary in the total integration of the members of the community.

It is a reality today that the struggle of the Chagossian community and their integration is an everyday battle. Yet the Government is moving forward and trying its best. I know everything is not perfect, but what we have is the goodwill to work together in order to bring about a positive aspect and a positive development in the life of the Chagossians of Mauritius who are Mauritians as well and the Government today is showing its support and is continuing to prove its goodwill towards this community.

Thank you.

(5.21 p.m.)

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Mr Speaker, Sir, we, of course, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition put it, welcome the amendment that is being brought to the House; amendment which proposes to change the appellation from 'Ilois' to 'Chagossian'.

We fully concur with that, as it is the wish of the Chagossian community, through their elected representatives at the Ilois Welfare Fund, chaired by Olivier Bancoult, famous for his

relentless battle at international level for the right of the community to return home and settle there. Lately, the case of the Chagos Archipelago has been more vocal on the international front, thanks to the *Groupe Réfugiés des Chagos*.

The term 'Ilois', as you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, is wide and vague and does not in any way designate a specific community and ethnic group. It was accepted, at one point in time, as the Leader of the Opposition rightly pointed out.

An identity, Mr Speaker, Sir, is essential to the community. This community to which I proudly belong - my parents have been born there - which has been uprooted from the Chagos Archipelago, has the feeling of being never at home. Some live in Mauritius, others in Seychelles, in UK and even in Switzerland. We could rightly, I think, speak of a *Diaspora Chagossienne*.

Although most, if not all of them, are of Creole origin, their culture is somewhat different; the way they speak, their melodious accent, I would say, the way women cover their head, the way they prepare their foods and beverages. All these are different. You, yourself, Mr Speaker, Sir, have been privileged enough to encounter them when you were part of the delegation as Minister of Social Security in 1981 to the UK; delegation which comprised mostly women of the community as well as my colleague, hon. Paul Bérenger, who participated in the delegation at the request of the Chagossians themselves - hon. Paul Bérenger who is considered as *un ami, un frère des chagossiens*.

I was saying that they have a culture of their own and it is important that they have an identity of their own. As we all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, the community is fighting for a legitimate cause; that of their right to return to their islands which, in parallel, has greatly helped Mauritius on our sovereignty issue on the international fora. Both issues are closely intertwined.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in their request for the right to return, it is essential that the community speaks with one voice from whichever part of the world they are and the outcome will be far better for all of us.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, this amendment is a step forward in recognising the Chagossians as a specific entity which will help us moving together forward. That is why we fully concur with that piece of amendment.

Thank you.

(5.27 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank all Members of the House for their valuable contribution to this Bill.

With regard to the mention made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition about the amendment requested by a group of Chagossian descendants, I wish to inform the House that we are ready to take this into consideration and, maybe at a later stage, along with the members of the Board, that is, Mr Bancoult and his team. We may consider an amendment in the future, so that other members of the Chagossian descendant community may become part of the Board.

M. le président, il y a une unanimité pour que dorénavant les anciens habitants de l'Archipel des Chagos soient connus comme les Chagossiens et non plus des îlois. L'amendement que nous proposons à la loi votée en 1999 était dû depuis très longtemps. Quarante-trois ans après l'indépendance, c'est le devoir de notre pays de donner à chaque citoyen la fierté qu'il ou qu'elle ressent de ses racines, des ses origines et de sa culture.

Cette réhabilitation de l'identité des chagossiens va dans le sens même de la politique gouvernementale. M. le président, ce gouvernement n'épargnera aucun effort pour donner à la communauté chagossienne...

Mr Speaker: In the Second Reading of the Bill, the hon. Minister made all these points.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: No, I am just quoting.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister must respond to what the Members have said. She is reading a second speech.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I am going to do that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

M. le président, comme je l'ai dit auparavant, la communauté chagossienne peut compter sur le gouvernement pour les reconnaissances auxquelles elle a légitimement droit d'aspirer. Cet amendement réaffirme la place des Chagossiens et leurs descendants dans la société mauricienne et montre l'engagement du gouvernement à travailler dans ce sens.

Je remercie les membres des deux côtés de la Chambre pour leur contribution et ensemble nous allons œuvrer pour le bien-être des chagossiens dans notre île.

Merci beaucoup.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The Ilois Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill (No. VI of 2011) was considered and agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Mr Speaker in the Chair, Mr Speaker reported accordingly.

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Ilois Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill (No. VI of 2011) was read the third time and passed.

Second Reading

THE ARABIC-SPEAKING UNION BILL

(NO. VII OF 2010)

THE BHOJPURI-SPEAKING UNION BILL

(NO. VIII OF 2010)

THE CHINESE-SPEAKING UNION BILL

(NO. VII OF 2011)

THE CREOLE-SPEAKING UNION BILL

(NO. IX OF 2010)

THE SANSKRIT-SPEAKING UNION BILL

(NO. XI OF 2010)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr M. Choonee): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I move that the Arabic-Speaking union Bill (No. VII of 2010), the Bhojpuri-Speaking Union Bill (No. VIII of 2010), the Creole-Speaking Union Bill (No. IX of 2010), the Sanskrit-Speaking Union Bill (Number XI of 2010) and the Chinese-Speaking Union Bill (Number VII of 2011) be read together a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have the privilege of living in a plural nation where the diversity of languages spoken and written is striking.

Should we protect the languages written and spoken in this country?

Should we promote the languages written and spoken in this country?

Is it the role of Government to legislate in respect of languages?

The answer to the above questions is 'yes', Mr Speaker, Sir. 'Yes', because language has played, is playing and will continue to play a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of our multilingual country and it will further strengthen our rainbow nation where language shall not only be yet another way of expressing cultural diversity; but most importantly, it shall pave the way to Government's vision of an Intelligent Island, *Maurice Ile Intelligente*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, why should we endeavour to protect and promote the languages written and spoken in Mauritius?

Each language reflects a unique world-view and culture complex. It also shows how a particular speech community interprets the signals received from the world and how it deals with them. It is often not easy to grasp the importance of language as it serves many purposes at the same time; thus, Mr Speaker, Sir -

- 1) Language is a basic human right. Here, I would like to quote from the second article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the UN which establishes that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms" regardless of "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status";
- 2) Language is a medium of communication; it mirrors one's identity and is an integral part of culture. In his famous book "Decolonizing the mind, the politics of language in African literature" famous writer Ngugi wa Thiongo referred to

language as the “soul of culture”, that is, a person’s language is a vehicle of his particular culture. Based on this postulate, linguistic diversity becomes symbolic of cultural diversity, wherein the need to consolidate it, especially in a multicultural society as ours.

- 3) Language is a means of expression and allows a person to participate in community activities. It can be used as a medium of fostering a democratic culture.

According to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, I quote –

“Language is an integral part of the structure of culture; it in fact constitutes its pillar and means of expression par excellence. Its usage enriches the individual and enables him to take an active part in the community and its activities. To deprive a man of such participation amounts to depriving him of his identity.”

Here, I would like to pay tribute to all the baitkas, madrassas and all the other agents who were pro-active in the process of transforming our society in the nineteenth century.

- 4) Languages are also valuable as collective human accomplishments and ongoing manifestations of human creativity and originality. The world’s languages represent an extraordinary wealth of human creativity.

According to UNESCO, languages contain and express the total ‘pool of ideas’ nurtured over time through heritage, local traditions and customs communicated through local languages.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after several stints as Minister of Arts and Culture in the Republic, I am convinced of the potential of arts, culture and creativity as an emerging pillar of our economy. The ‘pool of ideas’ I referred to just now, will be instrumental in creating and adding value in this new economy. This pool of ideas will also help us on our way to transforming our society in a more intelligent nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius all the languages in use form part of our National Cultural Heritage. The Government is making all efforts possible to promote our ancestral languages in order to preserve the cultural identity of all the components of the Mauritian society.

After the setting up of the English-Speaking Union in 1993, the Hindi- Speaking Union in 1994, the Urdu-Speaking Union in 2002, the Marathi, Tamil and Telugu-Speaking Unions in 2008, today I stand to present the Arabic, Bhojpuri, Creole, Chinese and Sanskrit-Speaking union Bills before this august Assembly. Soon we shall catch up with the French-Speaking Union. We are thus, putting all languages written and spoken in Mauritius on an equal footing. Our aim is to bring to the fore the rich diversity of our cultures which are sources of individual and collective fulfillment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall now elaborate on the different language Bills; first the Arabic-Speaking Union Bill.

Regardless of their linguistic and cultural differences, Muslims form one community of believers. This community is based on their shared faith in One Almighty God, and the guidance that he has sent down through his final revelation to mankind, the Qur'an, which was written in the Arabic language.

Arabic is also a language of Science. Al Idrissi made original contributions to geography in his "*al-Kitab al-Rujari*" (Roger's Book) while Muhammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī wrote "The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing" in Arabic language.

Arabic is spoken by around 300 million people and is the official language of 22 countries. In one of his recent speeches, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy called Arabic the "language of the future, of science and of modernity."

In Mauritius, many people have studied and continue to study Arabic for academic and examination purposes. This is a subject which is examinable at SC and HSC.

In the light of the above, it stands to reason that we should have an Arabic-Speaking Union.

Mr Speaker, Sir, next we have the Bhojpuri-Speaking Union Bill. Bhojpuri is widely spoken by our population. It is not restricted to people of Indian origin. In the villages, it is not uncommon to find the Chinese shopkeeper using the language fluently. This language is shared by almost all the people of Mauritius. As all dynamic and active languages, Bhojpuri has evolved and enriched itself with inputs from other sources. A typical Bhojpuri sentence will nearly always contain a word from Creole, French, English, Hindi etc.

It seems that Bhojpuri is one of the most widely spoken languages outside India after Hindi. This is the language spoken by people from the Indian diaspora who settled in Mauritius, Trinidad, Fiji, Surinam and other countries during the indenture period. This language was carried to other shores in Europe and America when children of the diaspora emigrated there. Today, you will find people speaking Bhojpuri in the major world capitals.

Bhojpuri folk and traditions form part of our intangible cultural heritage. They are unique to Mauritius and we are taking steps to get them proclaimed as Masterpieces of UNESCO's Oral and Intangible heritage of humanity.

Bhojpuri has also made great strides in the cinema industry. In recent years, Bhojpuri has become popular with the Indian film industry. Several Bollywood movies have adopted Bhojpuri as a cultural movement and hence have incorporated Bhojpuri music into the films. Bhojpuri films have also become more popular than ever before. This trend is poised to grow.

For all these reasons, Government is introducing Bhojpuri language as an optional subject at school. And today, we start along this journey by introducing legislation in respect of the Bhojpuri-Speaking Union.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now turn to the subject matter of Creole. Creole is the mother-tongue of the majority of Mauritians. It is the language we use every day and everywhere in this country. We use it to converse, to teach, to joke and to share our beliefs! It is the language *par excellence* to bind the nation.

Creole is not restricted to Mauritius, it is the vernacular that is used in many countries Reunion, Seychelles, Tahiti, Nouvelle Calédonie etc. This is the language of those who rebelled against inhuman treatment. They expressed their feelings and emotions in this language. Today, by rehabilitating the Creole language, we are also paying homage to those who contributed to making our Nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all like our sega. This is one of our precious cultural legacies that we want to be proclaimed as a Masterpiece of UNESCO's Oral and Intangible heritage of humanity. Government is taking various initiatives to give the Creole language its deserved status. I seize this golden opportunity to salute the political courage of our Prime Minister and the

determination of my colleague, Dr. Vasant Bunwaree, the Minister of Education and Human Resources, who is coming forward with the introduction of Creole at primary level.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of the foregoing, we can say that Bhojpuri and Creole are the languages of Unity in Mauritius. Both of them have played a pivotal role in the construction of the Mauritian nation. They so developed that they share words and expressions with other languages prevalent in our rainbow nation. They will continue to flourish and play their part in fostering dialogue between cultures. Their Speaking Unions will thus have to make a serious study on all those aspects that will enable the population to understand the concept of unity in diversity and its impact on the construction of a strong nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now I turn to the subject of Sanskrit Speaking Union. Sanskrit is a historical Indo-Aryan language and the primary liturgical language of Hinduism and Buddhism. Most of the sacred books of Hindus, like the Vedas and Upanishads are written in Sanskrit. This is also the language of prayers and rituals while being the carrier of Vedic thought.

Sanskrit is considered to be the oldest scientific language. It is the language seers and philosophers used in order to understand the creator. Sanskrit is also acknowledged as being the mother of all Indo-European languages.

In his epoch-making "Science of Languages", Friedrich Max Muller calls Sanskrit the "language of languages", and remarks that "it has been truly said that Sanskrit is to the Science of language what Mathematics is to Astronomy."

Many scientists have been looking at Sanskrit as a possible computer language since its syntax is perfect and leaves little room for error. The Sanskrit Speaking Union will open our horizon to the vast Hindu philosophy and way of life. It will enrich our linguistic tapestry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now I shall conclude with the Chinese Speaking Union Bill.

(Interruptions)

Sir, we all know the saying: 'All roads lead to Rome'. I surmise that this adage will shortly be changed into: 'All roads lead to China.'

(Interruptions)

In fact, the powerhouse called China is not only the second economic super-power of the world, but it is also the home to the largest population. In today's world, success is not dictated by bullets from tankers: success comes through the barrels of the economy! China has the largest internal market and boasts growth rates that are simply astonishing. According to recent reports, China has become the third tourist destination in the world. So, China has become the place to be!

Mr Speaker, Sir, how do we trade with China without knowing its languages? Mandarin has already overtaken English as the most spoken and written language in the world. It's only a matter of days, when Mandarin overtakes English as the language *par excellence* of business!

Members on both sides of this House will no doubt concur with me that knowledge of Mandarin will become a *sine qua non* for the future. In this regard, this Bill comes in the nick of time.

However, Mr Speaker Sir, we are conscious that many of our ancestors who came from China spoke Hakka and Cantonese along with Mandarin. As I said at the very beginning of my speech, language is a basic human right. The fact that only a few people speak a language in a given country is not a valid reason in itself to let the language die away – the more so as these languages have followers elsewhere. We should not forget that linguistic loss might symbolise the loss of a precious intangible heritage. In this respect, Mr Speaker, Sir, after consultations with all stakeholders, we are giving the Hakka and Cantonese dialects their due recognition through this Bill. These will be promoted, along with Mandarin, by the Chinese-Speaking Union

Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall now dwell on the objects and functions of the Arabic, Bhojpuri, Creole, Chinese and Sanskrit Speaking Unions, which are similar to those of the Marathi, Telugu and Tamil Speaking Unions and comprise, *inter alia*, the following -

- (i) promotion of the Arabic, Bhojpuri, Creole, Chinese and Sanskrit languages in their spoken and written forms;
- (ii) promotion of friendship and understanding between Arabic, Bhojpuri, Creole, Chinese and Sanskrit speaking peoples of the World, and to engage in any educational, academic, cultural and artistic work to further that objective;

- (iii) provision of facilities for the exchange of views affecting the interests, well-being, development, relationships and common problems of the speakers and users of these languages;
- (iv) promoting and encouraging the publication, exhibition and sale of books, magazines, newspapers, e-books and other literary works, including modern technologies, and
- (v) promotion of intercultural and inter-linguistic understanding and harmony through exchange and participation in joint projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after the adoption of the five Speaking unions, we will work out the amendments required regarding the existing Speaking unions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while drafting the Arabic, Bhojpuri, Creole, Chinese and Sanskrit Speaking Union Bills, care has been taken to make these Bills as comprehensive as possible. These concern the following -

Cause 6 - Executive Council

Twelve (12) elected members shall form part of the Executive Council and other members can be co-opted on an “ad-hoc” basis. They shall elect from amongst themselves the following office bearers of the Council.

- (a) A President;
- (b) A First vice-President;
- (c) A second vice-President;
- (d) A Secretary;
- (e) An Assistant Secretary;
- (f) A Treasurer;
- (g) An Assistant Treasurer, and
- (h) A Public Relations Officer

The members and office bearers shall hold office for a period of two years.

Clause 8 - Director

The Council will appoint a Director on a part-time basis, with a view to reducing the financial burden of the Union. He shall be responsible for the execution of the policy of the respective Unions, control and manage its day to day business.

The Council may also appoint such employees as may be necessary for the proper discharge of its functions under this Act.

Clause 16 - Estimates

Unions will have to submit to the Minister, not later than 30 September every year, an estimate of the income and expenditure of the Union of the next financial year for his approval.

Clause 17 - Annual Report

With a view to maintaining checks and balances and ensuring the principle of good governance, the Audited Accounts and Annual Report shall have to be submitted to the Minister not later than four (4) months after the end of a financial year.

Clause 19 - Transitional provisions

The Minister shall, at the commencement of this Act, appoint forty ordinary members who shall be the initial ordinary members of each Union. Twelve office bearers will be appointed from the initial ordinary members of the Union.

The main objective of this clause is to ensure that the Unions are operational as soon as the Act is proclaimed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the establishment of these Unions will enable us to appreciate the literary arts in different languages. They will be instrumental in the development and consolidation of the multi-linguistic landscape of our plural nation. Access to the ocean of knowledge, literary as well as scientific, will be made easier. It will give a new dimension to the concept of mutual understanding and sharing of values enshrined in the different cultures that make up our mosaic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that a Committee has already been set up, comprising of all Speaking Unions, under the chairmanship of the Permanent Secretary of

my Ministry, with a view to creating more synergy among these Unions by finding ways and means for closer collaboration and with a thrust on nation-building.

I am convinced that this strategy can allow for common and optimum use of logistics and IT-based means to further promote all languages.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, may I quote Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the father of the Nation, who said at his inaugural address on the occasion of the Second World Hindi Convention held in Mauritius on 28 August 1976, I quote -

“It is our belief that, if all languages of Mauritius are preserved, it will help preserve the essential cultural values of our different communities. Through the synthesis of these various cultures alone will be created a united culture of Mauritius in which all can cooperate.”

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I now commend the Arabic Speaking Union Bill, the Bhojpuri Speaking Union Bill, the Creole Speaking Union Bill, the Chinese Speaking Union Bill and the Sanskrit Speaking Union Bill to the House.

Thank you.

Mrs L. Dookun-Luchoomun rose and seconded.

(5.56 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger): *Mr Speaker, Sir, I think this is another opportunity to acknowledge la richesse et la diversité culturelle et linguistique de notre pays. Cette richesse et diversité culturelle et linguistique sont le résultat de notre peuplement lui-même, puisque nous le savons tous, après que les hollandais aient quitté l’île, tous nos ancêtres sont venus de l’extérieur : de l’Inde, de la Chine, de France, de Madagascar et du Mozambique surtout. Ils sont venus avec la richesse culturelle et linguistique des grandes civilisations qui occupaient déjà ces territoires. Notre richesse et diversité culturelle et linguistique s’expliquent aussi de par le fait que nous sommes un d’une demi-douzaine de pays ayant été colonie française et ensuite anglaise, ou anglaise et ensuite française. Ce qui fait que nous sommes un d’une demi-douzaine de pays appartenant au *Commonwealth* et à la francophonie. Saluons donc, une fois de plus, la richesse et la diversité culturelle et linguistique que nous ont légués nos ancêtres !*

Mr Speaker, Sir, there were already Speaking Unions for English, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and, apart from the already existing Speaking Unions, you had Alliance Française, British Council, and I shall stop there. Today, we are completing the picture, if I may say so, with the Arabic, Bhojpuri, Chinese, Sanskrit and Creole-Speaking Unions. In the case of the Chinese-Speaking Union, I understand that the Bill referred only to Mandarin and - I am given to understand that my colleague will speak more at length on that - that there is only one written form of the Chinese language, but different speaking forms. I won't call them dialects, but different speaking forms, including Mandarin, Cantonais, Hakka. Therefore, it's good that we have changed the appellation - the content rather - of what was the Mandarin-Speaking Union into a Chinese language Speaking Union. We go along with setting up of those different Speaking Unions, Mr Speaker, Sir, as we went along when other previous Speaking Unions were set up.

We are for, but I am in the habit of pointing out that we should not duplicate. We should not create confusion because we have three different sets of bodies. We have the Speaking Unions that we have and we are setting up. Secondly, we have a number of socio-cultural organisations that have promoted different languages in the past. I could refer to the Mauritius Arya Sabha, the Urdu Institute and the different socio-cultural organisations, the Mauritius Andhra Maha Sabha, the Mauritius Tamil Temples Federation, the Mauritius Marathi Mandali Federation and so on. So, we have the Speaking Unions and then we have a number of socio-cultural organisations that have done great work in the past in promoting languages amongst other things. Thirdly, we have set up cultural centres: Tamil, Telugu, Marathi Cultural Centres, the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture, the Chinese Cultural Centre, the Islamic Cultural Centre, the French Cultural Centre and the Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre for African Culture. We are probably the only country in the world where these three different sets of organisations have been created and operate in parallel.

Socio-cultural organisations that have their roots deep in the past and that have done great work in promoting ancestral and other languages in the past. Then, we have the cultural centres that we have set up and the Speaking Unions that we have and are setting up today. I think that we can all agree that there is need *de ne pas s'éparpiller*, not to duplicate, but on the contrary to coordinate matters among these three different sets of organisations.

In the case of Creole, Mr Speaker, Sir, which is the language that we all speak, *c'est surtout, de mon point de vue, la place du créole dans le système d'éducation et ici au Parlement qui devrait retenir notre attention*. I find it a bit ironical that today, in this House, we shall be voting to set up a Creole Speaking Union - Creole that we all speak - but that we are not entitled to speak here, in Parliament. I think at the time when we are creating amongst other Speaking Unions, a Creole Speaking Union, we should revisit that issue of the use of the Creole language here in the House. As I say, it is quite ironical that we are going to vote - we are going to speak in great English and French - a Creole Speaking Union, but we are not entitled to use that Creole language which we all share, here, in the House. I would wish that we make progress on that score, Mr Speaker, Sir.

On the Bills themselves, I am not happy with two points. I am not happy with the fact that elections will be organised by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry.

(Interruptions)

Yes, it is in the Schedule! I have the impression that they have not read the Schedule. They forgot to read the Schedule. In fact, it is provided in the Schedule that it is the Permanent Secretary who will organise elections. I don't think it is the role of the Permanent Secretary or of the Ministry concerned because he will have to use other officers, whereas our Electoral Commissioner's Office is very good at organising not just general elections, but the trade unions, all sorts of organisations approach it and it is always very helpful. If the Bills, as they stand, allow the Permanent Secretary to approach the Electoral Commissioner's Office, fair enough. But if this is not the case - I think it is not the case - that it is the Permanent Secretary and his officers who must organise elections. I think the Minister should revisit that part and give the possibility of resorting to the good services of the Electoral Commissioner's Office.

Secondly, why put in legislation, for all of these Speaking Unions, that there will be a part-time Director only. Why impose that? I think they will be mature enough; they will have the capacity to decide. If they can do with a part-time Director, fair enough, but if they progress sufficiently to have a full-time Director, then why not, why put this veto, if I may say so, on that. I think we should leave it open. They should be able to have a part-time or a full-time Director.

I started my speech by referring again to *la richesse et la diversité culturelle et linguistique extraordinaire de notre pays*. And I am very happy - I miss no occasion of saying

that - that today the concept of *unité dans la diversité* has unanimous support. It was not always like that. There was a time when some people thought that setting up cultural centres would *balcanisé la société mauricienne*. I am glad that this is way behind us. Today, when I hear the present Prime Minister speak of *l'unité dans la diversité*, it is as if I hear my own voice. *Tant mieux! Le temps a fait son travail. Aujourd'hui, le concept de l'unité dans la diversité - et nous venons de le constater dans le cas de la communauté Chagossienne aussi* - took time even on our side, on the MMM side ; it was not always unanimously accepted and promoted this concept of *unité dans la diversité*. *Le temps a fait son travail. Aujourd'hui, il y a une unanimité autour de ce concept de l'unité dans la diversité. Respecter notre diversité, encourager notre diversité, s'enrichir de notre diversité, mais ensuite pour construire l'unité dans le respect mutuel*. That is also why I never missed the opportunity of saying it. It took some time for the present Government, for the Labour party to accept this idea of *unité dans la diversité* and especially the concept of cultural centres. The cultural centres were made to lie dormant for a number of years. Now, everything has been reactivated. *Bravo pour notre diversité!* But one thing is still dormant. It is the Mauritian Cultural Centre that we set up by legislation and that started working.

Le couronnement de l'unité - nous avons la diversité, une diversité extraordinaire - si nous sommes sérieux à propos de l'unité dans la diversité, now the time has come to reactivate the *Centre Culturel Mauricien* so that the concept of *unité dans la diversité* will not be a *slogan creux, mais une réalité vivante*. Therefore, I appeal once more to Government. We have travelled a long way, now the time has come to reactivate and set up again *le Centre Culturel Mauricien* so that the concept of *unité dans la diversité* be truly completed. For today, we go along with the setting up of the five last Speaking Unions: Arabic, Bhojpuri, Chinese, Sanskrit and Creole.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.08 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me at the very outset to congratulate my

colleague, the hon. Minister of Arts and Culture, for introducing the five new Speaking Union Bills in this House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that the first Speaking Union was introduced in the 1990s to promote English language in its spoken and written forms. Thereafter, other languages, namely Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Urdu have also been provided with the same institutions to achieve the same goals. It is only normal and long overdue that the five languages, that is, the Arabic, Chinese, Sanskrit, Creole and Bhojpuri languages get today the same treatment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are these days being praised around the world for our economic growth, our resilience, at a time when the leading economies are still battling the aftermath of the economic crisis. But even before that, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has always been cited as a model of peaceful coexistence of so many diverse cultures, religions and ethnic groups. Our population has proved wrong those heralds of omen of Babel by making harmony a brand name for Mauritius.

Our country is young, but yet so rich in history, both political and cultural. We have an immeasurable heritage from great civilisations from Asia, Africa and Europe which has stood the test of time. This has only been possible through relentless efforts of our elders in baitkas, madrassas and, of course, in the public schools. We must continue the work that they have initiated in very adverse conditions now that we have control over the legislative body of this country.

M. le président, désormais, la reconnaissance constitutionnelle des langues de notre patrimoine implique de leur donner un cadre législatif et de créer les outils juridiques nécessaires à leur sauvegarde. Par les nouvelles propositions de lois, l'Assemblée Nationale veut faire reconnaître que leur préservation n'est pas seulement l'affaire de leurs locuteurs, mais concerne la collectivité nationale dans son ensemble car ces langues constituent un bien commun à l'ensemble de l'île Maurice.

Je voudrais rappeler ici l'article 2 de la Convention de l'UNESCO -

« La diversité culturelle est une grande richesse pour les individus et les sociétés. La protection, la promotion et le maintien de la diversité culturelle sont une condition

essentielle pour un développement durable au bénéfice des générations présentes et futures».

Il est donc nécessaire de construire une véritable politique de soutien à ces langues, qui combine les outils juridiques, institutionnels, financiers et autres. Il s'agit de sauver ce patrimoine commun.

Toutes ont leur histoire, ont généré une culture spécifique et parfois une littérature brillante, ont servi de vecteur à une pensée, à des sentiments, à des croyances précieuses dans leur singularité.

Les pouvoirs publics de notre pays sont redevables devant les générations futures de leur préservation et de leur pérennisation. Car elles contribuent à la richesse de notre Nation, et nul n'a le droit, par l'indifférence ou l'hostilité, de laisser se perdre tout ou partie de ce patrimoine inestimable.

Et c'est pourquoi, M. le président, le gouvernement a jugé important de présenter cinq nouveaux projets de loi de *Speaking Unions* pour s'ajouter aux six déjà existants. Parmi nous avons une des plus vieilles langues du monde, le sanskrit. Le sanskrit est la grande langue de la culture de l'Inde classique, et tout particulièrement la langue des écrits sacrés de l'hindouisme, mais aussi du canon bouddhique du Grand Véhicule avec le tibétain et le chinois. Il est l'une des langues officielles de l'Inde.

Le sanskrit est à la culture indienne, dont nous nous réclamons largement, ce que le latin et le grec sont pour les sociétés occidentales. Mais, contrairement, à ces deux langues dont l'usage reste confiné à l'étude des textes anciens, le sanskrit est aujourd'hui porté par un mouvement de revitalisation, qui voudrait le faire rentrer dans l'usage quotidien en Inde notamment par le mouvement Samskrita Bharati. Le projet de loi qui est présenté à l'Assemblée rejoint donc un courant international visant à préserver un patrimoine mondial.

S'agissant de l'arabe, M. le président, nous sommes en présence d'une langue qui est à la fois la langue du texte sacré de l'islam, une religion pratiquée par une grande partie des Mauriciens, mais également une langue parlée par des millions de locuteurs à travers le monde et surtout dans une partie stratégique du globe.

Donner à la langue arabe un cadre pour s'épanouir répond donc à un impératif de respect de la foi de milliers de nos compatriotes, mais aussi à souci d'intégrer un mouvement global d'acquisition d'une langue dont l'importance diplomatique, économique, culturelle et financière ne saurait être contestée.

M. le président, il en est de même pour le chinois. Langue ancestrale de milliers de nos compatriotes, le chinois, grâce à la dynamique des langues, a contribué à l'enrichissement de la culture locale. Nul ne peut sous-estimer l'importance d'un *nee-haw*, un salut qui devient aujourd'hui tout aussi connu que le *namasté*, le *salam aleikoum*, le *vanakam* ou le bonjour.

M. le président, le chinois est bien évidemment une langue qui s'impose à mesure que la Chine continue son ascension sur la carte économique et géopolitique mondial. Deuxième puissance économique mondiale, le pays de l'Empire du milieu est en passe de rafler la première place aux Etats-Unis qui auront dominé le XXe siècle.

Si l'on peut dire que cette hégémonie américaine aura permis d'imposer l'anglais à travers la planète, on peut tout aussi prévoir que le chinois sera la langue de l'avenir avec la montée en puissance de la Chine.

Nous-mêmes à Maurice nous sommes allés au-delà des liens traditionnels que nous offrait cette terre de peuplement en instaurant des relations commerciales et politiques qui s'intensifient, M. le président, d'année en année. Aujourd'hui, les Mauriciens se déplaçant vers la Chine sont avant tout des hommes d'affaires comprenant à la fois les gros importateurs comme les petits commerçants même des marchands de foire. Beaucoup d'entre eux ont compris la nécessité d'apprendre les rudiments de la langue chinoise afin de mieux faire leur travail. On aura noté également un engouement pour les classes de mandarin dans les écoles primaires.

L'institution de la *Speaking Union* ne pourra que pourvoir à un besoin sans cesse grandissant pour une meilleure connaissance et une plus grande maîtrise de cette langue.

Pour autant, M. le président, il ne faudrait pas que notre intérêt pour les langues qui s'imposent en raison de la mondialisation nous porte à négliger les langues qui sont propres à l'identité mauricienne. C'est pourquoi la proposition de loi en faveur d'une Bhojpuri et d'une Creole Speaking Union se justifie d'elles-mêmes.

La sauvegarde de notre identité mauricienne implique la protection de notre patrimoine linguistique dans son ensemble, langues ancestrales mais aussi les langues qui se sont développées sur notre territoire, c'est-à-dire le créole et le bhojpuri.

Toutes les langues proposées ont aujourd'hui d'égale importance car elles font partie d'un patrimoine indivisible.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, de citer ici le directeur général de l'Unesco -

«Les langues sont en fait des éléments essentiels pour l'identité des groupes et des personnes ainsi que pour leur coexistence pacifique. Elles représentent un facteur stratégique de progrès vers un développement durable et une relation harmonieuse entre le monde et le contexte local. Elles sont de la plus grande importance pour atteindre les objectifs de l'Éducation pour Tous et des Objectifs du Millénaire pour le Développement adoptés aux Nations Unies en 2000 ».

M. le président, depuis des décennies, le créole et le bhojpuri essaient de se frayer un chemin pour reconnaissance officielle. Aujourd'hui, cette heure est arrivée. Le gouvernement, sous le *leadership* éclairé du Premier ministre, a pris la décision historique et, *long overdue*, d'introduire le créole à l'école publique. Je suis fier, M. le président, de former partie du gouvernement qui a pris le devant pour introduire le créole à l'école.

Cette décision va donner ses lettres de noblesse à notre langue à tous. Elle va donner une fierté légitime à ses locuteurs. Cette décision va permettre à des milliers de Mauriciens de mieux maîtriser les fondamentaux de l'enseignement au primaire et de mieux progresser dans le cursus scolaire. Je me permets de citer ici un célèbre linguiste français, Alain Bentolila, de Paris V, Sorbonne :

« Il nous faut affirmer avec force que prétendre apprendre à un enfant à lire et à écrire dans une langue qu'il ne parle pas, c'est tout simplement le condamner à l'analphabétisme ».

Reprenant un rapport de l'UNICEF de 1999, la Banque Mondiale elle-même l'affirme dans le *Sourcebook for Poverty Reduction Strategies* (2001) -

« De nombreuses recherches montrent que les élèves apprennent plus vite à lire et à acquérir de nouvelles connaissances lorsqu'ils ont reçu un premier enseignement dans

leur langue maternelle. Ils apprennent également plus rapidement une seconde langue que ceux qui ont d'abord appris à lire dans une langue qui ne leur était pas familière ».

M. le président, la maîtrise des langues locales et leur utilisation dans le cadre du développement est une nécessité. C'est à ce prix que les formations techniques spécifiques deviendront des armes efficaces de lutte contre la pauvreté, en permettant au plus grand nombre d'acquérir les compétences nécessaires à l'amélioration de leurs conditions d'existence. A ceux qui pensent que le créole et le bhojpuri ne peuvent être considérés comme des langues au même titre que l'anglais ou le français ou même le hindi, je voudrais leur rappeler que les langues ont d'abord été, comme le créole et le bhojpuri aujourd'hui des langues parlées avant d'avoir une écriture, une codification ou les règles telles que nous les connaissons. Ces langues, l'anglais et le français, qui étaient auparavant appelées vulgaires ont pris du temps pour être reconnues et ce n'est qu'en 842 que l'on peut dater la naissance du français ou le francien avec Les Serments de Strasbourg, les documents avant cette date n'étant écrits qu'en latin.

C'est dire que le créole et le bhojpuri sont encore au début de leur vie. Il est important de se rappeler l'importance de ces langues dans la genèse de la nation mauricienne. Les langues de communication de bhojpuri et de créole ont aussi été les marqueurs d'identité face à des oppresseurs qui ont tout fait pour les couper de leurs racines. Si le bhojpuri a bénéficié de circonstances permettant son utilisation lors des vagues successives de l'immigration indienne, le créole a été forgé dans les conditions d'esclavage extrêmement difficiles.

M. le président, le créole de la société d'habitation a été imposé aux premiers esclaves qui devaient en moins d'un an s'approprier du français régional du nord-ouest de la France. Par la suite avec une importation massive d'esclaves venant des différents pays africains comme le Mozambique, le Sénégal ou Madagascar il y a eu une langue créole issue de la société de plantation pour utiliser comme le linguiste français Robert Chaudenson. Il faut comprendre que la logique d'amener les esclaves des différents pays reposait sur une volonté d'empêcher toute communication entre eux et ainsi bloquer tout désir de révolte. Il faut dire que l'usage de toute langue africaine était rigoureusement interdit sur toutes les plantations.

“On s'efforce de mélanger le plus possible ceux [les esclaves] qu'on amène de divers lieux d'Afrique où l'on parle divers langages et, par ce, ils ne s'entendent pas les uns et les autres” - rapportait l'écrivain britannique Richard Ligon en 1684.

Cette langue, M. le président, qui a fait des emprunts lexicaux à la langue du maître, reposait sur une syntaxe propre aux langues africaines et démontre une complexité propre à une langue. Bref, du point de vue linguistique, le créole est une langue à part entière dont la structure grammaticale est proche de celles des langues africaines et dont le lexique est en très grande majorité d'origine française, mais non exclusivement, puisqu'il subsiste un certain nombre de mots africains. Il existe aussi des influences indiennes et aussi du malgache.

Cependant, M. le président, les langues créole et bhojpuri, malheureusement, ont pendant longtemps été considérées comme des langues inférieures. Aujourd'hui, la démarche du ministre va permettre à ce que ces deux langues retrouvent un nouveau statut. Le créole et le bhojpuri, qu'on le veuille ou pas, ont été des langues les plus utilisées par les mauriciens et peut-être des éléments unificateurs inestimables pour la société mauricienne. L'institution des *Speaking Unions* va non seulement promouvoir l'utilisation de ces langues, mais va certainement aussi rehausser le statut de ces langues et de ce fait le *self-esteem* de tous les mauriciens qui utilisent ces langues. Il nous appartient à nous, législateurs, de donner cette reconnaissance officielle au créole et au bhojpuri, mais aussi à toutes les langues qui font partie de notre patrimoine linguistique. Il nous échoit d'en faire des langues à part entière pour des générations à venir. Il nous revient de tout faire pour que ces langues soient préservées et encouragées. Or la disparition d'une langue n'est pas seulement une perte pour la communauté de ces locuteurs, mais aussi pour notre connaissance humaine commune car une langue est bien plus qu'un instrument de communication. C'est aussi le vecteur d'une façon de penser, d'une culture, le dépositaire de l'histoire d'un peuple, d'une mythologie, d'une cosmogonie, d'une musique. Ce ne sont pas seulement des mots que l'on perd avec une langue, mais un regard sur le monde.

M. le président, les milliers de langues que compte aujourd'hui la planète sont par ailleurs les réceptacles de connaissances importantes pour le reste de l'humanité. Par exemple, certains scientifiques estiment que plus de 80% de la flore mondiale demeure inconnue des occidentaux, alors que les locuteurs des langues en danger connaissent et utilisent ces plantes, notamment dans leurs médecines traditionnelles.

Beaucoup d'actions sont aujourd'hui engagées à travers le monde pour sauver les œuvres d'art, des monuments, des lieux de mémoire etc. Partout l'on estime qu'il est important de restaurer telle pièce de musée, de classer tel patrimoine d'humanité, tel village ancien et de veiller à ce que ne disparaisse tel site archéologique.

Tous ces programmes de préservation, M. le président, existent parce que les êtres humains sont conscients de la nécessité de transmettre ce qu'ils ont appris, imaginé, construit au fil des âges parce que le savoir et l'expérience doivent être perpétués parce que sans le passé l'avenir est appauvri. Alors la question qui se pose c'est : quelle différence entre des pierres et des langues, entre des toiles et des contes ? Quelle différence entre des productions matérielles et des productions immatérielles ? Les unes et les autres sont le fruit de l'imagination et du génie humain. Tout comme les monuments, les langues du monde sont des œuvres à préserver. Elles sont notre héritage commun, elles ont traversé des siècles et des millénaires. Elles ont été transmises jusqu'à nous de génération en génération et il est de notre devoir de ne laisser disparaître cette part immense de notre patrimoine.

C'est pour ces raisons, M. le président, que je suis fier d'appartenir à un gouvernement qui est venu de l'avant, qui a pris le devant pour la sauvegarde de ces langues ancestrales, identitaires et aussi je saisis l'opportunité pour féliciter une nouvelle fois mon collègue, l'honorable ministre pour la présentation de ces six projets de loi.

Merci beaucoup M. le président.

(6.27 p.m.)

Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill is most welcome although it arrives rather belatedly. Before I talk about the Bill, maybe, I can start with some preliminary remarks on Speaking Unions. There may be some criticisms levelled at the creation of Speaking Unions in the sense that they may be considered to be divisive especially along linguistic lines.

On the one hand, let us note that there is no guarantee that people who speak the same language can live in harmony. Northern Ireland is a classic example, but on the other hand, people who have the same objective in building a nation, will succeed only if they have the desire and the will to achieve a harmonious society. A nation is not given nor does it pre-exist, it

has to be constructed. Each one of us has the duty to contribute to this construction. The Mauritian nation has to be built through this interaction between the various ethnic groups. We may speak different languages and have different cultures and values, we may come from different lands, but we are so to speak in the same boat. In fact, in Chinese, we call it 'son-yiw', because we travelled through trials and tribulations along the same boat to come to this far remote land. I think in Hindi we call it 'dahaji-bhai', because we are on the same boat and we have to live together. We are now a nation with several languages, hence the relevance of these different Speaking Unions today.

To come to this Bill, I must say that when it was first introduced as the Mandarin Speaking Union Bill, I felt most ill at ease, I felt even so to speak speechless, like excluded, because in Mauritius, we are mainly of Hakka and Cantonese culture. When we get a Bill that is specifically called Mandarin Speaking Union Bill, it looks like marginalising us and I am very glad that the hon. Minister of Culture, hon. Choonee, who was President of The World Chinese Conference which we organised in 1992 when I was the General Secretary, was receptive to our representation that we should not label this Bill Mandarin Speaking, but open it to other speaking versions of the Chinese language. I am glad that we have in that context the support of our Leader of the Opposition, hon. Paul Bérenger here and also of the Prime Minister.

I am glad that, with this openness of mind, the original appellation has now been changed to Chinese-Speaking Union. It is good that it is so, because it takes into account the specificity of the Sino-Mauritian community in Mauritius. It is good, therefore, that it includes the Mandarin, Hakka and Cantonese dialects, and leaves the door also open for other dialects in the future. Had this not been changed, the Bill would have been dead before it is born, because in Mauritius only a handful of people speak Mandarin. Even if it were so, it is not their mother tongue, because it is spoken by people of Chinese origin who have migrated very late here with the textile and the construction industry. So, the two main dialects which are most spoken in Mauritius are the Hakka and the Cantonese, although there is also Chinese of Fujianese ancestry. Unfortunately, they no longer speak the Fujianese language any more. So, for business and social purposes, the Hakka dialect has virtually become the lingua franca, because it is the maternal tongue of the majority of the Mauritians of Chinese origin in Mauritius. 90% of Chinese-Mauritian population are Hakka, and the remaining 10% is Cantonese.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we look at the objects and functions of the Union, the first one spells out as follows –

“(a) promote the Chinese language in its spoken and written forms.”

I had some problem with that, and I did share my apprehension with the Minister of Culture. Chinese has only one language, one written form. But there are many spoken forms, many dialects, not meaning that one dialect is inferior to the others, because there are just different ways of speaking the same written language. Therefore, when it is said ‘to promote the Chinese language in its spoken and written forms’, it gives the impression that there are many written forms, when there is only one written form; there is only one linguistic system. I would have preferred that it is termed in the other way: ‘to promote the Chinese language in its written and spoken forms’, where the emphasis is more on the ‘spoken’ forms and ‘forms’ is plural because of the combination of written and spoken. But, be that as it may, we fully support this Bill, which opens it up for the promotion and preservation of other dialects than Mandarin.

In a sense, Mandarin is just a dialect like Hakka and Cantonese. When we speak of a Chinese language, it simply means that there are various spoken versions of this Chinese language. Therefore, Mandarin is just one modern spoken version of the Chinese language, having been promoted recently and adopted as the national language, in the sense that it is a relatively recent event in Chinese civilisation.

The Chinese are lucky in the sense that they have only one language for such a large population, and that was thanks to one Chinese Emperor who unified the language centuries ago. Until this day, we identify, therefore, only one language, one script, although there are many ways of reading it. Each group, whether regional or cultural, has its own spoken version. Therefore, this is a marvel that today we have, at least, seven major dialects of the Chinese language.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius, we need to preserve and promote the Hakka language, because this is a language that is declining among the youth and, therefore, we should not allow it to continue to decline and disappear. The object of this Speaking Union is very laudable and comes well in time. Hakka and Cantonese are the languages that are spoken by the Chinese Diaspora. Mandarin, for many people of the Chinese Diaspora, is, in fact, a second language. It is like a foreign language to them. We, in fact, do not need to bother too much about Mandarin,

because it is a global language; it is the language of a superpower, and it is going to gather more and more recognition. Actually, the promotion of the Hakka and the Cantonese dialects is going to reinforce the appreciation of Mandarin, and is going to encourage the learning of Mandarin among people interested in the Chinese language. The appellation of Chinese-Speaking Union is, therefore, most appropriate.

When we talk about the need to have a Hakka revival, this is because we know that this language is spoken by over 60 million people, which is the size of the population of Great Britain and France. Mauritius is a model, is unique, in the sense that it's the greatest concentration of Hakka people among Chinese in a single country existing in the world. There are other countries where there is a majority of Hakka people living, namely Reunion Island, East Timor, Surinam - where Bhojpuri also is a very common language - Jamaica, Tahiti and Calcutta. These are the places where you have a majority of Hakka. I think Mauritius is the place where you have the highest ratio of Hakka among the Chinese Diaspora.

What is the Hakka language? For this purpose, I need to quote from the book written by Mr Joseph Tsang Man Kin, called 'The Hakka Destiny', which says as follows -

“Some linguists have been affirming that Hakka was the language of the Tang (618-905) dynasties and the poetry of the period can recover their rhyming patterns only when read in Hakka. If only that were the case, and indeed it is, Hakka is, therefore, an important part of the world's heritage and as such, like all treasures that have come down to us, deserves to be protected, nurtured and handed over to the future generations. Thus, the Hakka people have an exceptional destiny. We certainly have a duty to revive and promote Hakkinese.”

What are the Hakka people? Here also, I need to quote from another Mauritian writer, Mr Clément Chan Wan Thuen, who was a former Permanent Secretary. In his book 'Hakkas Worldwide', he says that the Hakka are, in fact, a term to describe wanderers, sojourners, guest people. People are called Hakka, because they are considered to be guests in the land. Hakka are migrants; they come from the North and have been migrating, because they are always resisting the invasion of 'non-Han' tribes who wanted to invade their region. Therefore, they keep fighting them and keep fleeing them, and migrate down South where they are considered to be foreigners, migrants and, therefore, Hakka. They have no fixed abode and they are always on the move and,

therefore, they have no province. The Hakka language is not attached to any province; like Cantonese comes from the province of Guangdong, Fujianese comes from the province of Fujian but Hakka has no province. They have only their language. So, language is part of the Hakka identity. That is why the Hakka people cling to their language. That is why I am so proud and so happy that this Bill is a Chinese- Speaking Union Bill.

When we talk of the Hakka, in the case of Mauritius, we need to note that they first arrived in 1860. This is the first contingent of Hakka people who arrived in Mauritius. Because the previous contingents of Chinese that arrived in Mauritius under the French colonial rule and the British rule as coolies to work in the sugarcane plantations were not successful because these Chinese were exceptionally rebellious and unruly and the colonial powers, the French and the British, had to terminate their experiments with Chinese coolies.

The first Hakka arrived in 1860s and mainly started the retail shops. When the immigration control was removed in 1877, this led to more and more Hakka immigrants, but there were already Cantonese and Fujianese settlement in Mauritius who became, therefore, quickly outnumbered; hence, the majority of Hakka population in Mauritius. But because there was shortage of women in those days, the Hakka migrants had to mix with the local community and that is why we have a lot of Chinese who married among the Indians and the Creoles and we have a very mixed, what we call '*Creole Chinois*' among the Chinese population. Very often, they were brought back to China for education and for family upbringing by their ancestral family. Hence, the Hakka people have been able, therefore, to preserve their language and their culture.

In order to talk about this objective of promoting the Hakka language and Cantonese for that matter, it is important to look at the ethos, the values and the customs of the Hakka people. Here, it is important for me to associate the public image of the Hakka with certain core principles and values that they represent. In that sense, it is important for me to mention three things. One is the retail shop which everybody knows as '*la boutique chinois*'. The second is the tavern and the third is the '*carnet rouge*', the '*carnet la boutique*'.

The shop is very important because it is the mark of the success of the poor, hapless Chinese who have come to Mauritius after a long voyage in rough seas to an unknown land and he has been sheltered and protected by his family and then he started totally on his own in a

remote village, in the midst of people he did not know and he had to survive. But the shop is a mark of his success because he is now in control of his own destiny. That is why the shop has a very important role for him and for the community. In the promotion of the Hakka language and the Hakka culture and customs, this association is very significant because the Chinese shopowner has been able to invent the methods of retailing, because he has been able to split up the goods that he sells into small units to sell to the inhabitants, because instead of allowing people to go hungry and unable to buy the food or the goods, the Chinese shopkeeper has been inventive and innovative enough to split it up, to sell it by small units so that it becomes affordable to customers. In this way, social stability has been maintained because people were able to survive with the very little money that they had available. This is one aspect of the ingenuity and hard work of the Chinese.

The second aspect is the tavern because although excessive drinking is condemned, the Chinese know that there is no place of relaxation in the countryside. In those days, there was no television and the cinema is very far from the small village. So, the bar played a central role like a community club so that people came around in conviviality and harmony and in spite of the occasional brawls and fights, the bar safely kept all the customers away from harm. It was a positive social role that was played by the Chinese shopkeeper for communal harmony and conviviality and that contributed to the stability of the rural community.

This brings me to the other innovation of the Chinese which is the '*carnet ration*', the '*carnet la boutique*'. This is an instrument of mutual trust. Nobody is forced to take it and the shopkeeper is not compelled to give it to anybody. It is a mark of trust that an account is opened with this little red book. The red book is a symbol of the solidarity and the human trust. When the rural people needed, during the intercrop season or when they are unemployed, to buy food to keep the family alive and when the plantation barons could not help and the banks refused to grant loans without collateral, while the loan sharks were ready to swoop down on them, only the Chinese shopkeepers were ready to give them help and to fill the vacuum. It was a win-win situation for both the customers and the shopkeepers. Without this type of unsecured credit system, many villagers would have suffered starvation and great hardship and may even have turned to violence and troubles and created social unrest at a time when there was no social security system.

In fact, late Sir Satcam Boolell was one of the politicians who paid tribute to this ingenuity and sense of solidarity of the Chinese shopkeeper with his '*carnet la boutique*'. Sir Satcam said, in one of his books, that many a wedding in the countryside would not have taken place in the village if it were not for the local Chinese shopkeeper who had given his green light for giving credit to buy all the ingredients for the wedding. So, the Chinese shopkeeper was like a village banker, a village doctor, a village confidant and a family counselor. Richard Titmuss and Brian Abel-Smith also said, in their report in 1968, that in the absence of social security provisions, the Chinese shopkeepers certainly helped the workers and their families to weather some of the common contingencies of sickness and unemployment.

The spirit of solidarity and mutual trust which is ingrained in the Chinese shopkeeper is an image also which will mark all the people interested in the Chinese language and the Chinese culture. Therefore, when we see in the objects and functions of the Union that it serves to promote intercultural and inter-linguistic understanding and harmony through exchange and participation in joint projects, I think this is a very appropriate objective to promote under this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also important for me to highlight a few of the other things that are mentioned in the Bill namely the membership of the Union and the Council members. The Minister made mention of a batch of first 40 members to be appointed. I would urge him to make sure that he does not just appoint people who represent respective specific clans and associations or even self-appointed representatives. He should make sure that, at least, the members speak the language and are really interested in understanding and promoting the Chinese culture.

In the case of the Council members, it is mentioned that they should hold office for a period of two years. I would also urge the Minister here to limit this mandate to a maximum of two terms of two years because, if not, we will end up with people who are permanent members of the Executive Council for an infinite number of years.

In the case of the appointment of a patron of the Council, it is important for me also to highlight the fact that it would be important not to appoint a political activist as patron for the Council.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have tried to highlight the importance of preserving and promoting the Hakka and Cantonese dialects while opening the doors for other dialects. The

Chinese-Speaking Union will have a tremendous task ahead. I am confident that the Chinese-Speaking Union will be manned by capable people who will fulfill the task. The Hakka elders have said always that it would be better to sell everything that one's ancestors have left behind than to forget to speak their language.

I end here by expressing the hope that the Chinese-Speaking Union will achieve all the objectives set out and that the Hakka dialect will not meet the same fate as the hapless Dodo. The final quote comes from the Hadith which says: 'Seek knowledge even if you have to travel to China'. This is an incitement not only to learn the Chinese language, but also to seek knowledge in the farthest sphere.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Peetumber rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not propose to move the Second Reading of the International Criminal Court Bill (No. XXIII of 2010) today.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 17 May 2011 at 11.30 a.m.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L. Duval) rose and seconded.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTER RAISED

(6.54 p.m.)

LATE PANDIT BASDEO DOOKHIT - TRIBUTE

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Speaker, Sir, I rise with the utmost humility to appeal to Government to honour the memory of late Pandit Basdeo Dookhit born Kewal Dookhit of Bassin Road, Quatre Bornes. Born on 01 March 1924, that distinguished personality left his mortal coil on 20 December last year at the age of 86. He took birth in Mon Loisir and started to reside at Bassin Road at a very early age. Those were the difficult colonial days, he was gratified with only basic primary education, became an orphan when he was quite young and after leaving school, did several odd jobs, including vegetable selling.

He was a self-made man, an autodidact. He became a follower of Pandit Basdeo Bissoondoyal and embraced the *Arya Samaj* Movement and became a devoted proponent of this vanguard movement. He was officiating as a priest not only in the region of Bassin, Palma and Quatre Bornes, but all over the island. He was not only a dedicated teacher and officiating priest, but also a tireless social worker. He was available and accessible at any time and his generosity and selflessness made him of a household name and a popular personality of the region. As a priest whose services were free, he gladly contributed from his personal funds for the construction of many places of worship and other social organisations. During winter time he would distribute blankets to the poor, bought religious textbooks and even funded the reprinting of spiritual texts, the most well known of them being *Les Chants de L'Ame* written by Mr Gangaram which he distributed free of charge to students and young people. His modest house in Bassin Road in those days became a sanctuary for different swamis and acharyas who visited Mauritius from India. Swami Krishnanand was one of them.

Pandit Basdeo Dookhit would very often organise *satsangs* and *yags* in the neighborhood and would bear all the expenses in the company of these Indian swamis. Pandit Basdeo Dookhit had spent his whole adult life tirelessly propagating the message of Swami Dayanand and propagating Vedic culture. He became a stalwart of the *Arya Samaj* Association of Bassin Road and he had received well-deserved decorations during his lifetime. He was made OBE. He was made *citoyen d'honneur de la ville de Quatre Bornes*. He received the most distinguished decoration of *Arya Ratna* from the Republic of India.

He was a highly cultured person endowed with a broad mind and his outlook was of a universal character. He had the habit of interrupting his *pravachan* in Hindi and would have recourse to French whilst in the heat of explaining the most complex Vedic concepts. He had no hesitation to collaborate with the Catholic priest of the region of neighboring Palma. He was known for his openness.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I, on behalf of the multitude of inhabitants of Bassin, Palma and Quatre Bornes appeal to the hon. Minister of Arts and Culture and to the Government to honour the memory of this *Mauricien hors pair*. In a recent public tribute paid to him which was held at the *Arya Samaj* of Bassin, members of this association unanimously expressed the wish to perpetuate his memory and rename a public place after him. Various suggestions have been made, renaming the Palma Junction Road which links Bassin Road to Palma Road or the Health Centre of Bassin Road or the green space at Rivière Bassin or renaming the new State Secondary School of Palma after him. Of course, Government can choose in consultation with the members of his family or the office bearers of the *Arya Samaj* Bassin of any other public place.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my plea to Government today coincides with the celebration of the centenary of the *Arya Samaj* Movement at Port Louis which was done with pomp and dignity a few days ago and I have no doubt that my appeal will not fall on deaf ears.

I thank Government and you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr M. Choonee): Mr Speaker, Sir, while recognising the contribution of the thousands of Mauritians who pass away every year after having, in their own humble way, contributed in the making of the nation, I humbly submit that it will neither be practical nor possible to honour the memories of all of them. We hold all of them at heart and fear that selecting only a few among them may betray our respect and recognition for all of them.

I sympathise with the family of the bereaved.

At 7.10 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 17 May 2011, at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

IBA – STANDARDS COMMITTEE

(No. B/273) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the Independent Broadcasting Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to if it has -

(a) set up a Standards Committee and, if so, indicate -

(i) when;

(ii) the number of meetings held;

(iii) if it has drawn up a code of ethics for licensees and a code of advertising practice, indicating when in each case;

(iv) if it has issued directives to radio licensees, since May 2005 to date and, if so indicate the recipients and substance thereof, and

(b) issued guidelines to licensees, since 2008 to date, in relation to political broadcast and advertising and, if so, indicate the number, substance and details.

Reply: In regard to parts (a) (i) and (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Director of the Independent Broadcasting Authority that the Standards Committee was set up in March 2002, pursuant to Section 29 of the IBA Act, but no meeting was held from the year 2002 to 2005. From 2006 to date the Standards Committee has met on seven occasions.

In regard to part (a) (iii) of the question, I am informed by the Director that a draft Code of Ethics and Good Conduct and a draft Code of Advertising Practice have been prepared and were presented to the relevant stakeholders for discussions on 02 July 2010 and 05 July 2010 respectively. These two documents are in the process of being finalised and will be launched next month.

In regard to part (a) (iv) of the question, I am informed by the Director that, on the recommendations of the IBA Complaints Committee, the Authority has issued seven directives

to radio licensees since May 2005 to date. These directives relate to ensuring the accuracy of matters which are broadcast and the presentation of news in a fair and balanced manner, the avoidance of defamatory remarks and consent of all parties concerned before the broadcast of confidential matters.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Director that the Authority has issued two sets of guidelines to licensees since 2008 to date, in relation to political broadcast and advertising.

With your permission, I am tabling a copy each of the set of guidelines.

VIPSU OFFICE – INCIDENT – 01 MAY 2011

(No.B/274) 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 incident which occurred, on 01 May 2011, whereby a gunshot was fired at the office of the Very Important Person Security Unit office, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto, and if so, indicate the -

- (a) circumstances thereof;
- (b) actions taken, if any, against the Police Sergeant, and
- (c) if consideration will be given for a review of the conditions for the issue of guns to VIPSU officers.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that no Police Sergeant at VIPSU was involved in any alleged negligent discharge from his firearm. However, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Sunday 01 May 2011 at 07 26 hrs, a Police Inspector attached to the VIPSU, proceeded to the VIPSU Armoury to collect his weapon as he was on duty on that day. The Armourer handed over to him the weapon with ammunitions. The Police Inspector thereafter proceeded to the loading bay to load

his weapon. Whilst he was doing so, a shot was accidentally fired and the bullet landed in the loading bay.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the Officer in Charge of the VIPSU Armoury has secured the weapon and ammunitions and an enquiry has been initiated. Upon completion thereof, appropriate action, if any, will be taken.

In regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the VIPSU Order on “Safekeeping and issuing of arms and ammunitions” already encompasses all safety measures regarding firearms. All VIPSU Officers undergo regular training in “Weapon Handling” at the VIPSU Training Wing and carry out firing exercises at the VIPSU firing range. They are all well conversant with the safety rules to be followed. Therefore, a review of the conditions for the issue of firearms to VIPSU Officers does not currently arise.

NATIONAL AIDS SECRETARIAT- ACTIVITIES

(No.B/275) 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 National AIDS Committee, he will state when it held its last meeting, indicating the measures taken by the Committee to address the issue of discrimination against HIV and AIDS patients.

Reply: As the House is aware, I took the decision in December 2006 to set up a National AIDS Secretariat within my Office with a view to ensuring a more proactive national response to HIV and AIDS. The National AIDS Secretariat coordinates HIV/AIDS programmes and activities with all stakeholders to address issues relating to prevention, treatment, care and support for both infected and affected and to ensure the protection of their human rights. I am regularly briefed on the activities of the National AIDS Secretariat.

Under the leadership of the National AIDS Secretariat, a multi-sectoral approach is adopted to tackle the problems relating to HIV and AIDS. In 2006, Mauritius set its Universal Access targets for 2010 for 10 key indicators related to prevention, treatment, care and support. In January 2011, the National AIDS Secretariat led a review of achievements towards the set targets and defined new ones for 2015, the year of the Millennium Development Goals. The review process showed that Mauritius has progressed significantly towards universal access and strategies were developed to take us further.

Government has constantly increased the budget for the fight against HIV and AIDS. An amount of Rs68.5 m. was provided for financial years 2010 and 2011 respectively to combat HIV/AIDS. In addition, in 2009, the Global Fund provided funding to the tune of Rs326 m. to support the Government in the HIV and AIDS implementation of its National Strategic Framework.

The National AIDS Committee, which I overview, provides leadership at the national level to ensure the implementation of multi-sectoral strategies to fight HIV and AIDS. The Committee meets as and when the need is felt.

We have adopted a holistic approach to address the issue relating to discrimination and stigmatization against HIV and AIDS. In this regard, my Government has taken several bold measures ranging from legislative, institutional, information/education/communication to capacity building. These include -

- The HIV and AIDS Act 2006 prohibits, among others, all forms of discrimination against people living with the virus.
- The HIV and AIDS (Miscellaneous) Act 2008 was passed to amend the Civil Status Act, the Immigration Act and the HIV and AIDS Act to ensure that there is no discrimination in respect of a marriage of a Mauritian citizen with an HIV positive foreigner.
- As from September 2009, health care services on HIV and AIDS have been decentralised to regional hospitals to facilitate accessibility of treatment to People living with HIV and AIDS. Previously, all HIV infected people were clinically managed at Dr Bouloux Area Health Centre, Cassis, thus increasing stigma associated with the HIV. Services are now offered at Volcy Pougnet Community Health Centre, near Dr Jeetoo Hospital, Victoria Hospital and SSRN Hospital.
- Testing facilities have been extended to Area Health Centres in Mauritius and Rodrigues.
- Private Laboratories registered with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life have been authorised to conduct HIV testing.
- An AIDS Unit has been set up in the Prison Department providing access to treatment for both HIV positive male and female inmates.

- An AIDS Unit has been set up by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and is offering all facilities to HIV patients as well as to those who come for HIV testing, without discrimination.
- Regular awareness campaigns are undertaken to ensure that people with HIV status are not being discriminated.
- Regular training sessions are conducted with all health care personnel – medical, nursing and para-medical staff – in the public and private sectors.

I should like to inform the House that on 06 April last, I met Dr. Mamoudou Diallo, UNAIDS Country Coordinator and Mr Jude Padayachy, UNAIDS Regional Monitoring & Evaluation Adviser and reviewed HIV and AIDS situation in Mauritius. They praised Mauritius for its achievements in tackling HIV and AIDS.

My Government places high priority in the fight against HIV and AIDS with a view to improving the quality of life of people living with this disease. Much progress has been achieved in reaching the goals set out in the National Strategic Framework 2007-2011. However, we will continue to revisit the existing legislation and institutional framework, if such need is felt, to further improve aspects regarding discrimination and stigmatisation.

RODRIGUES - MBC - PRESS COVERAGE

(No. B/276) Mr C. Leopold (First Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the press coverage of conferences and other issues related to political activities in Rodrigues by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to -

(a) the reasons for the delay in the broadcasting on the television of the

press conference held by the Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues, on or about 18 April 2011, and

(b) a breakdown of the time allocated to the *Mouvement Rodriguais* and *l'Organisation du Peuple de Rodrigues* parties on MBC television and radio on the celebration of the Labour Day.

(Withdrawn)

TRANQUEBAR & WARD IV - POLICE STATION

(No. A/107) 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 he has received representations from the inhabitants of Tranquebar and the Ward IV regions of Port Louis for the setting up of a Police Station thereat and, if so, will he state if consideration will be given thereto.

Reply: The Police have received requests from the inhabitants of Tranquebar and Ward IV for the setting up of Police Stations in their respective regions.

Tranquebar falls under the jurisdiction of Pope Hennessy Police Station which is located at about 1 km and has a population of about 10,000 persons.

According to available statistics, there is a decreasing trend in the number of crime and misdemeanor cases reported to Police for the region. In fact, the crime rate is low compared to the number of cases reported in the whole station area of Pope Hennessy. In view of the proximity to the nearest Police Station, the crime rate and the level of daily activities there, the setting up of a Police Station does not arise for the time being.

As for the region of Ward IV, it is serviced by Line Barracks Police Station which is at a distance of around 1 km. It has a population of about 5,000 persons and is mainly a residential area.

The crime rate in this region is also on a decreasing trend. It is therefore not envisaged for the time being to construct a Police Station there.

FOREIGN NATIONALS - MAURITIAN CITIZENSHIP

(No. A/108) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the foreign nationals who have been granted Mauritian citizenship and or Nationality, since June 2005 to date, he will state the country of origin, in each case.

Reply: Mauritian citizenship is granted to the following categories of foreign nationals in accordance to a specific criteria which are stipulated in the Mauritius Citizenship Act under the sections listed below -

- (i) registration under section 5 in respect of a Commonwealth citizen, if he has resided in Mauritius for a continuous period of 5 years immediately preceding the date of his application;
- (ii) registration under section 6 in respect of a minor child of a citizen of Mauritius;
- (iii) registration under section 7 in respect of the foreign spouse of a Mauritian citizen, if he/she has resided with his/her spouse under the same conjugal roof in Mauritius for an aggregate period of four years immediately preceding the date of his application;
- (iv) naturalisation under section 9 in respect of a non Commonwealth citizen if he has resided in Mauritius for –
 - (a) a continuous period of 12 months immediately preceding the date of his application;
 - (b) during the seven years immediately preceding the period of 12 months referred to at paragraph (a), for aggregate periods amounting to not less than 5 years, and

(c) in respect of an investor if he has invested a sum of not less than US\$500,000 in Mauritius and he has resided in Mauritius for a continuous period of not less than 2 years preceding the date of his application.

(v) under section 15(2) in respect of a person who ceased to be a citizen of Mauritius, for failing to renounce the nationality or citizenship of that foreign country under the previous section 15 of the Mauritius Citizenship Act.

Once a person has been granted Mauritian Citizenship or Nationality, he becomes a Mauritian citizen like others.

It is therefore not proper to try to make distinctions between Mauritian citizens.

CHOISY CONTOUR PRUNE – DRAIN & SEWERAGE SYSTEM

(No. A/109) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the region of Choisy Contour Prune in Constituency No.14, Savanne and Black River, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Black River District Council, information as to if consideration will be given for the construction of a drain and a sewerage system thereat and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the Black River District Council that there already exists a drain network in the regions of Choisy Contour Prune Nos. 1, 2 and 3. Furthermore a drain has recently been constructed along Samson Road.

However, I am also informed that there are no drains in the region between Samson Road and Choisy Road and same may be constructed subject to availability of the required funds.

With regard to the last part of the question, the decision for provision of a sewerage system in that region rests solely with the Waste Water Management Authority.

FOOD SECURITY

(No. A/110) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the recent food price increases, especially in relation to staple foods such as wheat, maize, sugar, edible oil and rice, he will state the measures Government proposes to take –

- (a) for the reduction thereof and
- (b) to encourage investment in agriculture and address the issue of food security for our country, together with the international financial institutions.

Reply: My Ministry is not mandated to state measures that Government proposes to take in regard to reduction of food price. However, my Ministry is encouraging production of food crops and vegetables as well as livestock.

As regards part (b) my Ministry has taken several measures under the Food Security Programme to promote production of certain commodities that can be grown under our local soil and agro climate conditions. These measures are currently being implemented through various schemes and projects to enhance production as indicated in the 3-year strategic plan for crop and livestock.

VALLÉE PITOT - CANALISATION PROJECT

(No. A/111) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he has received representations from the inhabitants of Vallée Pitot for a canalisation project, starting from the slope of the mountain to the bridge, on the Edward Street, Port Louis and, if so, will he state if consideration will be given thereto.

Reply: A request was received in November 2010 for the improvement of a storm drain at Vallée Pitot up to Edward Bridge.

I am informed that work on site has started on 30 April 2011 and is in progress.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND COMPETITIVENESS PROGRAMME - FUNDS

(No. A/112) Mr K. Li Kwong (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Economic Restructuring and Competitiveness Programme, he will state the –

- (a) amount earmarked;
- (b) amount disbursed as at to date;
- (c) criteria and procedures for evaluation and allocation of the funds disbursed;

- (d) list of beneficiaries, indicating in each case the -
 - (i) amount disbursed
 - (ii) nature of the assistance
 - (iii) economic sector involved
 - (iv) terms and conditions attached thereto and
 - (v) results achieved, and
- (e) composition of the ERCP Committee and a report on the steps it has taken to monitor and control progress on the use of the funds disbursed.

Reply: The information requested is being tabled.

EARLY CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT - TRAINING

(No. A/113) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to early child care and development, he will state if her Ministry proposes to recruit trainees therefor and, if so indicate the –

- (a) number of trainees who will be recruited, and
- (b) details of the training which will be provided, including -
 - (i) who will dispense same;
 - (ii) the duration thereof, and
 - (iii) the scheduled starting dates thereof.

Reply: Under its Child and Family Empowerment Programme, the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) intends to set up some 10 Day Care Centres in vulnerable regions. Further, after a survey indicating an acute shortage of qualified personnel in existing Day Care Centres, a Training and Placement Programme was mounted by the NEF in 2010 with the objective of providing training to some 275 Assistant Care Givers, over a period of one and a half years.

With regard to part (a) of the question, a first batch of 60 trainees, the majority being holders of CPE and coming from underprivileged regions, was enrolled in a 8-month “Foundation Course for Child Day Care Givers”, which started in September 2010.

A second training programme started on 20 January 2011 with 115 trainees and is expected to be completed on 20 September 2011. A third group of 120 trainees has been enrolled as from 03 May 2011 and the programme will end in December 2011.

With regard to part (d) of the question, the formal training is dispensed by the Mauritius Institute of Education and is conducted on two week days, spread over a three-month period. It consists of a 60-hour course comprising of two modules on “Managing Child Day Care Centres” and “Child Growth, Development and Care” of 30 hours each. On the other three days, the trainees are placed in Day Care Centres for practical sessions under the supervision of qualified Child Day Care Givers. The trainees also followed a mandatory “First Aid Course” delivered by the Red Cross Society of Mauritius.

At the end of the three-month course, the trainees undertake a formal examination in theory and practice and they are afterwards placed on a full-time basis in a selected Day Care Centre for five months. A monthly stipend of Rs4,000, inclusive of transport costs, is provided to each trainee by the NEF and the latter also meets the cost of the course, amounting to Rs4,000 per trainee. On completion of the placement and training, the trainees can be employed as “Assistant Child Day Care Givers”.

BOOKMAKERS – FOOTBALL MATCHES – BETTING

(No. A/114) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Gambling Regulatory Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the number of licences which have been revoked or cancelled for non-compliance with the conditions of licence in respect of the fixing of odd betting on overseas football matches, indicating how and when the licensees were informed thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Gambling Regulatory Authority (GRA) that no licences in respect of Bookmakers conducting fixed odds betting on football matches taking place outside Mauritius have so far been revoked or cancelled.

HOSPITALS – OBESITY PATIENTS – TREATMENT

(No. A/115) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to obesity, she will state the treatment available in public hospitals for patients suffering therefrom.

Reply: Obesity is not a disease for which treatment or medication is available as any other diseases. It is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases.

Accordingly, a person who is considered to be obese or who is at risk of being so, is given appropriate counselling about eating habits and modifications in lifestyles, namely to do physical exercise, to quit smoking and avoid alcohol abuse. Education materials are also given to support the counselling exercise.

In the case of an obese person who suffers from associated medical conditions, he is treated with medication for that particular medical problem.

QUATRE BORNES MUNICIPAL COUNCIL– COUNCILLORS - OVERSEAS MISSIONS

(No. A/116) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the overseas missions undertaken by the Mayor and the Municipal Councillors of the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, since October 2005 to-date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, a list thereof, indicating in each case the -

- (a) countries visited and the duration thereof ;
- (b) composition of the delegation;
- (c) amount of money spent in terms of air tickets, *per diem* and/or any other allowances,
and
- (d) purpose thereof.

Reply: The information requested by the hon. Member is being compiled and will be placed in the Library as soon as the exercise will be completed.

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY – CAFETERIA

(No. A/117) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the cafeteria of the University of Technology, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University, information as to the –

- (a) duration of the contract signed with the present operator, indicating the terms and conditions thereof, and
- (b) if it proposes to launch tenders therefor at the expiry of the present contract.

Reply: As regards part (a), I am informed by the University of Technology, Mauritius that –

- (i) the duration of the contract was for a two-year term from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2009. The contract was renewed from 01 January 2010 to 31 December 2010;
- (ii) the caterer is operating on a month to month basis until approval of a new operator by the UTM Board, and
- (iii) The terms and conditions of the contract are as follows -

Opening Hours: On weekdays: from 08.00 hrs to 19.00 hrs

Rent: Rs 12, 000 monthly

Utility Bills (Electricity and Water): Payable by Caterer on the basis of sub meter readings.

As regards part part (b), a new tender exercise has already been initiated by UTM.

SIR EDGAR LAURENT STREET, PORT LOUIS - HAND RAILS

(No. A/118) 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 Sir Edgar Laurent Street, Port Louis, he will state if consideration will be given for the urgent installation of hand rails thereat, at the level of the Tabagie Islamic up to the traffic lights, to reinforce the safety and security of the students attending the Islamic Cultural College.

Reply: I am informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit that it will carry out a road safety audit along Sir Edgar Laurent Street in the vicinity of Islamic Cultural College. In light of the findings, appropriate measures will be taken for the benefit of students of the Islamic Cultural College in particular and of road users in general.

IMPASSE COCOTERIE, ROCHE BOIS - TARRING & DRAINS

(No. A/119) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Impasse Cocoterie, Roche Bois, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if consideration will be given for -

- (a) re-instating and tarring same;
- (b) the provision of drains thereat;
- (c) the installation of additional street lanterns thereat, and
- (d) regular collection of the wastes.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that Cocoterie Road, Roche Bois has a road network of six “Impasses” which are regularly maintained by it.

I am further informed that the following major reinstatement works at Impasse Cocoterie near the primary school will be undertaken -

- (a) complete resurfacing at an estimate cost of Rs225,000
- (b) provision of drains for conveyance of rain

With regard to paragraph (c) of the question, I am informed that the Impasse has a sufficient number of street lanterns.

As far as the last part of the question is concerned, I am informed that a regular scavenging service is provided twice weekly on Mondays and Tuesdays in the region.

BARKLY - WATER PIPE PROJECT

(No. A/120) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the water pipe project at Barkly, Beau Bassin, he will state -

- (a) when works are expected to -
 - (i) start, and
 - (ii) be completed, and
- (b) the time schedule for the road to be re-instated to its original state.

Reply: I am informed that the laying of 1,950 metres of pipeline to improve water supply and reduce water leakages at Barkly, Beau Bassin started on 15 November 2010 and are scheduled for completion by end of June 2011.

Temporary reinstatement is being carried out presently. Permanent reinstatement of the road would start by end of May 2011 and would be completed by end of June 2011.

ALBION ROAD, PETITE RIVIÈRE - WATER ACCUMULATION

(No. A/121) 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 has received representations concerning water accumulation at Albion Road, Petite Rivière, in front of the Ramnaresh Mandir, during rainfalls, thus causing inconveniences to the devotees attending thereto and, if so, will he state the immediate actions that will be taken.

Reply: Representations were received concerning water accumulation at Albion Road, Petite Rivière in front of the Ramnaresh Mandir. A survey will be carried shortly to determine the scope of remedial works required.