



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION
TUESDAY 17 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>
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK	<i>Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade</i>
Dr. the Hon. Abu Twalib Kasenally, FRCS	<i>Minister of Housing and Lands</i>
Hon. Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo, GOSK	<i>Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare</i>
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha	<i>Minister of Tourism and Leisure</i>
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Members

Members

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 8 of 2011

Sitting of Tuesday 17 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)

ANNOUNCEMENT**HON. MRS LABELLE - VICE-PRESIDENT - PAN-AFRICAN PARLIAMENT**

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, we have learnt with pleasure the election of hon. Mrs Françoise Labelle as one of the four vice-Presidents of the Pan-African Parliament.

The election of hon. Mrs Labelle is indeed a great honour for Mauritius.

On behalf of the hon. Members of the National Assembly and in my own personal name, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to hon. Mrs Labelle, and wish her well in the discharge of her new responsibilities.

Thank you.

(Applause)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of great pride for the House and for the country that hon. Mrs Labelle has been elected to this prestigious position.

We, as Government, supported her candidature, and I would like, on behalf of all the Members of this House, to congratulate her and wish her well in her new function. I have no doubt that she will discharge her duties in a manner commensurate with the reputation of our country as a vibrant democracy.

(Applause)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger): I join with you, Mr Speaker, Sir, and the hon. Prime Minister, in expressing my pride as a party leader at hon. Mrs Françoise Labelle being elected to that post. I am sure she will make Mauritius as a whole proud.

I wish to put on record my appreciation of the fact that not only the Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also the Government Members in Parliament did their best for hon. Mrs Labelle to meet with success.

Thank you, Sir.

(Applause)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office –

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills –

- (a) The Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies Bill (No. IX of 2011);
and
- (b) The Law Practitioners (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2011).

B. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

The Financing Agreement between the European Commission and the Republic of Mauritius on the Decentralised Cooperation Programme (DCP) II – Support to Non State Actors (MAS/001/10) EDF X (Agreement No. MU/FED/021-436)
(In Original).

C. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands –

The Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill (Streets Naming) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 73 of 2011).

D. Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms –

- (a) The Civil Establishment Order 2011.
- (b) The Civil Establishment (Rodrigues Regional Assembly) Order 2011.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

VALUATION AND REAL ESTATE AND CONSULTANCY SERVICES – DIRECTOR – VALUATION SERVICES

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Director of the Valuation and Real Estate and Consultancy Services, he will state if he -

- (a) is allowed to undertake private valuations or be a partner in private companies offering valuation services and, if so, the private valuations undertaken by him, indicating whether a record of the sums paid to him by private parties or Government entities is kept;
- (b) has kept an updated valuation database as required by law, and
- (c) has been suspended from duty, following his arrest by the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Director, Valuation and Real Estate Consultancy Services is authorised to provide valuation services to parastatal bodies and non-Government bodies in his personal capacity against remuneration, provided that such assignments do not conflict with the interest of his office and the works are carried out outside normal working hours.

It should be noted that the current incumbent was given this authorisation in June 2006 in line with long established practice extending to his predecessors. It should also be pointed out that the PRB has endorsed this approach in its 2008 report at pages 26 to 27 of Volume 1. Moreover, at page 25 of the same report at paragraph 4.7, it is noted that, I quote –

“The market is tight or the package is insufficient compared to the private sector in areas such as Quantity Surveying, Marine Engineering, Architecture, Valuation, Law and Occupational Health and Safety.”

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no authorisation for the Director to be a partner in a private company offering valuation services.

Concerning the record of private evaluations undertaken by the Director and the sums paid to him by Government owned entities and private parties, no records are kept by the

Valuation Department or the Ministry of Finance. However, I am informed that he has undertaken a number of assignments since 2006 and I am tabling a list.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am further informed that the Valuation Department does keep a valuation database. However, in view of the LAVIMS project which is expected to be operational by the middle of this year, the Valuation Office is currently in the process of updating the database.

Concerning part (c) of the question, the officer has not been suspended but has taken an extended leave. The Responsible Officer considers that it would be more judicious to await a formal decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions before deciding whether the officer should be interdicted or not.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister of Finance whether he is aware that in the past, as far as the Chief Government Valuer - now called Director of the Valuation and Real Estate Consultancy Services - is concerned, there was only authority on a case by case basis, whereas from what I have heard and according to my information, these recent years, there have been numerous cases of private valuation done by him of Government entities but private bodies also?

Mr Jugnauth: No, this is not the information that I have gathered. I have been told that it has been an established practice to give authority to the then Chief Government Valuer to undertake such kind of works. This is my information.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know who gives the authority?

Mr Jugnauth: The authority is given by the Ministry of Finance because I can see that the officer has written to the Ministry of Finance for such authority.

Mr Bérenger: Am I given to understand that authority is given in each case by the Ministry of Finance or is there a blanket authorisation?

Mr Jugnauth: No, there is a blanket authorisation.

Mr Bérenger: And we just heard that there is no record at all of the sums received from parastatal bodies, from Government bodies or from private companies. Now, this idea of giving blanket authority to the Chief Government Valuer to do valuation for private companies, is this being reviewed?

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that this is an established practice. It has applied in the past also. Such kind of authority has been given to other Chief Government

Valuers. And I can state that in the years 2000 to 2005, I am informed that such kind of authority has been given. Now, the second part of the question is whether it should be reviewed. I think probably we should have a look at it and see whether we can improve on the system.

Mr Bérenger: My information is that until 2005, the authority was given on a case by case basis because of shortage of professionals which is no longer the case, and I will come back to that later on. These recent years, therefore after 2006, all this has changed. We have a blanket authority. Out of fair play, can I ask the hon. Minister to give a list of the number of cases between 2000 and 2005 - if it is not available now - and table the number of cases since 2005?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, I can compile the list for 2000 to 2005, I have asked for that information, in fact. I have got one case, but we can compile the list of cases where such practices have been made.

With regard to what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying that in the past it used to be only in cases where there is scarcity. I must say again that the PRB Report 2008 has, in fact, recommended. Let me quote again section 4.7 at page 25 which says -

“The foregoing overview confirms that the market is tight or the package is insufficient compared to the private sector in areas such as (...).”

And the report mentions about valuation. So, valuation is still an area where there is a scarcity of resources. However, this is what the PRB has recommended in order to attract people in the department. They should also be entitled to do private work, of course, upon a number of conditions so that their package increases. I must say, PRB has, itself, recognised that it is a scarcity area.

Mr Bérenger: Not at all, Mr Speaker, Sir! PRB talks of scarcity and lower down; I am talking only about the Chief Government Valuer. There are more than half a dozen fully qualified fellow and members of the Institute concerned. There is no shortage at that level. We understand it is a free-for-all. It has been given blanket authority. There are no records at all. I understand that we are talking about millions and millions of rupees since 2005. Has the hon. Minister of Finance looked into that or checked with the Income Tax for whatever he has declared to the Income Tax?

Mr Jugnauth: With regard to the first part of the question, my reading of the PRB Report is different from that of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

With regard to the second part, let me, again, repeat that this has been the established practice. Now, whether we should review that practice, I have answered that probably we'll have to look at it again. Even in the past, there has been no record whatsoever kept either at the Valuation Department or at the Ministry of Finance.

As to whether that gentleman has declared his income tax, I cannot say. Income Tax will have to do its work but, even as a Minister I don't have privileged information which is strictly confidential. Income tax will not give me this information. But, of course, I can inform the Income Tax that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has raised the matter in the National Assembly and it will be its duty to see to it that every taxpayer is paying his tax.

Mr Bérenger: In the case of the valuation that this gentleman made in the Med Point saga, was he paid and if yes, by whom? Was he paid for doing a valuation in his private capacity after his No. 2 had carried out an official valuation and if yes, did he do it in his private capacity and was paid by whom?

Mr Jugnauth: First of all, I am not aware about this case. Secondly, this...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer. He is answering, Members have to take the answer in good faith.

Mr Jugnauth: The matter has been raised even in the House in a PNQ where the stand of Government is to be respectful of institutions since there is an inquiry which is under way. Even if I were aware, I would not have been able to provide such information. It would be for ICAC, of course, to carry out its inquiry.

Mr Bérenger: Then, in the case of Infinity and Neotown where he carried out valuations, again can I ask - I am not asking for details - whether he carry out these valuations in his official capacity as Chief Government Valuer or in his private capacity and against payment?

Mr Jugnauth: I have given a list of cases where the Government Valuer has undertaken assignments but, of course, since there are no records that are kept either at the Ministry of Finance or at the Valuation Department, we have tried to seek information from him to get the list. It might not be a complete list. So, I would not know. With regard to Infinity, I can further find out and give the relevant information.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister of Finance if he has information as to whether the Chief Government Valuer has carried out, in his private capacity, valuations of property owned by Ministers?

Mr Jugnauth: I don't know. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition can tell me which Minister, I can ask the Valuer whether he has carried out any valuation.

Mr Bérenger: We have our staff, it is not difficult to go to the authorities concerned and check. Can I know from the hon. Minister of Finance whether again that gentleman carried out, in his private capacity, valuations for companies that used his valuation exercise to obtain financial assistance through the Stimulus Package, because this is my information.

Mr Jugnauth: Let me come back to the former question. Of course, we have staff and we can find out. But, in order to save time, if we know the details, we can go directly to that information and try to check. But, anyway, we will do our work and we will check whether he has done any valuation for any Minister.

With regard to this part of the question, again, I have no information, I need notice of that question in order to find out and, of course, we will provide the information to the House.

Mr Bérenger: We learned that on a routine basis, blanket authorisation to do valuation for private companies. Can I lay on the Table of the Assembly - because I heard the hon. Minister say that he does not have the authority to be a partner in private companies - something which is advertised on the Internet even, but everybody knows, a firm called PolyExpert Mauritius Ltd, a company profile where proudly it is stated: 'amongst our partners so and so, a Chartered Valuer.' The gentleman concerned is, in fact, a civil servant, he is in a company prospectus, he is presented as so and so. He is Director, Valuation and Real Estate Consultancy Services. We talk about the civil servant at the Valuation Department and so on and so forth. He is presented proudly as a partner in a private firm that sells its services for valuation purposes. On that, at least, will action be taken?

Mr Jugnauth: First of all, let me say that I have seen this note on the website of that company, it is a private company, and I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that as soon as we were made aware of certain information, an inquiry had already started at the level of the Ministry of Finance to that effect. So, he can rest assured that we will go deep into that and check about the veracity of this information and, if it is correct, of course we will do the needful.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure that the hon. Minister is now aware of the enormity of the situation. Conflict of interest! It is the Chief Government Valuer! He has to advise for tax purposes the authorities concerned. He does private valuation! And we know the temptation! We are talking of millions and millions of rupees there! He is allowed to do valuation for private companies! The conflict of interest is enormous. Does the Minister really believe that in case the No. 1 has done valuation that anybody will dare challenge him? Who will challenge the boss?

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has made a point, but he has to be fair also in the point that he is making. It is not as if this is only now that this is happening. I have said that it has been an established practice.

(Interruptions)

I maintain that this is the information that I have. At the level of my Ministry, it has been an established practice.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, Members have to accept ...

Mr Jugnauth: The same argument of the hon. Leader of the Opposition applies today, it did apply from 2000 to 2005. Why did the then Government at that time not thought it fit to review this situation? Again, let me say that it is a fair point that is being made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and, of course we will be looking at this.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister should not try and compare what happened between 2000 to 2005 on a case-by-case basis to this wholesale business that has been ongoing. Now that we have seen what has taken place, have there been attempts at estimating Government revenue loss through undervaluation over the past five years?

Mr Jugnauth: This is an allegation - a very serious allegation. I need to have substance, there need to be evidence. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who is making a very serious allegation, can provide me with some information, we will find out and I can assure the House that no case will be left lying by if there is information that there has been under evaluation or whatsoever. We will inquire and we will do the needful to take people who are responsible for that to task.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the last part of my question is concerned, if you will allow me, it is confirmed that after he was arrested and bailed out by ICAC, that gentleman was not suspended, he is supposed to be on leave. Is the hon. Minister aware that after having been

released on bail, that gentleman went to his office regularly, giving instructions to staff and taking files away from his office? Is he aware of that?

Mr Jugnauth: I am not aware of that. In fact, I have been informed that he is on leave and he is not attending his office.

Mr Bérenger: Everybody knows that he has been attending his office and taking away files, except the hon. Minister. A question was put concerning this *scandale* of the Chief Government Valuer carrying out valuation exercises for payment by private companies. Is there any reason why the question put on 09 November 2010 as late as that by hon. Li Kwong Wing on precisely that question of private companies was never answered?

Mr Jugnauth: If the question was put to me, as far as I can say, we normally...

(Interruptions)

I have to check because normally the answers are tabled in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Bhagwan: It is on record that the question has not been replied. Mr Speaker, Sir, everybody knows the person; everybody in business knows the way he operates and his accumulated wealth. Can I ask the hon. Minister, amongst other questions, whether it is not time now, or whether he will recommend, as we do when we are elected Members? We have to go to ICAC and declare our assets ourselves and those of our children and we have to sign them so that we can make them public. We have no objection. Can the Minister inform the House whether he will use the same procedure for such type of civil servants, at high level, that they declare their assets at the point of entry and regular monitoring be done if this is not the case to report the House whether that person has declared his assets to ICAC?

Mr Jugnauth: If this is not the case, if he is not covered by law, it is a very good suggestion and on Government side we will look at it if we need to.

Mr Dayal: Can I ask the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance - for the benefit of the House - whether one of the conditions laid down by the Public Service Commission is that when an officer is appointed he should devote all his time at the disposal of Government and whether, in this particular case, authorisation was sought and received?

Mr Jugnauth: I understand authorisation to carry out private work, yes. I have just answered that authorisation was asked as previously has been the case, but there is also the Human Resource Management Manual which says - I think it is good that I read it for the

understanding of all Members, in accordance with section so and so, Human Resource Management Manual –

“Any officer may subject to the approval of his Supervising Officer be exceptionally authorised to undertake private work where the work -

(a) is performed outside official working hours;

(b) has no adverse effect on his official position or duties.”

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. vice-Prime Minister confirm that during the period of 2000 and 2005 to which he referred, in fact, Government Valuers were allowed to undertake valuation solely for the Municipal Council & Parastatal Bodies?

Mr Jugnauth: For the Municipal Councils probably, but also other institutions...

Mr Speaker: Parastatal bodies.

Mr Jugnauth: I have here, for example, a case where the Chief Government Valuer was requested by the Mauritius Port Authority to carry out valuation and he did so.

Mr Baloomoody: Now we know that this gentleman has breached one of the main regulations, that he is not supposed to be a partner in a company and we know that he is a partner in a company. We know that he is a civil servant and we know according to records that there are many more civil servants, and that once they are arrested it is, of course, for the DPP to prosecute. Once they are arrested, they are interdicted to attend office and they are suspended. Can I know in that case why this procedure has not been followed and what action Government intends to take now that we know he has also been a Director of a company?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, as I have answered in the main reply, the Supervising Officer feels that it would be more judicious to await the decision of the DPP, but with regard to the first part of the question, the hon. Member is saying that now that it has been proved that he is a partner of a private company, to me it has not yet been proved. I have said that an inquiry is under way at the level of the Ministry of Finance to find out whether that is so. If that is so, of course, we will take the necessary procedure.

Mr Uteem: Since the hon. vice-Prime Minister has mentioned that he is aware of the prospectus of that private company which publicised that the Chief Valuer is a member of staff, will he look in all cases where this firm has been involved in valuation and verify with the Government Valuation Department whether there have been any cases where the Government Valuer challenged the valuation of that firm.

Mr Jugnauth: Yes. As I said the inquiry pertains, therefore, to the fact that there has been this publication by a private firm mentioning that this gentleman is a partner and everything that pertains to that company will be looked at.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the vice-Prime Minister inform the House who is the one who approved his leave, on which date and what grade? I mean who is the high officer in his grade who approved his leave and whether he will take immediate steps to recover all files which are in his custody? We happened to know that there are many confidential files of Government - dealing with valuation and transactions – which are in his custody and that these files must be recovered even if we have to use the police, *met ménotte dan la main*.

Mr Jugnauth: I have a Minute dated 05 June 2006 whereby at that time Mr Guptar had approved, so I can't say more than that ...

(Interruptions)

This is what I am saying, on 05 June 2006. It concerns this gentleman.

Mr Speaker: No, who approved the leave?

Mr Jugnauth: I don't know who, but by the Ministry of Finance. I have to find out.

Mr Bérenger: It is a shocking situation. We are informed that an inquiry will be carried out under the control of the same gentleman, the Financial Secretary, who found it fit that he would be on leave and not be interdicted. Can we have a real inquiry, not judge and party, a Commission of Inquiry, if necessary, or an inquiry by a top person whom we can believe in and then we have a full report on what to pay, how many millions this gentleman had made and who are the parties who benefitted from that situation, private parties, Ministers, if any, Members of Parliament, if any, anybody who benefitted from that scandalous situation since 2005?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that a real inquiry is being carried out at the level of the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Speaker: Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister. The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/314 in regard to Agalega will be answered by the Minister of Local Government and that PQ No. B/325 in regard to State Bank of Mauritius will now be replied by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister.

MONTAGNE BLANCHE – TRAFFIC CONGESTION

(No. B/313) Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard the Royal Road of Montagne Blanche, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if there is an increase in traffic congestion thereat, especially due to obstruction on the route from La Croisée Sans Souci, near the Queens cinema hall, to the Montagne Blanche Police Station, and if so, indicate the measures that will be taken in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Royal Road at Montagne Blanche from Sans Souci Road junction to the Montagne Blanche Police Station is a built-up area with commercial buildings on both sides and is used heavily by vehicular and pedestrian traffic. As most of these commercial buildings do not have parking facilities, vehicles park on the road for loading and unloading purposes.

The road is also used by buses serving the route between Bel Air and Rose Hill. There are three bus stops with no lay-bys for the embarking and disembarking of passengers.

Traffic along this stretch of the road is thus very slow particularly during morning and afternoon peak hours, for the following main reasons -

- (i) increase in the number of vehicles in the region;
- (ii) temporary on-street parkings and stopping of vehicles to embark and disembark passengers, and
- (iii) on-street loading and unloading in front of some commercial buildings.

During these hours, Police presence is reinforced. In fact, two Police officers are deployed on foot patrol, one officer on fixed-point duty at junction Sans Souci Road, another one at junction Petit Paquet Road, and two on fixed-point duty at the two pedestrian crossings.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping has, in 2009, taken the following measures to improve fluidity of traffic and to ensure road safety and security -

- (i) a bus stop and a pedestrian crossing were shifted near the junction with Petit Paquet Road, and
- (ii) several stretches of the road have been marked with yellow lines to prohibit on-street parking.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to further improve traffic at Montagne Blanche and following various representations made by inhabitants of Montagne Blanche, the Police have already requested the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit to carry out a fresh survey, with a view to assessing the impact of the previous measures taken, which I have just mentioned, and to propose further remedial measures such as, if need be -

- relocation of other bus stops;
- relocation of existing pedestrian crossings and provision of new ones;
- provision of single and double yellow lines and road markings, in addition to what I have just mentioned;
- provision of handrails, and
- installation of traffic lights.

Mr Seetaram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he could, in fact, look at other alternatives. For example, we have inhabitants or persons using the Royal Road of Montagne Blanche, especially in the morning when they have to attend office, from Bel Air, Olivia or Sebastopol, and they are stuck in the traffic. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the Police to look at alternative routes from Sebastopol, Pellegrin, that would skip the heart of Montagne Blanche and proceed at Melrose or the junction at Camp de Masque? Can those alternatives be looked at?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I know, from discussions with hon. Minister Bachoo, that we are looking at those possibilities. Whether we can do it straightaway or not will depend on the available means, but these are also being looked at. I tend to agree that probably alternative routes will have to be looked at; otherwise this might not solve the problem.

Mr Seetaram: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister consider having police officers to be instructed to be tougher for cars that are parked on both ways, especially in peak hours? We have cars which are parked on both ways when they go to the shops or whatever. People park their car and don't even look if there is a car on the other side, and this causes heavy traffic, especially buses, during peak hours. We have the Lady Boolell Primary School at the junction of Petit Paquet and also Royal Holloway College. I would like to ask whether this can be looked at, so that during peak hours cars are not parked on both sides.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member cannot go on...

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: As I mentioned in my reply, in fact, from January of this year to May, we have had 31 contraventions for parking offences, four contraventions for failing to comply with traffic signs, and others as well which are not pertinent to the question. But I agree with the hon. Member. The Police are trying to be tough with them, but we are going to increase that vigilance.

Mr Speaker: I think I will have to intervene here. Before hon. Members come with such complicated situations, they can go and see the Commissioner of Police and talk to him; it applies to everybody. It is an established practice of Parliamentary procedure that hon. Members must take the first steps; they should go and talk, and if they don't get satisfaction, they can then come and put questions. Please do that! Next question! Hon. François!

(PQ No. B/314 – see ‘Written Answers to Questions’)

RODRIGUES – TELEVISION CHANNELS

(No. B/315) 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 Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation television and radio broadcast for Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to -

- (a) the number of permanent television channels available therefor;
- (b) if, following the introduction of the Digital System, the -
 - (i) personnel has been given training, and
 - (ii) Analogue System will be maintained, with a view to enabling the vulnerable groups to access the programmes, and
- (c) if any recent survey has been carried out to assess public views about the programme content.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I made my remark! It applies to everybody!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Director General of the MBC that there are four permanent television channels available in Rodrigues. They are on the Digital Platform (TNT).

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Bhagwan, please!

The Prime Minister: Regarding part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed that, since the introduction of the digital system, appropriate hands-on technical training has been provided to the Rodriguan technical staff to man the digital system. Such training has been conducted by the Officer-in-Charge of the Rodrigues Station and by other technical staff from Mauritius.

Regarding part (b) (ii), I am informed that the MBC/TV in Rodrigues has already switched over to the digital system since December 2008.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I can't hear the answer from the hon. Prime Minister! Can you keep quiet!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: However, a secondary analogue transmitter is still in operation until it exhausts its lifetime use, which will be by end of this year. The MBC does not plan to replace the transmitter on the exhaustion of its lifetime use.

However, the MBC will be carrying out a survey to ascertain the number of householders not equipped with a Set-Up Box for reception of the digital channels, and a decision will be taken in the interest of the viewers.

In regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that there has been no formal survey carried out recently. However, regular feedback is obtained from the Officer-in-Charge of the Rodrigues Station on the views of the public about programme content. On the basis of feedback obtained, daily news items on Rodrigues are being included since February 2011 in the main 19 30 hours French news bulletins. As far as logistically possible, events are broadcast on the same day.

Mr François: Thank you, hon. Prime Minister! Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there are frequent disruptions and swapping of programmes on channel 2 and channel 3, especially with the Voice of America programme and the BBC channel on channel 4 being frequently broadcast simultaneously on two channels? May I know whether any remedial action will be taken in that line?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of that situation, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I will certainly ask the MBC to look into that.

Mr François: As there are no surveys on the programme contents that have been carried out, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the MBC local radio is mostly every morning being used by politicians to make political propaganda, causing great annoyance to listeners who qualified our local radio - which is a *patrimoine* - as *radio pintade*?

(Interruptions)

Will the hon. Prime Minister see to it with the Corporation that there is a just and fair balance of the use of local radio by politicians, especially those in power, during the present contradictory electoral period in Rodrigues?

The Prime Minister: That is a different situation from what I understand. I will have to look into it. In all honesty, I am not aware of this.

RODRIGUES - INTELLIGENCE SERVICE/UNIT

(No. B/316) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to public peace, safety and security in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an Intelligence Service/Unit has been set up by or for the Regional Assembly, and if so, indicate -

- (a) since when it is in operation, and
- (b) who is in charge of this Service/Unit.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Island Chief Executive that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has not set up any Intelligence Service/Unit in Rodrigues. Besides, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is not empowered by law to set up such a Service/Unit.

However, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, in the context of the implementation of the National Policing Strategic Framework, a Divisional Crime Intelligence Unit has been set up in all Police Divisions, including Rodrigues, as from last year. Currently, two police officers are posted to the Unit in Rodrigues, which is headed by a Police Sergeant. The Unit is responsible for processing and disseminating information about crime and public disorder for appropriate policing measures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Government Programme of 2010-2015, we have announced the establishment of the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS), which will provide

leadership in criminal intelligence on a national scale. In this regard, appropriate consultations will be held with all the stakeholders concerned, including Rodrigues, for the establishment of the NCIS.

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that a high-ranking officer of the Regional Assembly, sworn and filed an affidavit on 29 April 2011 in the Supreme Court of Mauritius, referring to an intelligence service of the Regional Assembly? If you allow me to quote only paragraph 13 of the affidavit -

“Due to the high political tensions in Rodrigues recently, the use of this place - that is, Malabar podium - will cause real hazard to public peace, safety and security in as much as respondent - that is, the Regional Assembly - has received intelligence that there might be outbreak of violence in the said place.”

Will the hon. Prime Minister confirm that the Regional Assembly does not have any...

Mr Speaker: Can I remind hon. Members that they cannot ask a Minister to confirm? It is not provided for; it is not allowed by our Standing Orders. You cannot ask for a confirmation of a situation from a Minister.

Mr François: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll rephrase. Will the hon. Prime Minister assure us that the NSS is not answerable to the Regional Assembly and do not disseminate...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is making a statement; he must put his question.

Mr François: Will the hon. Prime Minister confirm that this is not the case?

Mr Speaker: Confirm, no! I said, no!

(Interruptions)

You cannot confirm. It is not allowed in our Standing Orders.

The Prime Minister: As I explained - maybe it is not clear - there is an Intelligence Service Unit which has to be in place to be able to get intelligence on criminal activities and this is what they are doing.

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will table a copy of what I have just referred to.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are lots of fishy things happening in Rodrigues on all fronts: fire in the Central Administration, loss of hard disk at the Cadastral Office and Water Department and reported acts of corruption. I wonder whether there is enough intelligence about all these issues. Will the hon. Prime Minister state whether he is agreeable to set urgently a full-

fledged Commission of Inquiry about the Regional Assembly as I requested in my budget response in December last? *Rodrigues va mal, M. le président.*

The Prime Minister: I will look into all this information. I must tell the hon. Member that, on the other hand, the Chief Commissioner himself came to see me in my office. He was complaining that he is not getting enough intelligence on crimes, he is not being briefed properly and all this. So, there are complaints on both sides from what I see. But I can only look into this and decide.

‘FREEDOM HOUSE’ & ‘REPORTERS SANS FRONTIÈRES’ - REPORTS

(No. B/317) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether he has taken cognizance of the unfavourable reports on Mauritius in relation to the freedom of the press by two international institutions, namely ‘Freedom House’ and ‘*Reporters sans Frontières*’, and if so, will he state the remedial actions Government proposes to take.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken cognizance of the two reports referred to by the hon. Member, but I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to PQ B/228 at our sitting of 19 April of this year.

I would like to stress again on the fact that freedom of expression in Mauritius is guaranteed by the Constitution and that freedom of the press is respected in Mauritius. In fact, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, when considering our Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Reports under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights in 2009, observed, I quote –

“Press freedom is generally respected as well as guaranteed in Mauritius”.

In its submission to the Human Rights Council in 2008, “*Reporters Sans Frontières*” itself stated that –

“Mauritius benefits from a real press freedom, with pluralistic and multilingual media. Daily newspapers and weeklies are often critical of both the Government and the Opposition parties (...)”.

‘Freedom House’ has, in its successive reports on Mauritius also been highlighting the fact that freedom of the press is respected in Mauritius.

Furthermore, the 2010 Index of Democracy, published by the Economist Intelligence Unit, has ranked Mauritius 24th out of 165 States. The EIU Index, which is known for its credibility and rigour, is based on five criteria, namely, civil liberties, which also include freedom of expression, electoral process, functioning of Government, political participation and political culture. Countries are categorised in four types of regimes -

- (i) full democracies;
- (ii) flawed democracies;
- (iii) hybrid regimes, and
- (iv) authoritarian regimes.

It is noteworthy that there are only 26 countries, out of 165, that have been classified as full democracies, and Mauritius is one of them, Mr Speaker, Sir. It should also be emphasised that, on the criterion of civil liberties, EIU has given Mauritius a score of 9.71 out of 10.

The EIU Report of 2010 has also highlighted the fact that Mauritius is the only State – I stress on that, Mr Speaker, Sir - in the region out of the 44 assessed that has remained a full democracy and has maintained a strong democratic tradition since its independence in 1968.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please keep quiet! Listen to this good news!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the World Press Freedom Index, prepared by “Freedom House”, and which the hon. Member has referred to in his question, countries are given a total score ranging from 0 to 100. A score of 0 is considered as the best, just to clarify, 0 means the best and 100 is the worst. Countries scoring between 0 to 30 are regarded as having a “Free” media; countries who scored between 31 and 60, are said to be a ‘Partly Free” media country; and a score of 61 to 100, they classified it as a “Not Free” media. It is noteworthy that in the 2011 report, that is, of this year, of “Freedom House”, Mauritius has obtained a rating of 28 and finds itself in the group of countries considered to be having a “Free” media. It has in fact been ranked 59th out of the 196 countries covered in the Report, ahead of countries like Greece and South Africa.

With regard to the report of “*Reporters Sans Frontières*”, it is a matter of regret that the organisation appears to have based its opinion on the version given by one journalist only and

does not appear to have deemed it necessary to verify the facts or to obtain comments from other sources, before making their report.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said previously in this House, the local media enjoys a long tradition of freedom and pluralism. You just have to look at the media every day, you will know. As a matter of fact there were, in 2005, a total of 47 dailies/weeklies/fortnightlies in Mauritius – that was in 2005 - this figure has now increased to 61 in 2011. Several international broadcast news stations are also available. There is unrestricted access to the internet, which is widely used. There is no official or unofficial censorship. Anyone is free to become a journalist in this country and practise journalism. Journalists are not forced to, and do not practise self-censorship. People have access to the media to express their views and have unrestricted exposure to different viewpoints, even people who represent nobody, but themselves. They still express their views. We have an independent Judiciary and any aggrieved party may seek redress before our Courts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my disagreement is not with those who are doing their job as journalists in a responsible manner and there are journalists who act in a responsible manner. My criticism, in the exercise of my own freedom of expression, is not aimed at factual and objective reporting of news items but rather at the deliberate distortion of facts and the unfair and biased manner in which certain matters are reported upon by a few individuals in a particular section of the media.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Admittedly, I am the first to agree, the media has a right to criticise but they must also realise and accept the fact that those who are criticised are also entitled to an appropriate rebuttal. They should understand that citizens of this country, including politicians, are entitled to exercise their freedom of expression as much as the press!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of my Government to promote the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens, including the freedom of expression. As provided in the Government Programme 2010-2015, Government

will introduce legislation for the media law reform and support greater professionalism in the media. Accordingly a new media law is being worked out to modernise our outdated laws and to review the role and functions of the Media Trust. In this connection, it is expected that Mr Geoffrey Robertson, QC, whose services have been enlisted to review our media law will submit his report very soon.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, we know Government's position with regard to Freedom of Information Act. The Prime Minister, last week, himself stated that this is not in Government Programme for 2010-2015. Doesn't he feel that there need to be free circulation of information and that this is the source of constant tension between Government and the free press?

The Prime Minister: It is more complicated than this. Perhaps, the hon. gentleman has a point. Sometimes my understanding is that they don't get the information and therefore they invent information and as they go and talk to the wrong people. But that is not right also. If you don't get information it does not mean that you have to put any information. The Freedom Act, as the hon. Member mentioned, is something that we are looking at and is being examined by Mr Geoffrey Robertson, Q.C.

Mr Bhagwan: In his reply, the hon. Prime Minister mentioned media as a whole. When we talk of media, we must also talk of the MBC/TV where we have journalists. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether he has received reports as far as marking is concerned? The hon. Prime Minister was informing us that it is 0 to 100, that is, starting zero is very good, hundred is worst. Has he been informed of the latest marking given to the MBC/TV? It is nearly hundred. The way MBC is acting...

(Interruptions)

It is nearly hundred!

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order! If the hon. Member has the answer, why is he putting the question? He said it is hundred.

Mr Bhagwan: I have not finished, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am completing the letter which I am addressing to you today as far as the way the MBC is acting here. It will be on your table today.

Mr Speaker: Put the question!

Mr Bhagwan: I am dead sure that my voice won't be heard this afternoon! Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he finds it normal the way the MBC is acting these days? He has been informed by his close advisers that the MBC/TV is causing much harm to democracy in this country.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The Member has put the question, let us hear the answer.

The Prime Minister: Who can say that your voice could not be listened today? Even outside ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Bhagwan you are not behaving properly now.

The Prime Minister: You are free ...

(Interruptions)

Cool down!

Mr Speaker: Order now! Time is running out!

The Prime Minister: Cool down! As politicians they know that we need to have a skin thicker than that of a rhinoceros.

(Interruptions)

Cool down! We were talking about the media. Sir Louis Blom-Cooper was not only a very eminent lawyer, but he was also the Chairperson of what was the Press Council at the time. He was interviewed by one lady here from "*L'Express*". I am not mentioning names and look what he answered! The question was -

“There are some concerns that if ever it came about, a Media Commission set up by Government might curtail our freedom of expression.”

This is the answer -

“What you are saying is a total mirror of what has been happening in the United Kingdom for the last twenty/thirty years. There is always that tension between the media and the Government. There have been threats from time to time of imposing a regulatory system.”

I won't read the whole thing. But it says –

“My comment would be that it would be a very odd thing that television and broadcasting should be under a regulatory system and not the newspaper industry.”

That is why we are saying the whole lot and, believe me, we will be fair because we have also been in the Opposition and we know what it means to be in the Opposition. We intend to be very fair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will agree with me that the issue is not his right or anybody’s right, to correct facts or to reply to criticisms. That is not the issue. But we live in a country where there is economic boycott by Government and Air Mauritius of certain newspapers and where, unfortunately, there have been brutal verbal threats against certain journalists. Will he agree with me that this is unacceptable and this is why not only the two organisations mentioned here, *Reporters sans Frontières* and Freedom House, but also the United States Foreign Affairs department has condemned such things and will he agree with me that this should stop?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am surprised. We, in Government, see what Sir Louis Blom-Cooper has just said. There is this tension. Let me remind the hon. Member what he, himself, said when he was Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Can the hon. Member keep quiet? He gets too excited sometimes!

The Prime Minister: I understand the position of the hon. Leader of Opposition when he was Prime Minister. But let me say this: Freedom House in its report says that there is a marked deterioration in the score obtained by Mauritius from 2001 to 2004 and in the 2005 country report from Mauritius, it says the following -

“In August, Prime Minister Paul Bérenger - it mentions you by name - established a special committee to review the power of the IBA after accusing private radio stations of irresponsible broadcasting and, in March, Mr Bérenger threatens to ban live debates on private radios.”

The Leader of the Opposition knows and he was right, I am not saying he was wrong, but that is....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: Now the hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to the interview given by the Public Affairs Officer and spokesmen for the US embassy and look what he says. The question was -

“In general, would you say that the press is free in this country? His answer was: “Sure, I think that freedom of the press is not this platonic ideal that gets totally achieved anywhere. There is political conflict and there are interests just like in my country, that is, the USA, where politics and the press are not perfect. Perfection is something that is unlikely to be achieved in a human achievable sense, you can actually be proved of this achievement.”

He is referring to us. Then the question was –

“You are saying freedom of the press is not enough, aren’t you?”

He said –

“Yes, to have freedom does not mean that everybody is behaving responsibly and well. It means that if those in power make big mistakes or do the wrong thing in major ways then someone is free to point it out. The evidence is that in the United States there is a constant back and forth where one section of the press tends to hold the President in high esteem, but others don’t. In my lifetime I have seen plenty of that, it does not surprise me and I would not want to hold Mauritius to a standard that we ourselves have not achieved in my own country, that is, the United States.”

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

HOSPITALS – MOTHERS - BABY BLUES - PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

(No. B/322) Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to cases of death of newborns, she will state if the necessary psychological support is provided, in the public health care services, to the mothers who show signs of mental depression.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

In case of death of newborns, mothers who show signs of depression are referred to the Psychiatrist in the respective regional hospital. The mothers are examined by the Psychiatrist and then referred to the Clinical Psychologist for follow up and psychological support, if necessary. The Psychiatrist may also, in some cases, initiate treatment.

Mr Seetaram: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister consider cases where mothers have just delivered the child and, who, at some point in time, have symptoms of baby blues? Can this particular aspect be looked into?

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a whole range of reasons why mothers are referred to psychologist and psychiatrist. For example, you have mothers who have stillborn, early neonatal, late neonatal death as well as what we call mercurial psychosis which is baby blues. All these are taken care of.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Seetaram!

BUSES - CARBON EMITTING - PENALTIES

(No. B/323) Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to buses, he will state if Government proposes to amend the legislation to make provision for tougher penalties for those emitting carbon.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, our existing Road Traffic (Control of Vehicle Emission) Regulation dates back as far as 2002. They make reference to Euro I standard when today we have Euro IV standard. We are in the process of reviewing our existing regulations, at the same time, penalty will be tougher.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has taken note of the number of Police and CNT vehicles that are polluting our roads?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is the reason why I have mentioned that we are going to review our laws and, at the same time, I would like to inform the House that we are under the process of procuring ten modern smoke meters. In fact, the evaluation is on. I am aware of the problem that is being caused as a result of smoke emission. Further I can assure the House that all actions will be taken to diminish it.

Mr Bhagwan: The situation is very alarming. Although we have read that the Ministry of Environment is purchasing equipment and so on, I consider that there is no concerted action, it is not only one Ministry; it is the Ministry of Environment, the Police and the Minister responsible. There is no concerted effort from what we see. Can the Minister inform the House whether recently there have been meetings chaired by him with all the different stakeholders and that firm action has been taken? Can the Minister give us a case where the licence of one bus has been revoked? Give us, at least, one case.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: Normally when you take one you refer it to the NTA. Give us one case and everybody will see what is happening on the road.

Mr Bachoo: I am not in a position to say whether the licences have been revoked, but at least, actions are being taken. I can assure the hon. Member that, in fact, there is a committee which has been set up and we have also taken decisions; we have reduced the sulphur content in our diesel. Actually, I can inform the House that we want to reduce it to 50 ppm and the meetings are on. Once we procure the new meters, I do hope that actions will be taken and this question of our environment getting a bit more polluted will come down.

Mr Bhagwan: I have one last question, Sir. I think it's time for action and hard action. Whatever sensitisation is done, people are dying. They are having asthma and other types of diseases. Can I request the hon. Minister to take action, hard action? If you ask me: "when have you seen one jeep of the Environment Police on the road these days?" Government, itself, has taken action to reduce the...

Mr Speaker: You are making a statement. Put the question!

Mr Bhagwan: I am asking the Minister whether he will liaise with his colleagues to give more means to the Environment Police that action be taken on the road, even to seize motor vehicles?

Mr Speaker: Yes!

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that the regulations are being reviewed over again and tougher punishment should be imposed.

Mr Hossen: Pertaining to the issue of coordination, is it not true that there is an Environment Coordination Committee under the aegis of the Ministry of Environment which means on a monthly basis to assure coordination of environment issues?

Mr Bachoo: I have already mentioned that we have a committee which sits monthly and, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can mention the actions which are being taken: the conduct, the thorough review of the existing natural regulations and incentives to promote cleaner and more fuel efficient vehicles in Mauritius. We are trying to develop and follow the implementation of cleaner fuel and vehicle policies. We are coming up with a roadmap for the introduction of lower sulphur content from 500 ppm to 50 ppm.

(PQ No. B/324 – See ‘Written Answers to Questions’)

CITÉ LA CURE – STATE LAND - APPLICATIONS

(No. B/326) Mrs A. Perraud (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State Land in Cité La Cure, he will state the number of applications received therefor for residential purposes, since 2000 to date, indicating the number of letters of intent issued in connection therewith and the date thereof.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to records available, around 325 applications for State land at Cité la Cure for residential purpose have been received. These include several applications from those persons who were already squatting on State land and there are also some persons who have submitted an application more than once.

I wish to inform the House that, notwithstanding the 325 applications received, some 200 letters of intent have been issued during the period August 2000 to date mainly in the context of the policy of Government to regularise occupation on State land of persons satisfying eligibility criteria.

An exercise is ongoing to determine the exact number of cases from the list of 325 persons who have effectively been issued with a letter of intent.

Mr Speaker: Parliamentary Question Nos. B/332 and B/342 have been withdrawn. Hon. Bhagwan!

PROTOCOL UNIT – OFFICERS - TRAINING

(No. B/327) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the protocol services, he will state if –

- (a) all the aspects of protocol are being solely handled by officers of his Ministry;
- (b) training is given to the staff members of the Protocol Unit and, if so, give details thereof, and
- (c) he has recently received any complaint for breach of protocol and, if so, state the actions taken, if any, to prevent any such recurrence.

Dr. A. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the parliamentary question, I wish to inform the House that protocol duties are essentially performed by officers of my Ministry.

However, it is customary for officers of host organising ministries/institutions to assist in ushering and seating of guests at such functions.

In respect of part (b) of the Parliamentary Question, officers of my Ministry follow induction courses on protocol and diplomacy upon joining the Ministry. Such courses are organised by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Trade which also organises refresher courses on a regular basis. In addition, our officers also receive training overseas on protocol as and when such courses become available. I wish to also point out that my Ministry has prepared a manual on protocol outlining protocol guidelines and practices observed in Mauritius.

Manual can be accessed on the Ministry's website. In respect of part (c) of the parliamentary question, I have not received any complaint for breach of protocol. However, I was informed of an incident at a function organised at the University of Mauritius involving one hon. Member of the National Assembly during the State visit of the President of India to Mauritius. I have expressed my sympathy to the hon. Member. I understand that the University of Mauritius had invited some 500 guests to that function and that the seating plan had been established in strict accordance with precedence list.

Mr Bhagwan: I don't concur totally with the statement of the Minister. I think there is something to be done. Recently I complained to the hon. Minister about the lack of protocol towards the Deputy Speaker. There was a lack of respect towards not less than the Deputy Speaker according to me. I think there is room for the hon. Minister to see to it when he has replied not solely by his Ministry; that he is not responsible solely. I think there are other departments which, at times, try not only to play politics, but to *faire l'intéressant*...

Mr Speaker: What is the question?

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Minister if he could have a fresh look at the whole issue of protocol in official functions and also inform us accordingly. He has informed us about training. Has the Minister received any assistance from the Government of India which is very good at protocol, even arranging for our officers to go and have training in India where we have seen how efficient they are?

Dr. A. Boolell: That was done, in fact, in 2009. Officers from the Protocol Department of India did dispense training to our officers here and, as far as the list of precedence is concerned, together with the Prime Minister's Office, we've revised the list. In fact, the list is revised as and

when required. I recall that the list was revised on 15 January 2010 to take on board the new position of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Bhagwan: Is the Minister aware that Members of Parliament, even the Deputy Speaker, the Chairman Public Accounts Committee, the Opposition Whip and the Government Vice-Chairman of Committees have been downgraded in terms of precedence with the actual list which is on the site and recently we have witnessed officers who were appearing before court of laws, were sitting in front of hon. Members at the airport greeting the VVIPs?

Dr. A. Boolell: That's why I have said that the table of precedence is going to be revised and we are going to work jointly with the Prime Minister's Office.

Mr Bhagwan: Can we know how soon, Sir?

Dr. A. Boolell: As soon as possible.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mrs Perraud: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether Members of this Assembly are informed about the precedence list ?

Dr. A. Boolell: The list is on the website, but I will make it a point to ensure that it is circulated. In fact, I will lay a copy on the Table of the National Assembly.

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD – ALLEGED MISMANAGEMENT

(No. B/328) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Agricultural Marketing Board, he will state if he is in presence of any allegation of mismanagement thereat, and if so, the actions initiated by his Ministry to –

(a) deal therewith, and

(b) ensure that the population be provided with a reliable and good quality of potatoes, garlic, onions and ginger at an affordable price.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I received a number of complaints from various stakeholders on the functioning and management of the Agricultural Marketing Board. In the light of these complaints, the Board, at its meeting, held on 26 April 2011, decided to terminate the contract of the General Manager.

Moreover, I have requested the office of the Public Sector Governance to conduct a Comprehensive Management Audit of the MAB, and to submit a report with recommendations for prompt implementation. The exercise is ongoing, and the report will be submitted soon.

I have further impressed upon the Board to take appropriate measures for a more effective and efficient management.

As regards part (b) of the question, I can assure the House that Government is taking all necessary measures to ensure that the population is provided with a reliable and good quality of potatoes, garlic, onions and ginger, at affordable prices, through imports from the best sources and through the incentives provided by Government to boost up local production of these commodities.

Mr Bhagwan: From what we have heard, the General Manager of the Agricultural Marketing Board has been asked to retire; he has been suspended. Can the hon. Minister inform the House who is the one assuming responsibility as head of the Agricultural Marketing Board?

Mr Faugoo: His contract has not been renewed, Mr Speaker, Sir. It has been terminated, as I said in my main answer. The Chairman of the Board is Mr Ramkissoon. The Board is supposed to appoint someone in the near future.

Mr Bhagwan: Will the post be advertised?

Mr Faugoo: I cannot answer now, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: This Agricultural Marketing Board is a very important organisation, and in the choice of a person who will be appointed as a General Manager and even Chairperson, we should place the right person in the right place. This is where mismanagement has led to the scarcity of several commodities.

Mr Speaker: Put the question!

Mr Faugoo: This is exactly what we are doing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Baloomoody: The allegation was not only about mismanagement. There was allegation of “criminal character as well”. May I know what action has been taken? He just resigns; his contract is not renewed, when we know there have been serious allegations against that gentleman

Mr Faugoo: As far as I know, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is an inquiry which is being carried out by independent institutions. As far as my Ministry is concerned, I had representations on mismanagement.

Mr Bhagwan: Will the hon. Minister give the assurance to the House, the country and the nation that, if ever there is foul play or whatever fraud or corruption issue, this person who has left and is under inquiry will not be left scot-free, leaving with all his benefits, house, cars and so on?

Mr Faugoo: We have already started with it, Mr Speaker, Sir, asking him to step down. Terminating his contract is already a positive signal.

Mr Bhagwan: Being given that the four commodities I've mentioned, namely potatoes, garlic, onions and ginger are the four main ones - normally, Mauritian people consume them and have easy access to them at the market - is the hon. Minister aware that - I have seen; I go to the market regularly - there is a problem with the quality of our onions these days?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Let the hon. Member put the question.

Mr Bhagwan: The quality...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Let the hon. Member put the question.

Mr Bhagwan: ...of onions *laisse beaucoup à désirer*. What are the incentives given to our local producers? The Minister last time paid a site visit to the market...

Mr Speaker: No, no. The hon. Member should ask what are the incentives given to the local producers, and that's all.

Mr Faugoo: First, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Member must be going to the wrong stall, maybe. Secondly, as far as local production is concerned, we have given lots of incentives to boost up local production, as far as potatoes are concerned. In fact, since 2008, we have moved from 40% of local production to 80% today. This is one. There is an increase in onion production, but not as much as we had targeted in the first place, due to conditions independent of the AMB and the Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, we are encouraging; we are giving lots of incentives under the Food Security Fund. We have, in fact, been giving 10% grant on input, as planting materials, not only onions, but for potatoes and also for garlic, Mr Speaker, Sir. I hope that this is going to give the support which was needed, because one of the impediments for planters was the high cost of

seeds, and we are giving 10% grant. Also, there is a scheme where they only pay an initial deposit of 10% on the seeds, and they pay the 80% remaining when they harvest the product.

Mr Bhagwan: The Minister has talked about incentives given to onion producers. I know that the Minister has been at St. Martin farm and also to that in GRSE. We are reaching a period again where there would be water cut. These people have suffered a lot, because there was drought. What action is contemplated, at least, with the coming hard months, in terms of water availability, for these onion producers of St. Martin and GRSE?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Carry on! Order, now!

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have asked AREU to look into the matter.

CITÉ PITOT, CUREPIPE ROAD - RE-DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

(No. B/329) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Cité Pitot, in Curepipe Road, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to if it has received any proposal letter for the redevelopment thereof and, if so -

- (a) indicate the name of the promoter, and
- (b) give details of the proposed project.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that an Expression of Interest was launched on 28 November 2008, through an open Advertised Bidding, inviting proposals for major property development projects on municipal land at Cité Pitot, Trou aux Cerfs, Mangalkhan and Teste de Buch. Following this exercise, an Expression of Interest was received from Gamma Civic in respect of all the four sites.

Gamma Civic Ltd. was subsequently requested to come forward with firm proposals for development of these sites, but there has been no response from the promoters. On 05 April 2011, the Council received a letter from the Director of Sik Yuen Ltd. regarding proposal for the development of the site at Cité Pitot only.

I am informed that the Council has, at its meeting of 28 April 2011, after having taken note of the request from Mr Sik Yuen, decided to launch an Expression of Interest for this site through an open Advertised Bidding.

Mr Speaker: Can we continue with the supplementary questions after lunch time? I suspend for one and a half hours.

At 12.59 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, le terrain de la Cité Pitot est une donation faite à la municipalité de Curepipe par un certain Monsieur Emile Pitot afin de loger des familles défavorisées. Est-ce normal, M. le président, que ce terrain reçu en donation, soit aujourd'hui convoité par un promoteur privé avec la bénédiction de certains conseillers piranhas pour construire un centre commercial?

Mr Aimée : Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of this information. What I have got in my file is that the land belongs to the Municipality.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Minister inform the House how many families live at Cité Pitot and what arrangements are being made to re-house them elsewhere in case this project is going ahead?

Mr Aimée : Mr Speaker, Sir, this project is at its first stage. It has called for expressions of interest. It is not time now to discuss about that. I don't have this information.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not hear the hon. Minister clearly before lunch concerning invitation for expressions of interest. Can I have the date on which the last one has been issued and in which newspapers it has been publicised?

Mr Aimée : Mr Speaker, Sir, from my file, it is on 05 April 2011 that they have published the expressions of interest in the newspaper.

Mr Obeegadoo: Will the hon. Minister give the guarantee to this House that he, as Minister, will not allow this project to go ahead under whatever guise unless and until appropriate re-housing is provided to the families concerned that is acceptable to them?

Mr Aimée: I would say "yes", Mr Speaker, Sir. I think this Government never left people outside. But I will try to find out. I don't even know whether there are people living on that particular land.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: If I may intervene. I think the hon. Minister said that there have only been expressions of interest, invitation has been received and the Municipality has not yet decided. I

think what hon. Members can do is to follow the matter very closely and the question of hon. Obeegadoo will be appropriate when the decision has been taken.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, je voudrais demander au ministre de se renseigner. Étant donné que ce terrain est une donation faite à la municipalité de Curepipe, est-ce qu'aujourd'hui la municipalité peut donner ce terrain à un promoteur privé ?

Deuxièmement, M. le président, il y a 12 familles qui habitent dans ces maisons. Est-ce qu'il ne serait pas plus logique aujourd'hui de réhabiliter ces maisons pour que ces familles puissent continuer à y rester?

Mr Aimée: I will look into it, Mr Speaker, Sir, and come back with a statement in the House for the hon. Member.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to differ and I'll differ by putting a question. Would not the proper procedure have been to survey the site, the number of families living there, the condition and then decide whether the Municipality is going to call for Expressions of interest and not call for Expressions of interest and then go and find out how many families and so on?

Mr Speaker: That question is very relevant.

Mr Aimée: The hon. Leader of the Opposition is right, but the way the hon. Member has put his question, he never made mention as to whether people are living on it.

(Interruptions)

Yes, I'll have to find out now with the Municipal Council and then I can come back with it.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, now that the hon. Minister knows that there are 12 families living there, can he consider this? I would also like the hon. Minister to ensure that there has not been any insider trading since hon. Sik Yuen was then Councillor or Mayor ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: He is a Member of the House.

(Interruptions)

Order! He is a Member. The hon. Member can rephrase his question without citing names.

Mr Guimbeau: Was the hon. Member we are talking about a Mayor or a Councillor at that time?

Mr Speaker: At the time of Expressions of interest.

Mr Aimée: I would say no, Mr Speaker, Sir, because, as I mentioned before, it is on 05 April this year. So, hon. Sik Yuen is no more the Mayor of Curepipe and not even a Councillor.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister give the assurance to the House that he will look into the file and table all notes of meetings relevant to that project where Members of Parliament, not from here, but from there, had participated in meetings?

Mr Aimée: Yes, I will look into the matter and come back to Parliament.

CUREPIPE - ROBINSON SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

(No. B/330) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Robinson Sport Infrastructure, in Curepipe, he will state where matters stand in relation to the –

- (a) lighting system of the football ground, and
- (b) construction of the –
 - (i) cloakroom;
 - (ii) *boulodrome*, and
 - (iii) kiosk, indicating in each case, if works have stopped and, if so, the reasons therefor.

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 by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that the various projects related to Robinson Sports Infrastructure cannot be implemented due to financial constraints.

I am also informed that in view of financial constraints the project will be implemented in phases and the National Development Unit will construct only the kiosk as a first phase during this financial year.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, this project dates back to 2004. We are in 2011. I would ask the Minister to, at least, do a *petit effort* for the Constituency of Curepipe and Midlands.

Mr Aimée: Avec plaisir, je vais faire un plus grand effort.

ATLEE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - STANDARD I - TEACHER

(No. B/331) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Atlee Government School, Forest Side, he will state if one Std I class is not being taught by a full-fledged teacher, since February 2011, and if so, the reasons therefor.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following the transfer of a teacher of standard I since February 2011 from Cité Atlee Government School, a teaching Deputy Headmaster (DHM) who is a full-fledged teacher reckoning 31 years of teaching experience has been allocated the Std I class. Moreover, he is being supported by a full-time mentor.

ANOUSHKA & CITÉ JOACHIM SOCIAL CENTRES

(No. B/332) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Anoushka and the Cité Joachim Social Centres, he will state if consideration will be given for same to be vested in her Ministry and if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

PRIVATE SECTOR - MATERNITY BENEFITS

(No. B/333) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the maternity benefits, he will state if employees in certain sectors of the private sector are entitled thereto on full pay only for a limited number of confinements and, if so, if Government proposes to bring amendments to the laws in relation thereto to review same.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, all female employees whose conditions of employment are governed by the Employment Rights Act 2008 are eligible for maternity leave on full pay without any restriction on the number of confinements. Female employees of the private sector whose conditions of employment are governed by the Remuneration Orders Regulations for specific sectors, are entitled to maternity leave on full pay limited to three confinements. However, the recently made Remuneration Order for Attorneys and Notaries sector has the same provisions as the Employment Rights Act 2008.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the House that, in accordance with section 3 of the Employment Rights Act 2008, the provisions of the Remuneration Order of the specific sectors prevail over those of the Employment Rights Act.

I have also to inform the House that in the context of the forthcoming amendments to be brought to the labour legislation, we have received several representations pertaining to the issue of maternity leave. Consideration is being given and we are looking into the issue of limitation of three confinements as is present in the Remuneration Orders.

Mr Ganoo: There is at the moment, therefore, a contradiction between the contents of the RO's and the new ERA?

Mr Mohamed: In fact, it is not in any way contradictory, as I have explained. There are certain provisions that are sector specific as governed in the Remuneration Orders. On the other hand, side by side to it, we have the provisions of the Employment Rights Act 2008 and section 3 of the Employment Rights Act, as I have stated earlier on, specifically provides that the provisions of the Remuneration Orders of the specific sectors prevail over those of the Employment Rights Act. Obviously, at the time of the coming into force of the Employment Rights Act 2008, the legislator took precaution and, when brought in section 3 of that Act, had in mind the provisions as contained in the Remuneration Orders.

In conclusion, there is no conflict as such.

Mr Ganoo: What is the purpose then of bringing amendments to clarify the situation?

Mr Mohamed: First of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, I never used the word 'clarification', maybe it is the hon. Member who requires clarification. The reasons of bringing amendments to labour laws are quite numerous. But, as I have said, we have received representations from trade unionists on the issue of maternity leave and, according to their proposals, there should not be any limit to the number of confinements, as provided for in the Remuneration Orders under certain specific sectors. They would like it to be such as in the Remuneration Order that governs attorneys and notaries.

I have also received other representations pertaining to the number of weeks for maternity leave. As it stands today, the maternity leave stands to twelve weeks and the ILO Convention governing this particular issue talks about fourteen weeks. Numerous African countries, according to the representations that I have received, are already at fourteen weeks and certain European countries are even talking about the possibility of going to eighteen weeks. That is why, as a responsible Government, what we have to do is to take stock of all representations that are made and see how we can consider favourably or not, all these representations.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, since this question raises the very important issue of sectoral discrimination having regard to maternity rights, could the Minister explain to the House why this Government and the previous Government have considered it proper to condone such a state of affairs up until now?

Mr Mohamed: In actual fact, I do not believe that there is a conflict, as I have said earlier on. I do not also believe that there is any discrimination. Why is there no discrimination? I will not have to get into the whole process as to how a Remuneration Order is reached at. If there are discussions before the National Remuneration Board there are representations that are made sector specific by workers, trade unionists and employers and, finally, we come up with a report. If that report is there and, at the other hand, we have also legislation, as I have said, section 3 that takes into account the existing Remuneration Orders, there is no discrimination and there is no conflict.

Dr. S. Boolell: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether the ladies who are in confinement are entitled to have extra months automatically on leave without pay, authorised to enjoy another three months, let us say, if they have no wish to resume work?

Mr Mohamed: In actual fact, what we are looking at exactly at this very moment is that there are several issues. One of them is the case of a lot of ladies - this is something which we hold close to our heart - who have started working for only less than a year and, all of a sudden, a good news happens that they have become pregnant. The question that arises is: are they entitled to have leave with pay? Obviously, as it stands right now, if it is less than twelve months, they are not entitled to leave with pay. Those are the issues we are looking into.

One issue which we would really like to bring in some changes is to be in line with the convention of the ILO which is going from 12 to 14 that would take care of the question which the hon. Member has asked.

What we are trying to do at the end of the day is to come up with measures. We are trying to find out how we can come up with measures in order to more protect women as regards maternity leave and to underline the importance of women spending time with their children when they have given birth. We believe that it is of utmost importance that this right is recognised and that this right is underlined.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he could consider to extend the unlimited number of confinements to all employees of all sectors, be they governed by Remuneration Order or the PRB.

Mr Mohamed: This is precisely what I had said, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have received representations, as the hon. Member has herself made a representation already here, and we are at the moment considering that possibility because, I say it again, we would like to underline the importance of a mother being with the child when she has just given birth.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY – CONTRACT

(No. B/334) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Financial Secretary, he will state if the incumbent is still on contract and, if so, indicate -

- (a) the date of the renewal and terms and conditions thereof;
- (b) if he is also the Chairperson or a Member of other boards and, if so, indicate -
 - (i) the names of the boards and;
 - (ii) fees drawn in each case, and
- (c) if his salaries and fees are subject to taxation.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker, Sir, the information regarding the contract of the Financial Secretary and the Boards and Committees that he serves on are posted on the website of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. I am tabling the particulars requested except for the Board fees which are being compiled.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that in line with outstanding Government policy to limit tax expenditures, the Financial Secretary and other Senior Public Officers are subject to taxation at the normal rates.

Mr Ganoo: Part of my question relates to whether the FS is still on contract or has he been now placed on establishment?

Mr Jugnauth: Yes, he is on contract; he has always been on contract and is still on contract.

Mr Ganoo: You mean this FS has been on contract, not all FS. When was the renewal of the contract recently?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, from memory, I think it was last year and the contract expires in July 2012.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister confirm whether this officer receives a monthly allowance of 6,000 US dollars and a yearly allowance of 12,000 US dollars?

Mr Jugnauth: His current salary is Rs120,000 per month plus a monthly allowance of 6,900 US dollars, but not the other allowance that the hon. Member mentioned.

Mr Bhagwan: Are the benefits paid in dollars also?

Mr Jugnauth: No.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House whether this person is paid his monthly salary in foreign currency, if yes in what currency?

Mr Jugnauth: Yes, as I said, the salary of Rs120,000 is paid in rupees, but the monthly allowance of 6,900 US dollars is paid in US dollars.

Mr Bhagwan: What about the gratuity? How much is he being paid?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, I see the salary car benefits travelling and gratuity are revised in the wake of the PRB report as per the PRB recommendations.

Mr Bhagwan: He was not paid in dollars.

Mr Jugnauth: No, I don't think he is paid in dollars. I'll check, but I don't have the amount.

Mr Bhagwan: Is the Minister aware that the gratuity amounts to 13,000 US dollars?

Mr Jugnauth: I will check on that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister inform the House whether - whilst on mission the Minister has not given us an answer - the total number of overseas missions effected since the present contract and whether also his allowances regarding missions have been increased?

Mr Speaker: It does not form part of the question. No, the hon. Member cannot, he should come with a specific question on overseas mission. Is the hon. Minister prepared to answer for overseas mission?

Mr Jugnauth: No, I don't have the information in terms of mission.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister of Finance whether the 6900 USD - I did not get the amount for the gratuity - is also subject to taxation? Is it the local amount for citizens of Mauritius also?

Mr Jugnauth: Let me point out that gratuity, because I have it here, is two months of salary on completion of 12 months satisfactory service in accordance with paragraphs 16 and 14 of the PRB report of 2008 and is subject to taxation on all these amounts.

Mr Bhagwan: Has the attention of the Minister been drawn to the total allowances paid to that princely officer amounting to more than Rs4 m. as allowances? I am not talking about air tickets and so on, the allowance amounts to Rs4 m., and this is my figure. Can the Minister confirm that?

Mr Speaker: I think the hon. Member can put the question, but the Minister has answered that the information is being compiled.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: The original question refers to the terms and conditions of the contract. Is the hon. Minister prepared to lay a copy of the contract of employment of this gentlemen and, in particular, is there any terms and conditions as regards his performance and can it be terminated if Government is not happy with his performance?

Mr Jugnauth: This is an example where we have cooperation between Government and the Opposition. I said that I am tabling the copy.

Mr Bhagwan: From our experience since 2005 with that person, can the Minister inform the House, the country and the nation whether it is not time now for that guy to go, to leave Government and have his contract terminated?

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Member here referred to “Mauritius Times” where the guy must go, but that is a matter of personal opinion. My opinion is that since he is working as Financial Secretary, he is here, it speaks for itself.

SAMU – AMBULANCES

(No. B/335) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the *Service d’Aide Médicale d’Urgence*, he will -

- (a) state its present staffing and logistics, indicating the -
 - (i) number of ambulances attached thereto, and
 - (ii) regions covered, and
- (b) consider the advisability of increasing the number of ambulances, in view of the number of requests for assistance.

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. The *Service d'Aide Médicale d'Urgence* (SAMU) is presently staffed with 21 Emergency Physicians, 42 Emergency Nursing Officers, 15 Emergency Call Operators and a pool of 19 Ambulance Drivers. The SSRN and Victoria Hospitals are each equipped with two SAMU Ambulances and the remaining three regional hospitals namely Dr. A. G. Jeetoo, Flacq and Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital are each equipped with one SAMU Ambulance.

Each of these ambulances is manned by a fully equipped team comprising 1 Emergency Physician, 2 Nursing Officers and a Driver.

For the last 13 years, SAMU has been operational with 5 ambulances, that is, one in each Regional Hospital. I wish to point out that in December 2010, at the request of the Prime Minister, two state of the art Advanced Cardiac Life Support Ambulances (ACLS) were acquired at the cost of about Rs10 m. These vehicles are based, one at Victoria and one at SSRN Hospital, respectively and are fully equipped to deal with cardiac emergencies.

The SAMU Services cover the whole island through the five Regional Hospitals.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that a total of 27,973 emergency calls were registered at the SAMU Control Room during 2010, implying an average of 2,331 calls monthly, out of which -

- 689 necessitated emergency intervention;
- 1,280 were attended to by ordinary ambulances;
- 70 were provided with medical advice;
- 88 were attended to by the Police, and
- the remaining were minor cases.

So, the hon. Member can see that there has been an increase from five to seven in the number of ambulances available and I need to further add that there is a question of trained personnel that needs to be taken care of. The Mauritius Institute of Health is making necessary arrangements with the University of Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2 to mount one year diploma course in medical emergencies for a batch of 20 medical staff and 25 nursing staff. The training will start by September 2011.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he mentioned Rodrigues as part of the sum recovered?

Dr. Jeetah: I do not have the information with me, but I can provide the answer should the hon. Member give notice.

Mr Lesjorgard: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the number of vehicles mentioned here is sufficient to service the whole island?

Dr. Jeetah: I did mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we used to have five. We have increased the number to seven (7), and there is a question of staffing dedicated with very specific skills. We have the assistance of Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2 to train the staff. In fact, I recall that we did provide with ambulances, but it's no use having just an ambulance if we can't have the trained personnel, and this is being taken care of.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Ribot and then I will come to hon. Obeegadoo and then to hon. Dr. S. Boolell! Not now! Later on!

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he would enquire into the complaints of patients saying that they have to wait 45 minutes to one hour before an ambulance comes? Does it have to do with the shortage of staff or shortage of vehicles? Could an enquiry be carried out, please?

Dr. Jeetah: I will look into it, but I did mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we do have a system of recording, and the person who is in charge of SAMU needs to decide to whom priority is given. I did give a list of actions that were taken at different stages.

Mr Bérenger: In view of what has just been said, clearly the officer who receives calls is a key officer because demand is more than supply. So, this key officer receives information, puts - sometimes too many questions - questions, and has to take that heavy responsibility where to send the SAMU. Does not the hon. Minister agree that the role of that key officer needs to be revisited, and maybe better training given to those key officers who decide at the level of each hospital?

Dr. Jeetah: I totally agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. This is an ongoing process of training and, as I said, this is being taken care of as well.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, from the figures given by the hon. Minister, some 600 calls, out of 2,000, are responded to by the medical services. Will he not agree that for poor people requiring transport facilities in the middle of the night to get to a hospital, there is a very real problem, taxis being expensive when they are available? Will...

Mr Speaker: No. We are talking of the SAMU. We ask a general question!

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that, very often, the SAMU ambulance does not get to the actual scene of an accident, is there a protocol which can be established? Would the Minister consider establishing a protocol linking the SAMU to, let us say, the Police helicopter service?

Dr. Jeetah: I guess this could be looked into, but I can give the guarantee - I have witnessed the SAMU at work myself - these are true professionals who do give assistance to people in need.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether a survey has been carried out with regard to the state of these ambulances? From what we see, many of these ambulances need repairs; they are badly maintained. Is it contemplated to renew the fleet, and, if yes, at which interval?

Dr. Jeetah: From my recollection, I think the SAMU ambulances tend to be the new ones. But then, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, there was an express request from the hon. Prime Minister - and I remember it was 30 December 2010 - to get two specialised SAMUs. The fleet is being upgraded.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as handicapped people are concerned, very often, they have problems to enter the SAMU; we have to lift them. Is the hon. Minister contemplating to buy specialised type of ambulances to cater for handicapped people?

Dr. Jeetah: I will have to ask a specialist to look into it.

CHAMOUNY - BUS STOPS

(No. B/336) **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 Chamouny, in Constituency No.14, Savanne and Black River, he will state if there is no bus stop thereat for buses to embark and disembark the passengers, indicating if he will consider the advisability of putting up sheltered bus stops thereat, adjacent to the Club Progressive Circle and the Gobin's store.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit that there is a bus stop without shelter in the direction of Chemin Grenier opposite Club Progressive Circle.

My Ministry will consider the possibility to site a pair of bus stops just after Gobin's store in the direction of Mont Blanc after a survey is carried out for acquisition of land.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Hon. Uteem!

WASTEWATER - TARIFFS

(No. B/337) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to wastewater, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to if it is proposing to increase the tariffs thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Wastewater tariffs were last increased in March 2008 by 22.2% for domestic customers and 29% for non-domestic ones.

In 2010, a Consultant, funded by the European Investment Bank, carried out a tariff study and his recommendations are being examined.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the moment, I understand that the amount which everybody has to pay with regard to wastewater is linked directly to the consumption of water. We heard the hon. Minister talking about revision of the tariffs. Is he also considering revisiting the way people will pay? So, it's not going to be linked on the consumption of water only. Are there going to be other ways of looking at the tariffs?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this issue has been raised in this House many times. It is one of the issues that are being addressed.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the review concerns non-domestic customers also?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Domestic and non-domestic customers. If the hon. Member will remember, it's a flat rate for non-domestic customers since 2008.

STC – CONTAMINATED PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - LOSS

(No. B/338) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Industry and Commerce whether, in regard to the 2011 consignment of petroleum products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the amount thereof which was contaminated, indicating -

- (a) what has happened thereto;
- (b) the resulting loss to the Corporation, and
- (c) if an inquiry has been carried out to situate the responsibility therefor.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation (STC) that the new contract with Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) started on 01 August 2010. STC has imported to date some 440,255 metric tons of products from this contract.

The last consignment, which arrived in Port Louis on 22 April 2011, consisted of some 38,000 tons of different products. Some 954 metric tons of Jet A1, which was loaded in the slop tank of the ship was found to be below STC's specifications.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is common practice that upon arrival of our tankers in Port Louis, the surveyors of STC, which in this case is SGS carry out routine checks to test the quality of the products on board, prior to unloading. It is during such an exercise that the 954 metric tons were found to be non compliant with STC's specifications.

As regards part (a) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, that part of the consignment was not allowed to be unloaded and remained in the custody of the vessel.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, the cargo is covered by an all-risk marine insurance cover policy. Therefore, the question of loss does not arise.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that an inquiry has been set up by the insurer of the cargo to situate the responsibility in this matter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that MRPL is a State owned Indian company of international repute. It has, by now, supplied more than 4 million tons of petroleum products to Mauritius since August 2006 consistently, meeting high quality standards. It has also been supplying petroleum products to quality conscious companies such as Shell and BP.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister referred to 954 metric tons of petroleum products which were not compliant with the standard of the STC. In what way were these products not compliant?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, it was on the specification. It just stopped below the minimum centigrade that is required by the STC. It was contaminated.

Mr Uteem: Is it correct to say that the contamination was between jet fuel and gas oil, diesel?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, the enquiry is still going on, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am not in a position to answer.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister mentioned that the petroleum product now is in the vessel. So, for how long will it stay in that vessel and what happened in-between? Does that mean that the presence of this contaminated product on the vessel is being paid each time the vessel will come to and fro Mangalore?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the vessel left on 26 April and as we are being covered by insurance, the vessels...

Mr Speaker: The vessel is not there?

Mr Soodhun: It has already left.

Mr Bhagwan: Is the hon. Minister aware that carrying black products, heavy fuel oil and white products, diesel, motor spirit and kerosene in the same tanker is against industry practice and involves high contamination and operational risks? Will the hon. Minister inform the House accordingly?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the risk is there. I agree with the hon. Member. This is why we are covered with the insurance and it is at the level of the vessels that it should be looked into, because normally all the vessels that we have, they carry black and white oil.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister would agree with me that the insurance will cover the first load of contaminated product. But if the product stays on the ship and goes to Mangalore and comes back again, we have to pay the ship for transporting this contaminated product, firstly. Secondly, every time we are having 1,000 metric tonnes of jet fuel less coming to Mauritius.

Mr Soodhun: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not the case. From what I understand, this has been put in a special tank. As we are covered with insurance - I maintain again - this is not our problem.

DR. JEETOO HOSPITAL – INCINERATOR

(No. B/339) Mr A. Hossen (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the incinerator of the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, she will state if her Ministry proposes the relocation thereof or to find an alternative solution thereto having regard to the black smoke emanating therefrom, with a view to alleviating the inconveniences caused to the inhabitants of the Ward IV region, especially those residing along the Mère Barthelemy, the Desroches and the Volcy Pougnet Streets and, if so when and, if not, why not.

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. Presently, waste produced at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital is incinerated into the incinerator located within the premises of the said hospital. This incinerator has been used for years.

Several recommendations have been made to minimise black smoke from the incinerator.

As a long-term measure, my Ministry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, will enlist the services of a consultant with a view to advising, amongst others, on the relocation of the incinerator and/or an alternative solution.

Meanwhile, short and medium term measures have been taken as follows -

- (a) The height of the chimney of the incinerator has been extended by 3 metres to a maximum permissible of 12.6 metres high to provide for the dispersion and dilution of the emissions over longer distances;
- (b) The maintenance contractor of the incinerator has been apprised of the prevailing situation and has been requested to investigate into the possibilities of minimising the smoke emission;
- (c) No incineration is allowed on Sundays and public holidays and after 15 30 hours on week days. It is envisaged not to undertake incineration on Saturdays as well.
- (d) No over accumulation of waste likely to give rise to odour nuisance is allowed, and
- (e) Loading of wastes has to be done only when the set temperatures for the combustion and post-combustion chambers of the incinerator (850⁰C and 1100⁰C respectively) are reached to ensure proper combustion of same.

Mr Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is known that Dr. Jeetoo Hospital has to cater for the burning of its own waste, but also the burning of the waste from 14 local dispensaries. At some time, the Ministry, rightly, directed mainly the burning of plastic waste which is the main cause of black smoke emission. So, that burning of plastic waste was directed towards the Brown Sequard Hospital incinerator. This had to be stopped due to a breakdown of that incinerator, but now that the Brown Sequard Hospital incinerator is again operational, is the Ministry contemplating towards directing those wastes towards that incinerator?

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I see in my notes that arrangements have been made for the plastic bottles containing syringes, dialysis wastes, another plastic waste to be incinerated at Brown Sequard Hospital which is located further away from built-up areas.

Mr Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, following the construction of the new wing at the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, the height of those newly constructed blocks are higher compared to the height of the existing incinerator with the potential threat that black emission could be blown towards those new blocks. As an urgent measure, is the Ministry contemplating to have modifications done to that chimney incinerator?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, we will have to look into this very important point raised by the hon. Member.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been complaints from residents for a number of months now regarding this black smoke. I myself have written to the Minister concerned. I wanted to know from the hon. Minister whether any test has been carried out to find out how toxic this black smoke was and the impact it may have had on people living in the surroundings, including taxi operators and hawkers who sell products in the vicinity.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I get a substantive question, I will look into the matter.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the incinerator, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is a joint monitoring with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development?

Dr. Jeetah: I did mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there is collaboration between my Ministry and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development. In fact, they are working together to bring about a solution to this problem.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is a regular staff monitoring carried out for the incinerators?

Dr. Jeetah: I do not have the information, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Hossen!

Mr Hossen: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the Ministry contemplating as a long-term solution to have one central incinerator located in an area which is not close to residential areas so as to alleviate the problem?

Dr. Jeetah: This is being looked into, Mr Speaker, Sir.

BASIC INVALIDITY PENSIONS & CARER'S ALLOWANCE – MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

(No. B/340) **Mr J. F François (Third Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the payment and the claim processing of the Basic Invalidity Pensions and the Carer's Allowance for the most needy and genuine cases with permanent disabilities, she will state if her Ministry proposes to review the time interval for medical examinations in cases of serious handicap.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Basic Invalidity Pension is provided to claimants who on examination by the Medical Board of the Ministry of Social Security are found to have a disability of 60%. For those requiring constant care, a carer's allowance is also provided. Further, claimants who have just undergone surgical operations can also be paid the Basic Invalidity Pension but are re-assessed after a period of time usually one to two years to check if there is need for maintaining this benefit.

It is to be noted that the system for processing of claims generally takes about four to six weeks but there is also a fast track channel for urgent cases whereby the whole operation comprising application, boarding and awarding of the benefit is completed within a maximum period of two weeks. This applies mainly to disabilities such as leg amputation, chronic renal failure, terminal cancer, muscular dystrophy, total blindness or in cases of aggravation of the disability, certified by a treating doctor, and needing prompt medical reboarding.

However, the benefit is awarded on a permanent basis to those having disabilities which are definitively going to last for life such as loss of body parts or functions resulting in more than 60% disability.

I wish to inform the House that in order to avoid undue hardship to beneficiaries, my Ministry has decided that henceforth those found to be permanently disabled by the Medical Board and upon confirmation of the Medical Director of my Ministry, will not be called for any further medical re-assessment.

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, with due respect to the answer of the hon. Member, in Rodrigues, it takes longer than what is being said, especially for claim processing. Will the hon. Minister look closely into that matter to avoid frustrations and prejudices to needy person?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I will certainly do so, but I wish to inform the House that in the case of Rodrigues, it used to be the case to have longer periods of time between the request

and the award of the benefit. However, recently, changes have been brought to the system so as to allow it to pass quicker and to allow the beneficiaries to get their awards more easily.

Mr François: The National Pensions Act provides payment to disabled persons with a minimum of 60% disability while referring strictly to medical assessment. Will the hon. Minister consider amending the law to provide pension within a shorter period of time to those with an extent of disability, incapacity to work to earn a living, mental disorder, schizophrenia and other disabilities?

Mr Speaker: There is no need for the hon. Member to list the diseases.

Mrs Dookun-Lutchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, apart from the list in the sixth schedule of the Pension Act, a new guideline has been proposed since January 2010 by the Ministry whereby other cases are also considered. However, I wish to inform the House that those having a disability of more than 30 percent are also allowed social aid in absence of the Basic Invalidity Pension.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, in case of the rejection of the request for social aid, how long does the appeal take to be heard and if I may add a dimension, is the appeal heard by a different panel from the one which has rejected?

Mrs Dookun-Lutchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir ..

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. This question does not arise from the present one.

(Interruptions)

This is about review, the time interval for medical examination in cases of serious handicap.

Dr. S. Boolell: When there is a request and, it is turned down, there is a time interval. It is the person...

Mr Speaker: That is totally a different matter. If the Minister has the information, please give it.

Mrs Dookun-Lutchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that in the case a person's request for Basic Invalidity Pension is rejected, the person can, within a period of one month, ask to go through the Medical Tribunal where there will be a Judge and two specialist doctors, in the field of the disease of the patient, to check the case.

Mr Speaker: Hon. François!

Mr François: It is a last, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister agreeable to set up also a medical unit instead of a Medical Board in Rodrigues according to existing procedures at national level? There is a lot of problems with those bedridden persons who are suffering from delayed domiciliary visits by doctors and most of the time with no guidelines.

Mrs Dookun-Lutchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what I informed the hon. Member a bit earlier, that this used to be the case when doctors had to move from Mauritius to Rodrigues for that purpose. However, nowadays we have a set of medical officers who are working with the Ministry of Health, who are, in fact, in the Medical Boards in Rodrigues itself thereby reducing the time delay between the application and the award of benefit.

PLAZA MUNICIPAL THEATRE - RENOVATION

(No. B/341) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the renovation of the Plaza Municipal Theatre, at Rose Hill, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, information as to if any request has been made for the grant of funds from the *Association Internationale des Maires Francophones* and, if so, indicate -

(a) when, and

(b) the outcome thereof.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill that a formal request was made in October 2008 to the *Association Internationale des Maires Francophones (AIMF)* for financial assistance in connexion with the renovation of the Plaza.

I am informed that during the meeting of the Council of the AIMF held from 26 to 27 March 2009 it had agreed, in principle, to finance the project for renovation of the Plaza to the tune of 40,000 Euros. However, on the 27 October 2010, the Council was informed by AIMF that its offer of assistance had been cancelled.

The Council, therefore, made a request on 13 December 2010 to the same institution to reconsider its decision and the latter has, on 16 December 2010, confirmed that the request has not been entertained.

Mr Nagalingum: Can the hon. Minister tell us if there has been any condition attached to the decision of AIMF regarding the transition?

Mr Aimée: No, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Is it a fact that, in fact, *l'Association Internationale de Maires Francophones* had put a certain number of questions to which the Municipality was supposed to answer before they finalised their decision, but the Municipality did not response at all?

Mr Aimée: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. I mentioned in my reply that even after they had turned down the request, the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill has written back again to the said institution, but there also they have declined.

Mr Bérenger: If the Municipality has not provided the answers, of course, when you apply again, you will end up in the basket, and rightly so. Will the hon. Minister look into it and tell us whether it is not a fact that between they were informed of the in-principle agreement and the letter of cancelation, they were supposed to do a certain number of things, provide a certain number of questions, they did nothing?

Mr Aimée: I don't have this information, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will look into it.

Mr Bhagwan: The Plaza forms part of our national heritage. More than Rs40 m. to Rs80 m. have already been spent and we all know that the work has stopped more than one year and here again we are losing fund. We are losing 14,000 Euros just because of mismanagement. Government was interested in funding at one time. Can the hon. Minister tell the country, the nation, the inhabitants of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill and the artists at least when Government would consider it - the Minister can bring this case to Government - as a priority to have funds to complete the reconstruction of the building?

Mr Aimée: In fact, I answered one PQ put by hon. Nagalingum on 22 March this year. I replied that the first phase has already been completed and concerning the two other phases - it will be in three phases - we have written to the Ministry of Finance for the remaining amount.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister what is the total cost of the two other remaining phases and, apart from the Ministry of Finance, whether the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill is envisaging seeking other funds?

Mr Aimée: The two other phases will cost Rs467 m. as I have said in my reply on 22 March and we have written to the Ministry of Finance to have fund for it.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that work has already been effected with public funds and that there is no insurance - that was confirmed by the Mayor -

cover on the present building as it is, which is a risk. Can the hon. Minister say whether he will take up the matter at the level of Government?

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I replied to this question on 22 March this year and I said to hon. Nagalingum that no insurance company wants to assure the Plaza as it is.

**VACOAS/PHOENIX MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - MAYOR'S FUND -
BENEFICIARIES**

(No. B/342) **Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Mayor's Fund of the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council and now table information as to a breakdown of expenses incurred, since the election of Mr K. J., as Mayor, indicating the names of the beneficiaries and in each case the purpose therefor.

(Withdrawn)

PORT LOUIS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - MAYOR'S FUND - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/343) **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 Mayor's Fund of the Municipal Council of Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to a breakdown thereof, since October 2005 to date, indicating, in each case the -

- (a) names of the beneficiaries;
- (b) quantum thereof, and
- (c) purpose therefor.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that there is no Mayor's Fund at the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix.

Mr Speaker: No, PQ No. B/342 has been withdrawn. PQ No. B/343!

(Interruptions)

Mr Aimée: I am sorry. Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the information requested by the hon. Member is being compiled by the Municipal Council of Port Louis and will be laid in the Library as soon as possible. In fact, a Written Question was put and I have laid down all the information concerning this matter.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Now, this is a very serious matter. Hon. Ameer Meea, the hon. Minister has just said that there was a written question and all the answers have been given.

(Interruptions)

No! But the Minister must be careful of whatever he is answering. Yes, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the same PQ was put by me on 17 August last year. Today, 17 May, nine months exactly, the Lord Mayor's Fund baby has not yet been born.

(Interruptions)

I have checked in the Library and there is no answer and it was not a Written Question, it was an Oral Question.

Mr Speaker: It was an Oral Question and no reply had been given.

Mr Aimée: From my information, I have already tabled that information, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Can the Minister inform the House where he has tabled the information?

Mr Aimée: I don't have the date.

Mr Speaker: Where?

Mr Aimée: To the Assembly.

Mr Speaker: To the Assembly! The Minister takes the responsibility for what he is saying! Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister aware that there have been numerous cases of embezzlement of Lord Mayor's Fund in the Municipality of Port Louis which is a public fund? Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, because of those cases of embezzlement of funds and misappropriation of public funds, that this has taken so long for us to get this answer?

Mr Speaker: No! Now, you are imputing motives on the Minister. Put your question! You have no question?

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Hossen, there is no need for you to intervene, otherwise take my Chair!

(Interruptions)

MAURITIUS SPORTS COUNCIL – BOARD

(No. B/344) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Sports Council, he will state the –

- (a) composition of the Board thereof;
- (b) projects identified and launched, since the constitution of the new Board, and
- (c) sports infrastructures where renovation works are being carried out by the Council, indicating in each case, the cost and works in progress.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information requested by the hon. Member is being tabled.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, j'aimerais néanmoins savoir du ministre s'il peut nous donner les coûts des différents projets qui ont été confiés au MSC?

Mr Ritoo: The information is being tabled, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Quirin: J'aimerais savoir justement, par rapport aux infrastructures dont les travaux ont été confiés au MSC - et là je fais référence au stade George V, quels sont les travaux qui ont été confiés au MSC?

Mr Ritoo: Les travaux qui ont été confiés au MSC concernent *the dressing of the grass and the minor works*.

Mr Quirin: Est-ce que le ministre peut nous indiquer le coût de ces travaux ou bien est-ce qu'il va *table* la réponse?

Mr Ritoo: The information is being tabled, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: We are talking of the Mauritius Sports Council, I think it is the new Board of the Mauritius Sports Council. Is the Minister aware or has he been informed that once appointed the new Chairperson...

Mr Speaker: No, no, we are on Parliamentary Question No. B/345.

(Interruptions)

I am sorry. Carry on!

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, is the Minister aware that the new Chairperson had been given cash gifts by the Board in the preparation of the end-of-year activity which was held somewhere in Grand' Baie for the athletes because he took some leave? Is it the policy of the Mauritius Sports

Council, instead of giving money to the Federation, for money to be given to the Chairperson for services he has rendered to the Council? Can the Minister inquire and inform the House what amount has been paid and who are the ones who proposed that payment to the Chairperson?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of any gift received by the Chairperson of the Mauritius Sports Council ...

(Interruptions)

... or cash gift. Anyway, I will inquire about this issue.

Mr Quirin: Merci, M. le président. J'aimerais que le ministre nous dise au niveau du MSC qui a la responsabilité de faire le suivi des travaux qui sont effectués au stade George V?

Mr Ritoo: Nous avons un comité au niveau du MSC qui concerne les infrastructures. Donc, il y a le secrétaire du MSC ensemble avec quelques officiers. Le membre aura la liste des responsabilités.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, est-ce que ces personnes ont l'expertise voulue pour faire le suivi de ces travaux ou bien allons-nous nous retrouver dans la même situation quand ces travaux avaient été confiés à un certain contracteur dont finalement on a dû résilier le contrat?

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, there is a question just after.

Mr Quirin: Je fais référence aux infrastructures qui sont en rénovation, c'est-à-dire, celles dont les travaux ont été confiés au MSC, et le Stade George V en fait partie.

Mr Speaker: *Non, j'ai dit que la question No. B/359* relates to this particular aspect. When the question will be called, the hon. Member can intervene. Yes, next question! Hon. Quirin!

INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND GAMES – TRAINING SITES

– MEDICAL SUPERVISION

(No. B/345) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the forthcoming Indian Ocean Island Games, he will give the list of the staff of the Sports Medical Unit involved in the medical supervision of the athletes on the training sites, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) job description, and
- (b) scheduled presence thereat.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Member for having asked this question as it would give me the opportunity to enlighten the House on the wide range of

medical and paramedical support being provided by my Ministry to athletes participating in the Indian Ocean Island Games.

I am tabling a list of the staff of the Medical Commission set up by my Ministry in the context of the Indian Ocean Island Games. This list includes staff of the Sports Medical Unit and the other medical and paramedical personnel whose services are being availed of on a sessional basis, their job description and their schedule presence.

Each staff of the Medical Commission is providing a specific treatment service or treatment to athletes in accordance with his or her field of competence on the training sites or at the Sports Medical Unit whose opening hours have been extended from 1600 hours to 1800 hours on weekdays and which now opens on Saturdays up to 1300 hours.

Moreover, the Club Maurice has also retained the services of four psychologists who visit the athletes regularly on the different sites. Treatment of all cases of minor injuries is normally done on the training site itself. Complicated cases are referred to the Sports Medical Unit or to Government hospitals for specialised treatment and follow up.

My Ministry has also made special arrangements with the Cardiac Centre at the SSR hospital to attend to athletes who need specific attention on a fast track basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the first time ever in the history of Mauritian sports that such facilities are being offered to our athletes for their preparation.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je remercie le ministre pour sa réponse bien détaillée mais j'aimerais aussi lui demander s'il est au courant que certains entraînements des présélectionnés pour les jeux des îles se déroulent sans la présence d'un officier du *Medical Unit*, et d'ailleurs je vais citer un exemple rapidement avec votre permission.

Mr Speaker: Non, ce n'est pas nécessaire.

Mr Quirin: Lors de la dernière journée...

Mr Speaker: Posez la question c'est tout, laissez le ministre répondre.

Mr Quirin: Lors de la dernière journée des championnats nationaux de natation, un nageur a été victime d'une crise d'asthme et je dois vous dire qu'il a eu à attendre pendant plus d'une heure pour avoir les premiers soins.

Mr Ritoo: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, again this has never been brought to the notice of my Ministry or myself. I have a list - which I will be tabling - of the respective nutritionists, nursing officers, physiotherapists who are present on the site.

Mr Speaker: In the light of the comprehensive answer given by the Minister, I will allow only one supplementary question.

Mr Quirin: Est-ce que le ministre peut nous préciser la composition - s'il l'a avec lui j'espère - de l'équipe médicale qui partira pour les jeux des îles?

Mr Ritoo: The list is very long. I am tabling it anyway.

Mr Speaker: Next question, Dr. Sorefan!

APOLLO BRAMWELL HOSPITAL – ACCESS ROAD BRIDGE

(No. B/346) **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 construction of the access road bridge near the Apollo Bramwell Hospital, he will state the –

- (a) number of companies which tendered for consultancy services for supervision, and
- (b) company which obtained the contract, indicating the value thereof, and
- (c) if, in the bid documents, it was proposed to retain the services of a foreign resident engineer from Australia and, if so, indicate –
 - (i) his names, qualifications and experience, and
 - (ii) if the same foreign engineer supervised the project.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that bids were submitted by three companies to Central Procurement Board on 19 June 2008 -

1. Servansingh Jadav & Partners Consulting Engineers Ltd.
2. Mega Design Ltd.
3. Luxconsult (Mauritius) Ltd.

The Central Procurement Board approved the award of contract to Mega Design Ltd for the lump sum of Rs6,750,000, exclusive of VAT, on 26 August 2008. It was not a requirement of the bid that the Resident Engineer had to be a foreigner. Mega Design Ltd. proposed a Mauritian Engineer with the relevant qualifications and experience and the bid was approved by the Central Procurement Board.

Dr. Sorefan: May I know from the Minister who is the supervising consultant, if not foreigner from Australia?

Mr Bachoo: The name of Mr Khushiram of Mega Design Ltd. appears on my paper.

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Lesjongard!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. With regard to that access road which was meant to service the Highlands Administrative City, the Réduit Triangle and Apollo Bramwell Hospital, can the Minister confirm whether it still holds good, that is, that access road will lead to all those facilities?

Mr Bachoo: We have nearly completed all the components and we are not going towards Highlands because we had to stop at one particular place. That's all.

Mr Lesjongard: If this is the case, can I know from the Minister whether those who are being serviced by that access road, especially Apollo Bramwell Hospital, have paid the amount they had to pay with regard to the access road?

Mr Bachoo: They have paid long back, Sir.

MUNICIPAL & DISTRICT COUNCILS - CHIEF EXECUTIVES & DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVES

(No. B/347) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the posts of Chief Executives and Deputy Chief Executives in the Municipal and District Councils, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the councils, information as to the number of vacancies in each case, indicating if same will be filled and, if not, why not.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the number of vacancies as at to date in the concerned grades is as follows –

- Two Chief Executive
- Three Deputy Chief Executive

The vacancies of permanent posts have already been reported to the Local Government Service Commission and the recruitment process is ongoing. In the meantime, with a view to ensuring the smooth running of the Local Authorities, all these vacancies (both permanent and temporary) are filled on a temporary basis by assigning the duties of these posts to officers down in the hierarchy.

Dr. Sorefan: May we know in the District Council of Black River who is assigned the post of Chief Executive and his qualifications prior to his assignment?

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question here is: how many vacancies there are, whether the post will be filled?

Mr Speaker: No, the hon. Minister cannot put questions.

Mr Aimée: I do not have the information.

Mr Speaker: Exactly! That is the point. Don't stand up and make a speech!

(Interruptions)

Next question!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue was raised in PQ No. B/343, that is, the Mayor's Fund of the Municipality of Port Louis. The hon. Minister insisted that he had laid the answer in the Library. We had checked, I had checked and hon. Ameer Meea has checked. We have checked again and it has never been laid in the Library. Can I ask for your ruling?

Mr Speaker: This is why I intervened at the very beginning to ensure from the Minister whether this has been done, whether the answers have been laid in the Library of the House. He answered 'yes' twice. Can I now know from the Minister: has it been laid down? If not, then...

Mr Aimée: In fact, I have checked, Mr Speaker, Sir, from my office. From there, I know that all the written replies...

Mr Speaker: We are not talking of all the replies. We are talking of this particular reply. Has the Minister checked? If he has not checked, please say so.

Mr Aimée: I am going to look into it and check then.

Mr Speaker: Can I remind hon. Ministers that if they don't have the answer, don't make any statement right, left and centre! They have to be sure of what they are saying in the House.

(Interruptions)

Yes! Let him check! This is the reason why I insisted upon the Minister, twice, when he was answering whether he is sure of what he is saying. I know why. Next question, hon. Ramano! PQ Nos. B/348 and B/362 have been withdrawn.

MAURITIUS NATIONAL LOTTERY – LICENCE

(No. B/348) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) 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 number of games that its present licence allow him to operate, indicating the –

(a) games which are presently being operated, and

(b) revenue generated by each game on a monthly basis, since their coming into operation to date.

(Withdrawn)

VICTORIA HOSPITAL - SECURITY OFFICERS

(No. B/349) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Victoria Hospital, she will state the number of –

- (a) security officers posted thereat, and
- (b) thefts reported, indicating the remedial measures taken, if any.

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to this question.

Security services at the Victoria Hospital have been outsourced to a private contractor who provides a team of 10 Security Guards during the day and 8 at night time.

As regards part (b) of the question, 11 cases of theft have been reported from January 2010 to date. All these cases have been referred to the Police for investigation and necessary actions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to reinforce security at the hospital, my Ministry has initiated a series of measures, which include amongst others -

- i. CCTV cameras have been installed at three strategic points within the hospital premises;
- ii. alarm system has been installed in theft pruned areas;
- iii. Police patrol by the Emergency Response Service has been reinforced, and
- iv. access near Ward A8, basement parking and behind the Central Laboratory of the hospital is being strictly controlled.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister what is the name of the security company that has been contracted?

Dr. Jeetah: The name of the contractor is Special Security Guards Ltd.

Mr Bhagwan: I raised the same issue some time back in a debate, Sir. Normally, for security officers, we don't want people like Mr Universe. We go to hospitals, especially Victoria Hospital - I am not downgrading these people - there must be a norm. I met somebody who was

above 65 years. I am not saying that he must not work. People who are drunk are looking after not only the parking, but within the wards. Can I appeal to the Minister for the security of the public and patients, at least, there must be a norm, a standard, given to that company to recruit people who would deserve the name of security, and not themselves being sick people.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have in my notes that, at the end of the first year, since the performance of the contractor was poor, the Central Procurement Board was not agreeable to extend the contract. However, pending the launch of a new tender exercise for the provision of security services, the contract has been renewed on a month to month basis. The reason being that several tender exercises, which have been initiated for the provision of security services have not been successful at the CPB.

HSC - ADMISSION - CRITERIA

(No. B/350) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether he will state if the new minimum criteria for admission into Lower VI conform with the minimum entry requirement at School Certificate level for recruitment in the public sector.

Mr Gungah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the criteria for admission into Lower VI, that is, a Cambridge School Certificate with three credits instead of four credits as in the past, conforms with the existing minimum entry requirements with respect to grades at certain levels in the public sector.

However, currently, for post requiring a Higher School Certificate as a minimum, the candidate should hold a School Certificate with five credits.

I wish to inform the House that a Committee chaired by my Ministry is working on the review of the qualification requirement in schemes of service for entry grades in the civil service and will address any issue related to this matter

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister if it means that, *valeur du jour*, holders of HSC or 2 'A' levels with 2 credits at SC level are not going to be recruited in the public sector?

Mr Gungah: No. In fact, as I said, certain grades in the public sector are recruited with the existing criteria for admission, that is, 3 SC levels.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are referring to clerical grades, of course, which is the ambition of everybody holding a School Certificate. I would like to ask the Minister when this committee at the level of his Ministry was set up.

Mr Gungah: This committee was set up long before the Minister of Education came with the new criteria for admission. The committee has been working regularly. It is chaired by my Ministry and...

Mr Speaker: No, when the committee was set up, that's all. There is no need to give the composition.

Mr Obeegadoo: My question is: what is the objective of this committee?

Mr Speaker: I think the Minister has replied to this question.

Mr Obeegadoo: May I then know whether it is the intention of Government to bring amendments to the regulations concerning...

Mr Speaker: The committee is sitting and looking into the matter. Next question, hon. Mrs Ribot!

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said certain grades are going to admit students having 3 SC levels. I would like to know what about those having 2 SC levels?

Mr Gungah: Mr Speaker, Sir, some entry grades require a bare Cambridge School Certificate, that is, either one credit or 5 passes, inclusive of English language or 2 credits and 3 passes, including English language.

Mr Speaker: Next question, Dr. S. Boolell!

HEPATITIS C – ANTIVIRAL THERAPY

(No. B/351) **Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to Hepatitis C, she will state the number of cases thereof recorded at her Ministry, indicating the number thereof currently on specific antiviral therapy, indicating the -

- (a) criteria for the choice of patients to go on same;
- (b) cost per patient and the sum spent on purchases, since 2008 to date, and
- (c) modalities for the purchase of the therapy.

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Hepatitis C is an infectious disease affecting the liver caused by Hepatitis C virus. Infection is often asymptomatic, but once established chronic infection can progress to cirrhosis of the liver.

I am informed that for the year 2010, 1637 tests of Hepatitis C have been confirmed by the laboratory services.

Currently six patients are receiving the specific antiviral therapy.

Concerning part (a) of the question, the criteria for providing the treatment are as follows

- (a) Patients should have contracted the disease through blood transfusion before 1997, the year in which tests were introduced for screening of Hepatitis C in blood donors, and
- (b) Health care staff who may have contracted the disease while delivering the service.

As regards part (b) of the question, the cost of treatment for each patient is around Rs300,000, and the total sum spent since 2008 till date is around Rs5 m.

As for part (c) of the question, the purchase is effected after justification from the consultant concerned and necessary approval from the Ministry. Purchases are effected from the local market at hospital level.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the purchases are on tender or is it only one company which has the monopoly of the supply of drugs?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have the procedure for the purchase, but I am being informed that IBL is a sole supplier of Pegylated Interferon, that is, the drug that is being used.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, are tenders issued so that there are more cheaper drugs of equal efficacy which may be available?

Dr. Jeetah: I think that might be taken into consideration.

FLIC EN FLAC – RADIOLOGY UNIT

(No. B/352) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether he will state if the Radiation Services of his Ministry have authorised any private concern to operate a Radiology

Unit in a residential complex, in the Flic en Flac region and, if so, if the risks of radioactive leakages have been evaluated and the residents of the complex informed accordingly.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Radiation Protection Authority that on 26 November 2010, an application was made by a private promoter to operate an X-Ray Unit in a private health institution known as St Patrick's Clinic, situated at Flic en Flac.

On 18 January 2011, the Radiation Protection Authority carried out an inspection of the facility confirming that all the requirements were met for ensuring the safety of workers and the public.

The Radiation Protection Authority has authorised St Patrick's Clinic to operate only one radiation source (an X-Ray machine with a maximum capacity of 125 KV). There is no radioactive source as such being used as a facility and thus there is no risk of radioactive leakage.

On 24 February 2011, the Radiation Protection Authority authorised the applicant to operate a conventional X-Ray Unit at the said facility for medical diagnosis purposes.

I am informed by the Radiation Protection Authority that there is no risk of radiation leakage, as the walls of the room have been properly shielded using 2.5 millimetres lead sheets up to a height of 2 metres.

The shielding is adequate for the type of X-Ray machine being used and there is no risk for any resident of the complex to be exposed to radiation resulting from the operation of the X-Ray Unit.

The Radiation Protection Authority has also confirmed that there are no residents next to the X-Ray room.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, is it perfectly in order for the residents of a residential complex near the beach be made to have, as neighbours, an X-Ray machine?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, an X-Ray machine is an innocent machine. It is not a radioactive source. And, as I have said, it is well protected. The four walls are lined and there is no risk to either the workers or the public or the patients attending next door. That is for sure.

Dr. S. Boolell: Then, could we have an agreement from the operator of the machine that should any mishap happen to any of the residents that he bears the full legal responsibility?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no problem with that.

PETIT VERGER – MULTIPURPOSE COMPLEX

(No. B/353) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Petit Verger, he will state if consideration will be given for the construction of a multipurpose complex for the leisure and welfare of the inhabitants of the locality.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Moka-Flacq District Council that the request of the inhabitants for construction of a multipurpose complex which may cater for indoor leisure, literary activities, a fitness corner, a reading room and a volleyball pitch, is fully justified as the existing facilities are situated far from Petit Verger.

I am further informed that the Council is agreeable to the construction of this complex which is estimated to cost around Rs15 m. subject to availability of the required funds.

L'ASSURANCE, DAGOTIERE –

FIRINGA-TYPE NHDC HOUSING ESTATE - AMENITIES

(No. B/354) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the firinga-type NHDC Housing Estate, at L'Assurance, Dagotière, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Corporation Ltd., information as to if consideration will be given for the -

- (a) construction thereat of a children playground and other common amenities, and
- (b) regular up-keeping and maintenance works to be carried out on the buildings and the environment thereat.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, as per records available at my Ministry, six portions of State land of extents varying from 76 m² to 2,570 m² within the NHDC housing estate at L'Assurance, Dagotière have been earmarked for green space. None of these plots has so far been developed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there are numerous requests for the use of the plots of State land within NHDC housing estates and there are also cases where plots vested in local authorities have not been developed. A Technical Committee has been set up at my Ministry to make recommendations on the possible use of these plots for social amenities and green space. The advisability of repossessing the undeveloped plots of land from the local authorities for vesting in other Government Departments willing to undertake social projects thereon, is also being examined.

As a general policy, whenever there is an undertaking from other Ministries or Government Departments to carry out a specific project on any vacant plot of State land, the land is vested to the Ministry after examination of the proposed development and confirmation that funds are available.

As regards part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, the residents are owners “*de plein droit*” of their housing units since July 2006, and as such, they are solely responsible for the regular upkeep and maintenance of their housing units and housing environment. It would also rest with the owners to maintain the plot of State land on which stand their housing units.

SURGICAL TREATMENT ABROAD – FINANCIAL AID

(No. B/355) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the patients who have to effect surgical treatment abroad, she will state if consideration will be given for an increase of the financial aid given to them.

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

With the development in the health sector during the recent years, many complex surgical cases that were previously sent abroad for treatment, are now being attended to by our local doctors or visiting professors. In view thereof, my Ministry has set up a Technical Committee chaired by a Director, Health Services to review the Overseas Treatment Scheme which was last revised in 1999. A decision on any increase in the quantum of the financial aid would be taken in the light of the recommendation of the Committee.

CPE – TEXTBOOKS

(No. B/356) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether in regard to the Part 2 of the Certificate of Primary Education books in all subjects, he will state the reasons of the delay with which they have been made available to the schools.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker Sir, in line with the National Curriculum Framework for the Primary Sub Sector, my Ministry, in collaboration with the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), has embarked upon the production of new textbooks for Stds I to VI since 2007. This cycle has been completed this year with the production of new Std VI textbooks.

Furthermore, in 2009, my Ministry, out of concern for the health and general well-being of children, decided to split those new textbooks which were bulky into two parts and thus reduce the weight of the school bags. This measure also allowed teachers to make their pupils learn at an appropriate and sound pedagogical pace throughout the year.

The textbooks for ten out of the sixteen subjects taught at the CPE were accordingly produced in two parts. With respect to these sixteen subjects, all the Part I textbooks together with the textbooks in single volumes have been delivered to schools before the resumption of studies in January 2011.

With regard to the ten Part II textbooks for the CPE, I am informed that -

- (i) Textbooks for Maths, Science, Arabic, Tamil and Urdu have already been delivered to schools;
- (ii) Textbooks for English, Hindi, Marathi and Telugu are being received this week and will be delivered to schools by the end of the week, and
- (iii) Textbooks for French will be received early next week and distributed to schools by the end of next week.

With this delivery schedule, Mr Speaker Sir, all the pupils of CPE will have their Part II textbooks by the end of next week.

I am informed by the MIE that the organisation of the learning materials into Parts I & II for the ten subjects has been effected in such a manner as to cater for the health, well-being and pedagogical considerations. Such a design is meant to discourage the practice of cramming the entire syllabus within a period of six months, and the devotion of the third term to an *ad nauseam* repetition and ultimate rote memorisation.

In line with this pedagogical imperative, the first Parts of the textbooks are expected to be covered by the month of June at the earliest.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given this perspective and time line I have mentioned, the question of delay does not arise.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is any change in the CPE curriculum.

Dr. Bunwaree: Not to my knowledge, I have to check if ever there have been minor changes, but not to my knowledge.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, whereas it is most welcomed that the books be split into two parts so as not to be a burden to the students, it is unacceptable that we are in the month of May, the exams are taking place in October, there are schools that have already ended Book 1 since the end of term one and which have not received the Part II yet.

Dr. Bunwaree: I am afraid that the hon. Member has not understood at all what I have mentioned.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has explained in his reply.

Dr. Bunwaree: I will advise her to read my reply and then to come back.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

NORTHERN VIEW POINT

– EMBELLISHMENT & REFURBISHMENT WORKS

(No. B/357) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the Northern View Point, also known as the Malinga-Crève Coeur View, he will state if his Ministry will consider –

- (a) embellishment and refurbishment works to be carried out at the foot of the Pieter Both mountain, and
- (b) including the site on the list of tourist attractions.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, in a reply I made to PQ B/1184 on the same issue in 2008, it was pointed out that in view of the limited availability of funds, sites with high touristic potential were being uplifted and embellished in a phased manner.

With regard to the Malinga-Crève Coeur View Point, a site visit has recently been effected by officers of the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure and I am informed that the works could include provision of signage from Saint Pierre to View Point, provision of bins and picnic tables, rehabilitation of handrails and the wall, provision of adequate parking space and lighting points.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure will initiate procedures for the project to be implemented this year, in a phased manner.

As regards part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the site will automatically be considered as a tourist site once all the basic amenities have been provided.

**MAURITIUS AMATEUR WEIGHTLIFTERS & POWER LIFTERS
ASSOCIATION - SUSPENSION**

(No. B/358) **Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Mauritius Amateur Weightlifters and Power Lifters Association, he will state if it was suspended and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the reasons therefor;
- (b) if the suspension has been lifted, indicating –
 - (i) when, and
 - (ii) the conditions thereof,
- (c) if this suspension has had any effect on the preparation of the athletes for the forthcoming Indian Ocean Island Games, and
- (d) if the athletes, presently in Bulgaria for a training camp of two months, are affected by this suspension.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was informed on 12 April 2011 by the President of the Mauritius Amateur Weightlifters and Power Lifters Association about the suspension of the Federation from international participation.

With regard to part (a), the reasons of the suspension were that –

- (i) the Federation did not submit the whereabouts of athletes who participated in a competition organised by the International Weightlifting Federation under the International Weightlifters Federation anti-doping policy rules for the last quarter of the year 2010. This constituted an offence punishable by a fine, and
- (ii) the Federation did not pay the fine of US \$5,000 as at deadline of 31 December 2010.

Regarding part (b) of this question, I am also informed that the fine has already been paid. Moreover the president of the Association has advised that the president of the International Weightlifting Federation is out of office and that a letter confirming the lifting of the suspension is awaited soon.

Regarding parts (c) and (d), this suspension has no effect on the preparation of athletes for the forthcoming IOIG games. In fact, 9 athletes are presently undergoing training in Bulgaria and some of them are giving remarkable performances.

Mr Khamajeet: Being given that a Desk Officer is attached to this Federation, can I ask the hon. Minister if any inquiry was launched as regards to this negligence and if any action was taken against this Desk Officer?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, a strong letter has been issued to the president of the Federation on 09 April concerning this negligence to avoid further sanctions.

GEORGE V STADIUM – RENOVATION

(No. B/ 359) Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the renovation of the George V Stadium, he will –

- (a) give a breakdown of the total amount of money paid, as at 30 April 2011, to all the contractors involved;
- (b) state the total amount of money earmarked by his Ministry to be put at the disposal of the Mauritius Sports Council to complete the remaining works;
- (c) table copy of the survey carried out by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping in relation to the drains which were not functioning, and
- (d) state if the lighting poles will be fixed at reasonable distance from the four corner flags.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that ICAC is presently carrying an inquiry regarding the renovation works at the George V Stadium. So, I do not wish to make any comment at this stage.

As regards the lighting poles, I am informed by the Mauritius Football Association that these have been placed within reasonable norms. However, additional measures are being taken to fix a safety pad around the poles.

Mr Khamajeet: As regards parts (a) and (b), Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not see anything concerning ICAC on this.

Mr Ritoo: For me, ICAC is inquiring on this issue. So, I do not intend to say anything.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I cannot force the Minister to answer!

Mr Khamajeet: Being given that the rehabilitation of the playfield of George V Stadium is totally different from the playfields renovated by the MSC previously, can I ask the hon. Minister if the MSC has the equipment needed and the expertise to carry out such jobs?

Mr Ritoo: I think that I replied to this question, namely that the MSC is doing the minor works. We have got skilled workers at the Mauritius Sports Council. I think that the hon. Member was himself the president for the past five years of the Mauritius Sports Council. He knows that we have got skilled workers to do such minor works.

Mr Khamajeet: I just want to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I do not think that these are minor works as regards the rehabilitation of playfield which has been given to *Active Décor*. The scope of work is totally different from the minor works that the Minister is referring to. Can I ask if the MSC has the equipment and expertise for such big works?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe that *piquage de gazon* is a very minor work. There is no question of doing drainage works or anything. This has already been done by the previous contractor. We were left with minor works regarding dressing of the grass. I do not find any problem regarding that.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is saying that the scope of work is big. The Minister is saying that the scope of work is small: *piquage de gazon*. I am at a loss to assess which is which.

(Interruptions)

I think that the best way would have been for the Member to ask him to lay a copy of the scope of work that is being done so that he can assess whether it is big work or it is small work.

Mr Khamajeet: Can the hon. Minister table the scope of work?

Mr Ritoo: I have no problem to table a copy.

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, I am a bit disturbed with the reply of the Minister...

Mr Speaker: No please!

Mr Bhagwan: ...for whom we have a lot of respect. We have applauded the Minister when he was playing at the stadium. He was an international player.

Mr Speaker: Yes, me also!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I am a bit deceived. *Tout ceux qui ont cotoyé* the George V Stadium over the years know how *la pelouse était*.

Mr Speaker: Put the question!

Mr Bhagwan: There was one Mr Kisnah who was working for years with the MFA - I still remember Mr Ram Ruhee and Mr Rambocus - and he became a professional in turfing. Can I know from the Minister whether the Sports Council or the Mauritius Football Federation or even the Minister has approached that Mr Kisnah and his team for his expertise in that job?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, all those who have known Georges V Stadium years back know very well Mr Kisnah and he was attached with the Mauritius Sports Council. I think now he is above 70 and...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister reply! Hon. Bhagwan, let the Minister answer! The Minister is saying he is now 70 years old, he cannot work. That is what the Minister is saying.

Mr Ritoo: He has intended to retire from service.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Khamajeet: Mr Speaker, Sir, given that George V Stadium was famous for the famous *gazon anglais* on the turf, can I ask the hon. Minister what has happened to the famous *gazon anglais* when it was removed for renovation? Has it vanished?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not an expert in *gazon*, be it *gazon anglais* or *gazon français*; I have no idea about the *gazon*. But I understand from the skilled workers of the Mauritius Sports Council who have been renovating the Anjalay Stadium and the Auguste Vollaire Stadium that they are the same skilled workers who are working for the George V Stadium.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Khamajeet!

FLACQ & BON ACCUEIL – COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES

(No. B/360) Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise, Cooperatives and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the co-operative sector, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the -

- (a) number of co-operative societies still operating in Constituency No. 9, Flacq and Bon Accueil, indicating if the number thereof in operation, since 2000 to date, is on the increase or decrease curve at national level, and
- (b) measures that will be taken to boost up this sector, including the financial incentives that will be given to encourage them to stay in this sector.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the number of active cooperative societies operating in the region of Flacq and Bon Accueil as at date is 112 as compared to 75 in year 2000 which indicates an increase of 37 co-operative societies. Moreover there has been significant increase at national level as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that many measures have been taken and various facilities, incentives and support services have been provided so far by my Ministry to co-operative societies. The Co-operative Act 2005, as amended, provides for fiscal exemption to societies and its members on an instrument executed by the co-operative society or by a member in relation to business transacted with the society.

Three audit services are also granted to co-operative societies having a yearly turnover of less than Rs10 m. and three consulting services are provided to all co-operatives. My Ministry also provides capacity building programs, infrastructural facilities where possible, three marketing outlets as well as support for fair trade certification. Two directories of co-operative products and services in Mauritius and Rodrigues and a cooperative best practice guide launched recently by my Ministry aims at increasing the visibility of co-operative products and services and improving good governance in co-operatives respectively.

In addition to the above, my Ministry will on 26 May 2011 launch a brochure on incentive facilities and support services to cooperative societies for 2011 which aims at providing cooperative societies and co-operators with the necessary information on the various incentives, facilities, services which they may avail of, from different Ministries, Departments and organisations.

TERASSON & POINTE AUX SABLES – SEWERAGE NETWORK

(No. B/361) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the region of Terasson and Pointe aux Sables, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to if there is any sewerage network project therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Member may wish to refer to my reply to PQ No. 1B/54 wherein I had informed the House that 1.1 km sewerage lines have been laid and 125 houses connected in the region of Pointe aux Sables. Terasson does not form part of phase 1 of the National Sewerage Master plan of 1994. Consideration will be given to the construction of a

sewerage network in Terasson in the next phase. A consultant is presently elaborating the next sewerage master plan which will cover all unsewered areas, including Pointe aux Sables. The report is expected to be ready by December 2011.

Mr Barbier: May I ask the Minister by when the next phase will start?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Once the report is out then we will decide about the implementation.

Mr Barbier: I would like to make an appeal to the Minister for priority to be given to Terasson being given the greasy type of soil there and the absorption capacity of the soil is very limited. Actually all the inhabitants who have septic tanks and absorption pipes are having many difficulties in this region. May I appeal again to the Minister to give priority to the region of Terasson.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will go further than that. The answer is yes, but we also had request that the wastewater services be provided in time. I will look into that.

CITE RICHELIEU – SPEED BREAKERS

(No. B/362) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to Cité Richelieu, he will state the reasons why the speed breakers found thereat have been removed, indicating if consideration will be given for the reinstallation thereof for the safety of the road users.

(Withdrawn)

L'ESPERANCE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – UPGRADING

(No. B/363) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the upgrading and enhancing of the infrastructure at the L'Esperance Government School, he state where matters as to the

- (a) tiling of three classrooms, library room and corridors of the new building and the toilet block;
- (b) construction of a shelter in front of the new building, a second one between the new building and the toilet block and a third one at the entrance of the playground, and
- (c) construction of an additional storey comprising of a staff room, a hall and three classrooms.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that in respect of parts (a) and (b) of the question, tenders are under evaluation. Should everything proceed smoothly the contract for the works which will be of a duration of 12 weeks is expected to be awarded in the first week of June 2011.

As regards part (c), I am informed that there are two classroom blocks at the school comprising 14 rooms which accommodate classrooms for teaching of core subjects and Asian languages, one library room, one ICT room, one staff room and one office for the head teacher. Given that there is a one stream-school with a declining school population, it is considered that the existing facilities are adequate and it is not envisaged at this point in time, to construct additional classrooms. However, the possibility of providing a larger space for the staff room is being looked into by officers of my Ministry. In regard to the construction of the hall, I would like to inform the House that it is not the policy of my Ministry to provide same to primary schools.

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.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the following Bills were read a first time –

- (a) The Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies Bill (No. IX of 2011), and*
- (b) The Law Practitioners (Amendment) Bill (No. X of 2011).*

At 4.17 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.57 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following Bills -

- (a) The Arabic-Speaking Union Bill (No. VII of 2010)
- (b) The Bhojpuri-Speaking Union Bill (No. VIII of 2010)
- (c) The Chinese-Speaking Union Bill (No. VII of 2011)
- (d) The Creole-Speaking Union Bill (No. IX of 2010)
- (e) The Sanskrit-Speaking Union Bill (No. XI of 2010)

Question again proposed.

Mrs M. Martin (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): M. le président, permettez-moi tout d'abord de présenter mes félicitations à l'honorable ministre des arts et de la culture pour la profusion des projets de loi qui sont présentés aujourd'hui, en l'occurrence le Arabic-Speaking Union Bill, le Bhojpuri-Speaking Union Bill, le Creole-Speaking Union Bill, le Chinese-Speaking Union Bill et le Sanskrit-Speaking Union Bill. Ces nombreux projets de loi - si je puis me le permettre - soulignent la constance du gouvernement par rapport aux objectifs énoncés d'abord dans le discours-programme, ensuite dans le discours présidentiel, présenté dans cette même Chambre, et aussi par rapport à la philosophie gouvernementale en général; la vision du gouvernement de mettre à la disposition de la population Mauricienne toutes les facilités possibles, y compris l'accès aux langues parlées et écrites à Maurice. Il s'agit ici, d'une promesse respectée. Je vous ai donné brièvement tout à l'heure, l'historique de la présentation de ces projets de loi; c'est donc une promesse respectée et cela démontre le sérieux de ce gouvernement qui honore les promesses qu'il a faites et aussi qu'il a l'intention de les tenir et qui démontre cette volonté.

M. le président, permettez-moi également de souligner la vision des gouvernements successifs de mettre en avant la promotion des langues parlées et écrites à Maurice. Je crois comprendre qu'auparavant, au cours des années précédentes, il y a eu au moins six *Speaking Unions* qui ont été votés dans cette Chambre - le marathi, le telugu, l'anglais, le français, l'hindi, le tamoul entre autres, l'urdu également, pour ne pas oublier, comme me le fait si bien remarquer l'honorable Peetumber, témoigne également de la volonté du gouvernement de faire en sorte que le peuple mauricien puisse être fier de sa culture d'origine et avoir également accès à toutes les facilités et les ouvertures qu'offrent les langues dans le monde et à Maurice. Nous avons écouté la semaine dernière plusieurs orateurs, y compris l'honorable Kee Chong Li Kwong Wing qui

n'est pas dans cette Chambre, aujourd'hui, mais qui avait livré, je pense, un discours très intéressant sur la culture chinoise en particulier la langue hakka. Il nous avait ouvert des horizons sur la vie et l'histoire de la population chinoise à Maurice. Cela démontre son intérêt également pour le sujet de la langue. Ce qui veut dire, M. le président, que cette Chambre dans son ensemble est unifiée dans le désir de donner à la population mauricienne toutes les facilités linguistiques qu'elle mérite et toutes les facilités linguistiques possibles pour mettre en avant le développement de Maurice. Ensuite aussi l'œuvre - il faut le souligner - du ministre des arts et de la culture qui fait un travail exceptionnel dans ce domaine, que ce soit au niveau des événements culturels organisés dans ce pays comme nous le voyons et comme le démontre si bien aujourd'hui, les cinq *Speaking Union Bills* qui sont débattus dans cette Chambre.

Moi, pour ma part, je serai particulièrement sensible au cas de la langue créole. J'y reviendrai tout à l'heure et je vous expliquerai pourquoi. Mais d'abord, pourquoi mettre autant d'accent sur les langues en général? M. le président, c'est un fait connu de tous, et particulièrement de ceux qui étudient la communication, que la langue est un vecteur formidable. Il est intéressant de noter que de tous les êtres vivants sur terre, seul l'homme a été doté de parole. Dans ce schéma, les langues jouent un rôle extraordinaire et déterminant. Il y a une phrase sanskrit qui dit : '*Vasudev Kutumbakam*'. Cela veut dire tout simplement que le monde est une seule famille. Aujourd'hui, nous vivons à l'ère du village global. Les langues, plus on en apprend, sont une opportunité sans égal pour pouvoir vivre vraiment cette expérience de village global. Et c'est donc une chance supplémentaire d'unifier le monde que nous offre ce gouvernement aujourd'hui.

Maurice, dans ce cas, constitue également un exemple intéressant puisque nous avons des ancêtres qui sont venus des quatre coins du monde et les *Speaking Unions* qui symbolisent, et dont la tâche ne sera pratiquement pas aisée mais également une tâche qui est essentielle, les *Speaking Unions* ont un rôle important à jouer dans la valorisation de nos valeurs linguistiques. Puisque la valorisation de nos valeurs linguistiques est une ouverture sur les valeurs culturelles et cette ouverture sur les valeurs culturelles forge la compréhension ainsi que le respect des autres et la compréhension et le respect de notre identité communautaire. Cette identité communautaire contribue à consolider notre identité nationale et notre ouverture sur le monde qui nous entoure parce que la langue, M. le président, peut être un outil ou une arme, dépendant de l'usage qu'on en fait.

La connaissance, c'est la richesse et également le pouvoir. C'est pour cela que nous applaudissons la vision de ce gouvernement de consolider le statut des langues à Maurice. C'est une fierté pour nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, de constater l'effort de vulgarisation entrepris en ce sens. J'avais parlé tout à l'heure du travail entrepris par le ministre des arts et de la culture. Permettez-moi aussi de souligner le travail accompli et réalisé par le ministre de l'éducation qui a également contribué à faire avancer la cause des langues à Maurice et qui, cette année, nous l'avons vu, a introduit, le bhojpuri et le créole comme langues optionnelles pour l'année prochaine dans les classes, et nous avons déjà - il l'a annoncé, je crois, publiquement - 2800 élèves qui entreront en *Std I* l'année prochaine et qui ont opté pour la langue créole comme une langue optionnelle. Parce que trop souvent, M. le président, nous avons vu que les langues sont utilisées comme un outil mais également comme une arme.

Je reviens maintenant sur la langue créole. Cette langue qui est la langue maternelle de la majorité des mauriciens, qui est comprise par tous les mauriciens et qui est parlée aujourd'hui naturellement et publiquement, n'a pas toujours été très comprise. Il y avait un moment où on considérait la langue créole comme un dialecte. Il y avait une époque où parler créole était mal vu dans certains milieux. Je me souviens personnellement, quand j'étais enfant, à l'école on nous interdisait de parler créole. Il y avait des endroits où c'était perçu comme étant dégradant, honteux de parler créole dans certains milieux. Dans certains bureaux également, cette langue qui a toute sa raison d'être, tout son vocabulaire et toute sa richesse, était vraiment dénigrée. Mais, aujourd'hui, à travers l'effort du gouvernement, notamment à travers les *Speaking Unions*, à travers l'effort qui est fait dans l'éducation, nous pouvons dire que cette langue, M. le président, est en bonne voie d'atteindre de statut qu'elle mérite. Le statut qu'elle mérite, dans le sens qu'à travers les *Speaking Unions*, nous pourrions vulgariser davantage, la langue créole, non seulement à Maurice mais également dans les autres horizons nationaux et internationaux. Il faut penser grand, M. le président. Les *Speaking Unions* ont, dans ce cas, une tâche supplémentaire.

Il serait aussi intéressant à l'aube où nous envisageons de diffuser les débats parlementaires en direct à la télévision que nous puissions également considérer la possibilité de baisser une autre barrière, d'ouvrir une autre porte en introduisant la langue de tous les mauriciens à l'intérieur de l'assemblée nationale.

M. le président, il y a aussi une chose qui me frappe dans l'action menée par ce gouvernement. La vision de ce gouvernement, nous en avons parlée. La constance de ce

gouvernement par rapport à la parole donnée et la parole respectée, nous l'avons vu et nous le voyons. La fierté de ce gouvernement qui fait en sorte que toutes les langues soient au même niveau à Maurice et aussi le désir de ce gouvernement de contribuer à l'*empowerment* du peuple mauricien. Ces projets de loi présentés aujourd'hui, M. le président, ne font pas exception. Le ministre des arts et de la culture a parlé, dans son discours, de l'idée de regrouper les *Speaking Unions* sous l'égide d'un comité afin de faire en sorte que les *Speaking Unions* travaillent tous dans la même direction et nous sommes totalement en faveur de cette idée et de ce projet, M. le président.

Encore une fois si je vous dis '*Vasudev Kutumbakam*', maintenant, je pense que je n'aurai plus besoin de le traduire. C'est cela aussi, M. le président, la magie de la langue et c'est ce que nous voulons témoigner et c'est ce que nous voulons partager avec le peuple mauricien pour faire en sorte que toutes les langues parlées et comprises à Maurice suscitent la fierté de nos compatriotes.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr M. Peetumber (First Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Mr Speaker, Sir, to start with, I would like to congratulate my colleague, hon. Mrs Mireille Martin, for her brilliant intervention and, in the same breath, I place on record my appreciation and congratulations to the hon. Minister of Arts and Culture for presenting this cluster Bill following a number of Speaking Unions Bills introduced earlier in this august Assembly. Successive Governments seem to be on the same wavelength with respect to the delicate language issue in Mauritius. The English Speaking Union Bill and the Hindi Speaking Union Bill were introduced by the MMM/MSM Government in 1993 and 1994 respectively along with the Urdu-Speaking Union Bill in 2002. Subsequently, in 2008, the *l'Alliance sociale* Government composed of the Labour Party and the PMXD passed the Marathi-Speaking Union Bill, the Tamil-Speaking Union Bill and the Telegu-Speaking Union Bill and today the *l'Alliance de L'Avenir* Government composed of the Labour Party, the MSM and the PMSD through the hon. Minister of Arts and Culture, has come forward with the Sanskrit-Speaking Union Bill, the Arabic-Speaking Union Bill, the Bhojpuri-Speaking Union Bill, the Creole-Speaking Union Bill and the Chinese-Speaking Union Bill. It seems that all the major political parties in Mauritius have heeded the advice given by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the Father of the nation, to the effect

that every precautionary measure must be taken not to hurt the sensibilities of any groups of people with regard to language, culture and religion.

These Bills pave the way for the embellishment of the cultural landscape of our country with the added presence of new Speaking Unions to the already rich panorama of linguistic bodies. The experience of existing Speaking Unions demonstrates how an agency with a strong structure can act as a disseminating vehicle of a language across society. Left to themselves many languages utilised in Mauritius will remain as only written languages or only spoken languages.

Elocution contests held among children testify to the vibrant life that is being given to languages that would otherwise be confined to the four walls of the classroom. The fluency of children in reciting poems, in oral storytelling, in play acting, proves that we, as a Government that is sensitive to the enrichment of our cultural heritage, are ensuring the longevity of our patrimony.

Mr Speaker, Sir, why should we give a boost to our linguistic heritage? Well, languages are vehicles of communication and socialisation *par excellence* which enable us to acquaint ourselves with the norms of a society, its customs and traditions, its religious, social and cultural values. They are also a *sine qua non* condition for the acquisition of knowledge and science.

Through language, we can express our joy, thrill and excitement, our frustration, apprehension, miseries and sufferings. We can also give vent to our feelings and emotions through songs, poetry, ballads and groom our children through storytelling and plays. Besides, we can perform rites and rituals pertaining to birth, wedding and funeral.

In a nutshell, languages are essential to the identity of groups and individuals and any measure to suppress people's languages will be tantamount to suppressing the identity of the people whose reactions might well lead to unrest and instability in the country.

Languages are so important in our everyday lives that we cannot afford to adopt a superficial approach while dealing with them. This is why Government should step in to reassure the people across the board that their interests and those of their groups will be safeguarded and that every effort will be put up to support and promote the cultural, lingual and religious values. Such a stand on the part of Government is essential for a peaceful coexistence and intercultural understanding.

Mr Speaker, Sir, language is more than just a vehicle of communication. George Steiner, a reputed scholar of Theoretical and Descriptive Linguistics says in 'After Babel' that every people have in its language a unique body of shared secrecy. When languages disappear, the identities of the communities which use them tend to dissolve. With the death of a language, a whole way of thinking, living and acting dies too. Each takes with it a storehouse of consciousness. He further adds that languages die not because of any inherent weakness in the language itself, but because the language is not in touch with the principal currents of intellectual and political force.

Countless tribal societies have withered inward, isolated by language barriers even from their own neighbours. A language is like a human being. As long as you imprison him within the confines of the four walls and do not expose him to society, the man withers and remains primitive.

Also following giant strides in science and technology, information, communication and transport, the world has shrunk into a global village. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, unfortunately we have not really witnessed the emergence of the global or universal man who advocates for global or universal values with respect to language, religion, culture, literature, cinema, painting and so on. Men with all his frailties, foibles and shortcomings has failed to get rid of his narrow mindedness and irrational fanaticism to transcend geographical, communal and racial considerations to project himself as a real champion for all religions, cultures and languages of the world. An effort along this line would undoubtedly bring about more understanding, trust, harmony and proximity between man and man. Inauspiciously this change of heart has not occurred and the internationalist has not emerged at the end of the day.

This is why Government has stepped in with the creation of the Speaking Unions to promote all languages in the country alike in order to make the linguistic tapestry richer, more diverse and even more attractive. Besides, through the creation of the Speaking Unions, Government is contributing to the democratisation of our linguistic landscape.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to draw a parenthesis at this stage to comment on the term 'ancestral language' which generally refers to the oriental languages in Mauritius or elsewhere.

Well, I have taken the pains to consult the Oxford dictionary which defines ancestor. Ancestral is the adjective from ancestor. Ancestor has been defined in the Oxford dictionary as a person, typically one more remote than a grandparent from whom one is descended. When we

talk about ancestral languages, as if we get the feeling, the impression that it is something very remote; it's something that is cut off from this world, cut off from the present world. In fact, I have been pondering over this question, and asked several of my colleagues: why should ancestral languages refer exclusively to the Oriental languages? Why not extended to other languages like English and French? If we follow the same logic like we have in Mauritius people of European descent who speak English and French. So, in their case too English and French have been bequeathed to them by their grand grandparents. At the end of the day, all the languages must be ancestral languages because they have been passed, handed down from generation to generation over the centuries. So, I understand that this term 'ancestral language' should not particularly apply to the Oriental languages, but on the contrary, it should be extended to all languages because this is the way how languages are bequeathed from one generation to another. So, if this applies to the Oriental languages, it is again true in the case of English, French, Italian, German or whichever language that we speak in different parts of the world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole point is that this Government is not promoting these languages because they happen to be ancestral languages. Government is promoting these languages because they are part and parcel of our linguistic landscape in Mauritius at present. These languages are utilised at present by large sections of the population in our everyday life. This is purposely why Government is concerned about this linguistic tapestry, this linguistic heritage and Government wants to make it as rich as possible, as diverse as possible so that we take on board languages, cultures, religions of all the people living in Mauritius on board. I think this is primarily the concern of the Government or of any Government.

Conversely, Mr Speaker, Sir, I deem it appropriate to say that I do not belong to the school of thought which opines that English and French are foreign languages; that they have been imposed upon us by our colonial masters and therefore they are languages of oppression. I do not buy this argument at all. I understand that all these languages - whether it is English or French - have been spoken in the country for centuries altogether; that they are being utilised by the written press. They are utilised on the radio, on the TV; as media of instruction in the pre-primary schools; in the primary schools, in the secondary schools, in the tertiary institutions...

Mr Speaker: With due respect to the hon. Member, we are talking about the Bill which is in front of us: the Arabic-Speaking Union Bill, the Bhojpuri-Speaking Union Bill. French is over. English is over. We are talking about these languages, there is no need for the hon.

Member to go deep into that and say that these are ancestral languages or not. I think that we better focus on those which are in front of us.

Mr Peetumber: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I took your permission to draw a parenthesis just to make a passing reference to this issue and I'll, of course, come back to this question of speaking unions as per your ruling. Of course, I'll try not to be complacent regarding the harsh realities that prevail regarding certain languages in Mauritius. I know that I can be censored for that, but I would like to stick to my stand and say what I've got to say. It will be an exercise in futility, Mr Speaker, Sir, to pretend that Bhojpuri is in good shape in Mauritius, that the number of Bhojpuri speakers is on the increase that the people in the rural as well as in the urban areas are speaking the language on a massive scale. Even quoting impressive figures as regards the number of people using the language in Bihar, Nepal, Guyana, Surinam, Fidji, Trinidad and Tobago will not serve any purpose in the local context. The naked truth, the harsh reality, the bitter fact on the ground is that Bhojpuri today is on the wane in Mauritius. The number of Bhojpuri speakers has known a drastic decline. Most of the people of the Asiatic origin in the urban areas no longer have recourse to Bhojpuri nor do the majority of youngsters from similar backgrounds in the rural areas. This decline must be attributed, *inter alia*, to a lack of exposure to the language; to an overexposure to Creole, French and English; to the introduction of TV in the mid-1960s which put an abrupt end to the custom of post-dinner oral storytelling and conversations in Bhojpuri among family members and also to a sort of snobbery that has crept into the minds of a number of prosperous and successful people of the Asiatic origin. Again, the migration to the urban areas had its toll upon Bhojpuri speaking in the country.

I am sure that with the creation of the Bhojpuri Speaking Union, we shall be able to revive a language that was running the risk of being utilised exclusively by the seniors of a rural Mauritius. The introduction of Bhojpuri at school is yet another important contribution to the reinforcement of the language and the same is true for Kreole as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, however, I'll fail in my duty if I don't acknowledge the efforts put up by many individuals and institutions to promote the language in Mauritius, so it is fitting that I pay tribute to –

- (i) the Department of Bhojpuri, Folklore & Oral Traditions at the MGI;
- (ii) the MBC for the three daily radio news bulletin in Bhojpuri the talk shows, the TV programmes like Bhojpuri gamut, Bhojpuri talk back, etc;

- (iii) the Bhojpuri Institute;
- (iv) the Indian Diaspora Centre;
- (v) the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund;
- (vi) the National Heritage Trust Fund;
- (vii) the Ministry of Arts and Culture for organising the Bhojpuri Drama Festival on a yearly basis since 1980;
- (viii) the socio cultural organisations like the Hindi Pracharini Sabha, the Arya Samaj; the Baitkas which played an important role in the promotion of Bhojpuri at a time when all kinds of prejudices prevailed against the language.

I would also like to pay homage to Dr. Bhagat Madhukar; to Dr. Chintamanee; to Mr Jugdish Goburdhun – he happens to be present in the ...

Mr Speaker: I have said so many times, hon. Members cannot refer to strangers in the House.

Mr Peetumber: ...and to Mr Ramnath Jeetah who has left no stone unturned to give a well deserved boost to Bhojpuri. They are probably the unsung heroes whose relentless efforts should not go unnoticed. I understand that this is the most appropriate time to express our gratitude to them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the risk of globalisation is that certain traditions; ritualistic practices and essential features of our native culture may be eroded. In the craze of being fashionable and worldly wise we abandon what gives us our identity, our authenticity. Making our population become fluent speakers of our languages will help to keep them alive. Too often it is observed that even a national language which is popular can smother other home languages. Younger generations tend to use the national language at the expense of their home language.

The best way to pilot the impact of globalisation lies in ensuring that native languages, home languages do not die out. It is always relevant and important to reiterate the real meaning of pluralism. Unity in Diversity does not lie in abandoning differences, but in ensuring that every group constituting the whole respects its specificity and identifies itself with the whole at the same time. We must learn to harmonise the specific with the national so that we have a breed of citizens who feel comfortable with themselves, within and without. We must not live in a world which cultivates linguistic apartheid and grades languages spoken by the people of a country in terms of importance. Let us not be colonizers in our own country.

Bhojpuri is not less important than Hindi, just as Creole is not less vital for our survival than French. Languages should not be standardised. Each language has its own standard. We have been able to forge our Mauritian peace by respecting all. Today, we are giving a proof of our unstinted respect for all the ramifications of our culture. This is how we have been able to avoid the turbulence many countries are experiencing today. I am positive, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the concept of Unity in Diversity can be further translated into reality through the various speaking unions that have been put in place by different Governments at different points in time.

We conceive of Mauritius as a language hub. We have all languages: English, French, Hindi, Urdu, Creole, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Arabic, Chinese, Gujarati, German, Portuguese which can be taken on board and which can further beautify the linguistic tapestry of the country and the speaking unions can, to a certain measure, contribute in transforming the Mauritians into universal men or the internationalists who can view things from a much wider perspective and cherish universal values.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(5.33 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central): Mr Speaker, Sir, according to historians, Mauritius was discovered by Arabs during their numerous trips across the Indian Ocean. Mauritius appears on Arab sketches as far back as 1500. We don't know how long the Arabs came to Mauritius and how often they visited our island, but what we do know is that the first people who spoke on this island, spoke Arabic. Five centuries later, it is very interesting that this House is recognising and promoting Arabic through its Arabic-Speaking Union Bill.

After the Arabs left, the Europeans came, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, along with the Dutch and the French, came people from Madagascar, from Eastern Africa. These people were uprooted, they lost everything. They lost their culture and their languages. When they came to Mauritius, they created their own culture; they created their own language, the 'Creole'.

As far back as 1949, the colonial Government of the day in an article published in the British survey, had this to say about Creole –

“It is a form of degenerated French, extremely picturesque and lively, which lends itself admirably to their humour and wit, and whose poetical values have been amply shown in the many songs and lyrics which have originated in this Native community. But it is unwritten and it is not a medium of education. This has placed a tremendous obstacle in the path of the African community, and will ever stand in the way of its self-development. It is probably at the bottom of their continued frustration and inability to better themselves.”

This was 60 years ago and already in those colonial days, the Government had already identified the link between the language and economic development.

Today, through the Creole-Speaking Union Bill, we are recognising Creole as a language *à part entière* in its own right, a language which is spoken by every Mauritian irrespective of its race, colour, creed or social background. Creole is a language of our *sega*, a language which needs to be promoted *et valoriser*.

Then, came the Indian immigrants, some as traders but most as indentured labourers, with their hopes, with their courage. They brought along with them their religion and their culture. They came from the four corners of the Indian subcontinent. Those from the South of India came with Tamil, Andhra Pradesh came with Telugu, Maharashtra came with Marathi, Gujarat came with Gujarati, there were those who came from the centre with Urdu and Hindi and those from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh came with Bhojpuri. Yes, Bhojpuri which today in Mauritius is still spoken in some quarters which has been mauritianised, but it is still alive and has evolved so much so that today even in songs and dance there has been an evolution. I am thinking here of a group like ‘Bhojpuri Boys’ which has created a fusion between the Bhojpuri language and the *sega*. This is what we call bridging the gap, a concrete example of how language can be a bridge across barriers to bring down community barriers.

The Indian immigrants also brought with them their religion. The sacred texts for Hindus are all in Sanskrit, Sanskrit which is referred to in many quarters as the mother of languages. The Vedas, Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharat are all in Sanskrit. It is important that people know the original language in which those texts were revered. It is important especially for this new generation to study the sacred text in their original form and understand the message contained in

those texts. It is only when one has understood the messages coded and uncoded that one can implement it and live one's religion to the fullest.

The Indian immigrants of Muslim faith brought along with them also their holy scriptures, the Holy Quran, the traditions of the holy Prophet – may peace be upon him – the *Sunnah* gathered in *hadiths*. It was in Arabic language that Islamic religious values and traditions as well as the life of the Prophet were recorded. The whole Islamic civilisation started in that language, and alongside the Islamic empire, the Arabic language spread worldwide.

Muslims around the world recite the prayers in Arabic and read the Quran in Arabic even if most of them do not understand Arabic. It is important for every Muslim to study and learn Arabic. Some scholars even maintain that learning Arabic is compulsory on every Muslim, because they need to learn and understand what the Quran tells them. The second rightly guided Islamic Caliph Umar – may God be pleased with him – said –

“Learn the *Sunnah* and learn Arabic; learn the Quran in Arabic for it is in Arabic.”

Knowledge of this language would certainly help to better understand Islam and its teaching; clear any confusion that surrounds this religion of more than 1.5 billion followers and appreciate the beauty of this world religion. Learning Arabic will also help the Mauritian pilgrims who go on Hajj pilgrimage every year to Saudi Arabia.

Many of our Islamic brothers and sisters appreciate the beauty of Arabic in the recitation of the Holy Quran. The imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Shaikh Abdur-Rahman As-Sudais, is a famous figure worldwide for his very melodious recitation of the Holy Quran. Arabic is a language of the heart, capable of evoking emotions in you. It is sweet, beautiful and sublime.

The beauty of written Arabic can be admired also through its calligraphy that adorns many mosques such as the Istanbul Suleymaniye Mosque. Today, Arabic is one of the most widely spoken language in the world. Even the United Nations recognise Arabic as one of its six official languages alongside Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Besides its religious importance, Arabic has also been the language through which major breakthroughs were recorded. During the middle ages, it was the Arabs who contributed mostly to the advancement of such fields as astronomy, science, medicine, philosophy, mathematics and

literature. For example, Al-Idrisi who is considered the greatest geographer and cartographer of the Middle Ages, constructed a globe of the world map of 400 kg of pure silver and it is this map that has been used for centuries by Europeans. It was even used by Christopher Columbus when travelling abroad. Mr Speaker, Sir, all these works were written and recorded in Arabic language and with the knowledge of Arabic, we can better understand the basic principles that were used to make ground-breaking discoveries some 1200 years ago.

Along with the Indian Immigrants came the Chinese with their work ethics, religion, culture and language. My friend, hon. Li Kwong Wing, has dwelt comprehensively on the contribution of the Mauricians of Chinese origin as well as on the origin of the various Chinese spoken languages such as Hakka and Cantonese much better than what I can ever do. I would very humbly state that I concur with my learned friend and join motion with him on the Chinese-Speaking Union.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have travelled briefly through our history because all these Speaking Unions only take their full importance when they are placed in their proper historical context. Like the hon. Leader of the Opposition, Mr Paul Bérenger likes to say –

“Un pays qui ne connaît pas son histoire est comme un navire sans gouvernail.”

We need to know where we come from and where we are going; we need to know the past to avoid making mistakes and prepare for the future; we need to know and understand each other. And this process of understanding and mutual trust necessarily has to go through the acceptance and recognition of everybody's languages. Mr Speaker, Sir, language is not a barrier. It is a bridge. Our linguistic richness is the very essence of our rainbow nation and without doubt is the most precious thing that we inherited from our forefathers and we have a duty to preserve such linguistic and cultural inheritance and to transmit it to generations to come.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to pay tribute to all these people who have worked hard and, very often, with very limited means to promote languages in Mauritius. I am thinking here of all those volunteers who, before going to work or after coming from work, would spend hours teaching others, sometimes going from house to house; I am thinking about the Gurujis in Baitkas, about the Imam in Madrassahs; I am thinking of those who regularly write and publish in languages which are not widely used, those who still keep newspapers in languages that are not widely used, those who write poetry, play writers, song writers, singers and artists

performing in ancestral languages to keep it alive. Language is an element of bonding not only amongst Mauritians but also between us and the rest of the world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I still remember when I was a student in London, an old man walked up to me one day and asked me for directions in Urdu. I replied to him in a very broken Urdu with a heavy Mauritian accent. The old man's face glittered as he asked me where I was from. And I very proudly stated that I was from Mauritius. And for him it was such a great thing that someone coming from such a small country so far away had not forgotten about his roots. And I am sure many people in this House must have felt this sense of belonging and pride that we can still, up to now, understand, read and write the language of our ancestors.

Today, language is not just a means of communication it is an essential business tool. I used to work in Hong Kong. I still remember in the early days, as I struggled to find my way around and had to call my secretary to ask for direction. Then I started learning Cantonese. And gradually, I used one or two words. But as soon as I started using some words in Cantonese, immediately people will come to me and try to help me because they would see that I am making an effort to understand them in their language.

Today, how many Mauritians travel to China. Most of them have, by now, known Mandarin. I have even seen them bargain in Mandarin. And I am not talking about intellectuals I am talking about hawkers with very basic education. Now, imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, with a proper Chinese-Speaking Union how we can even promote this language and use it as a business tool.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are blessed to live in a country where so many languages are written and spoken. Most of us are quadrilingual, being fluent in Creole, English, French and an Asian language. We should make the most of it.

We can become a niche market for providing business process outsourcing services and solutions for enterprises in countries speaking an ancestral language. China and India are super powers. We can capitalise on our language advantage. We can provide translation facilities. Today, the wealth is concentrated in the old, rich countries. The opportunities are in the African countries. Mauritius is in the middle. We want to be a financial centre. We are ideally placed to tap into that market. But there is fierce competition out there. If we want to compete for the Arab market, we need Islamic products and we need people to speak Arabic.

In the tourism sector, we have heard the hon. Minister, in his last Budget Speech, saying how he is going to open up the tourism sector to the Asian market. But the Asians will only come to Mauritius when they feel at home in Mauritius. They will only feel at home in Mauritius when we will speak their language, when we'll know their taste, when our menu will be written in their languages, when the little waiter and waitress will come and speak to them in their languages. That is what is going to make the difference. Countries like Malaysia have identified this. And in Malaysia, graduates in Arabic are being put in five-star hotels just to cater for the needs of the Arab tourists.

Knowledge of languages, be it Chinese, Indian or Arabic, will help us in our economic diplomacy; will help us with China, India and Arab. We live in a country where we don't have anything in terms of natural resources. If we have the Arabic language, we can benefit from closer relationships with our Arab partners. More, we can help the Arabs to come and invest in Mauritius and develop Mauritius. We can get more foreign direct investment. But all this comes with the process of learning their language, making those foreigners, Indian, Chinese and Arab feel at home in Mauritius. And that is where these Speaking Unions have a tremendous job to do.

In other words, Mr Speaker, Sir, these Speaking Unions will help Mauritius become what it is predestined to be, the star and key of the Indian Ocean; the bridge between the east and the west, the platform to bring India, China and Arab into Africa, Europe and America. But in order to achieve this aim, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Speaking Unions should be above politics. They should be seen as independent, free from political interference, they need credibility; they need to be able to rally support of all Mauritians independently of their political inclination.

It is against this background that I would like to draw the attention of the House to certain new provisions that are being introduced in the new Bills today which not only differ in several aspects from the existing speaking unions legislation such as the Urdu and Hindi Speaking Union Acts, but, in my opinion, are potentially dangerous. Why should a representative of the Ministry of Arts and Culture sit on the Executive Council when there is no such requirement for the other Speaking Unions? Why is the Minister of Arts and Culture given the power to appoint the first ordinary members and the members of Council, whereas in previous legislation the names of the founder members and Council members were already set out in the Bill adopted by Parliament? Why should the Speaking Union submit to the Minister an estimate of the income and

expenditure of the union for approval and the Minister has the power to approve only part of the expenditure and direct the union to amend its estimates in such manner as the Minister thinks fit? Those Speaking Unions should be financially independent. They will have audited accounts, they will file audited accounts and they can have their accounts audited by the Director of Audit, if need be. But why should they be under the Ministry's control? We know the one who controls the purse controls everything. Why should the Minister be given the power to give direction to the Executive Council which must then comply with such directions? Is this not undue power being given to the Minister?

The Speaking Unions, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, should be apolitical to become really credible. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have seen all too often what happened to institutions which are manned by political appointees and which have to cope with political interference. We have seen what has happened to supposedly independent bodies such as the Islamic Cultural Centre which, despite all the guarantees and commitments given in this very House by the hon. Minister, is still operating with a Board which is allegedly improperly, if not illegally, constituted.

Let us hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Speaking Unions will not suffer the same fate. Our concerns are legitimate and the risk of interference from the Minister is not only real, but is being legitimised. This is unacceptable. I would urge the Government majority to reconsider its position and align the new Bills with existing legislations regulating other Speaking Unions.

Thank you, *merci, dhanyavaad, sukran, tse tse ni.*

(5.52 p.m.)

Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will first take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague, the hon. Minister of Arts and Culture, for introducing these five Speaking Union Bills to the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this House has the opportunity, since last week, to listen to the debates of various speakers and it is apparent that there is a clear consensus on both sides of the House in introducing these five Speaking Union Bills. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the previous orators who have taken the floor before me, have all stressed on the importance of setting up these Speaking Unions. I fully agree with them and as such I will not repeat what Members of this House have been saying.

However, since the main and foremost objective of establishing a Speaking Union is at the outset to preserve a language, I would therefore base my speech on this basis and the importance of a language.

Language is a means of communication by word of mouth. It is a method of exchanging ideas and feelings. In so doing, we use sounds, gestures or signs. Therefore, any means of expressing ideas by way of human speech or other gestures becomes a language. In this aspect, a language is a communicative medium in a society and as such there can be no interaction without spoken or written language. This makes language a vital mechanism in a society. Not only a language facilitates the exchange of views and ideas, but a language is considered as being the very identity of individuals or a group of persons or other. It also creates friendship, cultural ties and economic relationships.

Mr Speaker, Sir, throughout history, many have reflected on the importance of language. For instance, I shall quote this historian from Quebec, Canada –

“La clef magique qui donne accès aux plus hautes richesses de la culture, c’est la langue.”

In short, a language helps preserving cultural ties.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the historical circumstances of Mauritius are such that the people of this country were descendants of European settlers, African people, Chinese traders and Indian labourers. When the people from Africa or Asia came here, they had nothing in their possession. They even did not have an iota of what this country looked like. But one of the things that those immigrants brought to this country was a vast wealth of knowledge regarding their language and culture. This, Mr Speaker, Sir, has enormously contributed in forging a stable country like ours.

We must admit that we are blessed with so many languages flourishing our multicultural society. We must be proud to say that we have been able to preserve all our languages and cultures. In a small country like ours, with a population of around 1.2 million people, if I am not mistaken, there are around 12 spoken and written languages. We have English, French, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Arabic, Creole, Sanskrit, Bhojpuri and Gujrati. Not only these languages give us an opportunity to learn about other cultures, but they also allow us to inculcate the values of tolerance to our children and to learn from different cultures that we have among ourselves in our small island.

Such a cultural diversity has led to a nationalised sense of pride. The prospect for Mauritians to learn more about other cultures and languages is enhanced by the simple fact that we are a multicultural nation. It is very important that these languages are not lost by our next generation, that is, by our children. We have to make the proper effort to preserve them and this Bill is coming at its critical juncture.

The setting up of these Speaking Unions will simply encourage this generation to learn more about his respective language and thus his culture. The more we are exposed to our language, the better we will learn that language, and hence the fact that we will be able to preserve our respective culture and traditions. As such, the coming generations will only wish to learn the language of their parents and parents of this generation will take pride in our cultures and languages.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up of those Speaking Unions will therefore help in promoting those languages, will forge friendship, other cultural ties and will provide facilities for exchange programmes and scholarships and so on. As we can see there will only be several advantages in their establishment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, many Speaking Unions have been established by now and if I'm not mistaken, we are still not done and there will be other Speaking Unions Bill coming and am of the view - I believe the French Speaking Union is yet to come, but there is also a proposal that we can also have the Gujrati Speaking Union. Gurajti is one of the spoken languages in Mauritius and to preserve that language, I am for the setting up of a Gujrati Speaking Union and I therefore invite the Minister of Arts and Culture, our dear colleague, hon. Choonee, to introduce the Gujrati Speaking Union in the near future.

I shall now dwell on the aspect of the Bhojpuri Speaking Union Bill and go a bit down history. Our history is greatly influenced by the language of Bhojpuri. I shall say nearly over two centuries before, Bhojpuri has been majorly the vehicle of communication of most Indians, when I say Indians, all who have Indian origin, that is, all communities, all components of the Indian Community and, well before, I shall say, in the 1900's, Bhojpuri was widely spoken by more than half of the population and all indentured labourers, mainly from Bihar, from Up, from as we said before, the Port of Bombay - Bombai, the Port of Madras - Tamil, Telugu languages emanate from a place called Coreng and even Chinese shopkeepers widely laid down by our

friend, hon. Li Kwong Wing. Most of our components of the Indian society before had a communication named Bhojpuri before, and Bhojpuri had been the identity of the Indian Community well before, whereas now it is going on the decline because Bhojpuri is not that much spoken as it was before. I believe this Speaking Union Bill has its duty to revive this ancestral language and to preserve such a beautiful language. As this is an age of fast developing and with technological revolution, being given that Bhojpuri has been left behind and other international languages have taken over, I believe that we should stop, take a deep breath and have a look behind at our cultural heritage.

What we have inherited culturally from our ancestors, our rituals that we are still performing, even in wedding rituals we are still performing traditional songs in all religious rituals performed all around; the food that we consume is all interlinked with our language, the ancestral values that we have preserved so long. So, being given that Bhojpuri has now been under the decline, it is the duty of this Bill to revive Bhojpuri, to revive its literature, to revive its richness, to revive its emotion and to revive the simplicity of the language and also as a matter of pride, Bhojpuri has never been associated with any religion. Bhojpuri transcends all barriers of religion and it does not belong to any religion. Bhojpuri has been the language of fraternity, has been the language of our elderly and we shall preserve this particular value and, in practice, I believe to promote Bhojpuri in the spoken or in the written form, to encourage, to facilitate, to organise, to debate, to train, one proposal come to mind is for the re-introduction of our Baitka classes as it was before. To promote the teaching as it was before in our classes, this Baitka culture has to be reborn from its ashes and also this would be best to serve our youth and it would be great to have a youth whether we have professional be it doctors or lawyers who are very conversant with the Bhojpuri language this would help our elderly. Even in hospitals or in court cases, Mr Speaker knows very well, this would help our elderly. This is our *patrimoine intellectual*. During programmes on the radio, usually in the morning, we can hear Bhojpuri bhasha like we say, we can hear Mr Saoud Goonoo sometimes, we can hear Mr Sutyadeo Peerthum, Mrs Sachita Ramdin, Behenji Sita Ramyead, even in Parliament we have Members who are very conversant with Bhojpuri. I believe the mission to propagate this language is a very challenging and possible one and also how we are going to propagate it in the written form. It can be in Roman alphabet or in Arabic. We can create dictionaries, we can create books. Our

children need to be instructed properly for the benefit of our future generation and to sustain the value of our culture in the next generation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the creation of these speaking unions, I must say that this Government has already covered one of its objectives. As per paragraph 261 of the Government-Programme 2010-2015, mention was made that –

“The range of speaking unions will be completed with Arabic, Bhojpuri, Creole, Mandarin, which is now Chinese, and Sanskrit Speaking Unions, thus embellishing our linguistic landscape.”

I only hope that the members of these speaking unions would work in complete harmony to attain the very objectives of our multicultural society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to end my speech on what the legendary Statesman Nelson Mandela once said, and I quote -

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head, but if you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, those inspiring few words of the former President of the Republic of South Africa says it all. It is therefore a must to preserve the language of a society and I am fully confident that the setting up of those five Speaking Unions, in addition to those already set up before, will inspire all of us to continue to make this country strong and competitive.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.12 p.m.)

Mrs B. Juggoo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Speaker, Sir, the diversity of our origin, our pluralism, our open economy and broadmindedness have collectively bequeathed a rich legacy of a multitude of languages.

While English is the official language entrenched in our Constitution, French is most widely spoken and written. Both are fully recognised without any prejudices, and this is indeed laudable as both are perceived as universal medium of communication. However, at the same time, a few languages have taken firm roots without the recognition they deserve. This Government is committed to a policy of correcting anomalous situations and rationalise common practices through proper legal framework. Hon. Choonee, the Minister of Arts and Culture, deserves all our congratulations for introducing a set of Bills that seek to address a long forgotten

but important issue. These Bills will give official recognition and a legal framework to permit languages that were left to die in oblivion to bloom. These Bills include -

- (i) The Bhojpuri-Speaking Union Bill;
- (ii) The Creole-Speaking Union Bill;
- (iii) The Chinese-Speaking Union Bill;
- (iv) The Arabic-Speaking Union Bill, and
- (v) The Sanskrit-Speaking Union Bill.

These five Bills essentially focus on the administrative, accountability and legal framework to facilitate the translation of the declaration of Government linguistic policies into action. Language is more than just a means of communication. It influences our culture and even our thought processes. The fact that different groups speak different unintelligible language is often considered more tangible for cultural differences than other less obvious cultural trades.

We are lucky in Mauritius that different ethnic groups interact with one another, which in turn serve as a springboard to open up the doors of different countries for us. Common culture and common language facilitate trade between individuals and countries, and many other matters as well. Individuals have incentives also to learn other languages and cultures so that they have a larger pool of trading partners. In a pluralistic society, Government policies that encourage diverse languages and cultures are likely to increase the welfare of all components of the population and can be socially beneficial. However, it is imperative that to maximise the benefits of the languages and culture of one component of the population, the other components should make the efforts to learn from the others. Knowledge is never too much, and gone are the days when prejudices and contempt tended to rule our life. The struggle to maintain the hegemony of one language over the other is a very myopic approach that can be detrimental to all stakeholders. It is in this context that we must view the introduction of these Bills, and we can only hope that in implementing the contents of these legislations and in seeking to attain the objectives set, commonsense allows us to penetrate into a compartmentalised linguistic ghetto. If this happens, there is a serious danger of over-identification leading to unnecessary fundamentalism, and a source of divergence from the emergence of a genuine Mauritian nation when the whole implicit objective is to promote convergence, participation, sharing and improvement.

The Creole language has progressed in strides recently. Regarded as an inferior medium of communication during the pre-independence era, the Creole language has now taken firm roots in every Mauritian and is the primary source of identification for the average Mauritian as it cuts across all cultures and ethnic components. Creole has taken a national dimension and is now a language recognised in its own right. This Bill in many ways formalises its wide use by Mauritians of all walks of life and today students will have the opportunity to learn, write and speak Creole without any inhibitions or complex, with the right to submit an application for a job. It is questionable though whether at this juncture the Creole language lends itself to the use of Internet and fast computerisation. We will leave it to the Minister of IT to look after. If these two conditions are not addressed in time, the future prospect of this emerging language will face daunting challenges.

Studying Arabic in Mauritius has three important reasons. To the extent that we have a big chunk of the population of the Islamic faith, Arabic will meet the ends of a big audience. Arabic culture has fascinated the world and those wishing to conduct research and study the Arab civilisation would have a valuable asset in their hands. For instance, anthropologists have found that learning about how people categorise things in their environment provides important insights into the interests, concerns and values of their culture. Field workers involved in this type of research refer to it as ethno science, an area that would be of a great use to promote understanding of the various socio-ethnic groups that shape the Mauritian nation. For economic reasons, Mauritius, as a small open economy, would increasingly look to the Arab world for new openings and trading opportunities, most probably. Besides Arabic is a beautiful language with an in-built melody that is lilting to the ear; like you have the word 'shukran' which means 'thank you'. It derives from the same root. Just as you would see 'shukriya' in Hindi means 'thank you', in Urdu also it means 'thank you'. The same word in Arabic for 'Kalam' means 'pen' and in Hindi also 'kalam' means 'pen'. The word 'kurseer', for example, means chair in Hindi, it is also the same in Arabic. The word 'khalas', everybody knows that word. The Sanskrit literature encompasses a rich tradition of poetry and drama as well as scientific, technical, philosophical and religious texts. Its position in the culture of Greater India is akin to that of Latin and Greek in Europe. With a significant influence on the modern languages of Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal, it equally represents an attestation of an Indo-Iranian language, a sub-family of the Indo-European language family, which includes English and most European languages.

Sanskrit continues to be widely used as a ceremonial language in Hindu religion, especially in the Hindu religious rituals in the forms of hymns and mantras. Spoken Sanskrit is still in use in a few traditional institutions in India. However, more importantly are the many attempts of revival, which is in line with the Government policy through its proposed legislation. In view of the Indian Diaspora and the growing importance people of Indian origin are playing in world economic affairs and in international institutions, Sanskrit is likely to provide a strong bond which, in turn, can form the basis for sharing of knowledge, information and research as well as promoting cultural and economic exchanges.

Sir William Jones on February 02, 1786, stated –

“The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed, that no philosopher could examine all three of them, without believing them to have sprung from some common source which perhaps no longer exists.”

The hitch with the legislation is that it is silent on how the study of Sanskrit can best be learnt in a multi-racial country with an inbuilt familiarity with European languages. For instance, would Sanskrit be romanised or would it be taught in its original Indian version? A romanised version has the advantage of reaching a broad audience, and can touch people of non-Indian origin. However, it may lose its original or maternal flavour. We need perhaps to have inspiration from Bollywood which has not hesitated to anglicise its films and songs, thereby enriching the language and hitting a wider audience, the best strategy to preserve and propagate the language. Since the last 18th century, Sanskrit has been transliterated using the Latin alphabet. The system most commonly used today is the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration. This form could be cost-effective if we are to use the computer and internet facilities. If we are rigid and conservative, there is a serious risk of encountering prohibitive costs which can doom the project. Mr Speaker, Sir, we would need clarification on this issue and to be enlightened about the way forward in implementing this project, as it is a laudable initiative.

The Bhojpuri language is being given a fresh life with its introduction at school and - we must thank the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources for this initiative - its

recognition as an important vehicle of communication. Like the Creole language it was regarded during the pre-independence era with much prejudice as a medium of communication among an inferior class of people, although it was widely spoken in the rural areas and the suburbs of Port Louis and basically by women of Indo-Mauritian origin mainly, often illiterate and cut off from the main trend of perceived modernity. We can still remember the sound in our ears of Bhojpuri from the suburbs of Port Louis, “*Aho kahan ja thawa*”. The Government has had the audacity to revive this language once spoken by more than half of the population and restore it at par with the rest of the other languages.

Bhojpuri has evolved over time and francised during the last three decades, but still share much in common with Hindi, the language expected to be included as an official international language by the United Nations. The question remains, however, whether with growing competition this language will be able to rise above the circumstances and establish itself in its own right as a proper medium of communication, artistic expression and a passport to remunerative job. Two main weaknesses are its adaptability to the use of computer again and its limitations for research purposes. Finally, like Sanskrit, the way we write will present a major challenge and can well decide the fate of Bhojpuri as well. If we link it to Hindi, it would be a small step to harnessing the language, but only to those already familiar with Hindi. On the other hand if we romanised Bhojpuri, it may attain a higher level of popularity, but may remain foreign to those who felt an ancestral affinity as we have heard from others. Thus, the study of Bhojpuri may present a daunting challenge like that of Creole. Only time will tell.

Finally, setting up the Chinese-Speaking Union shares the same objective with the other Unions I mentioned above. At first sight this may appear a balancing exercise in a spirit of fairness that the Government, out of concern and respect for a small minority, has decided to introduce this Bill. This concern clearly shows that the Government is not concerned merely to maximize votes, but to share and promote the rich legacy that our ancestors, from wherever they came from, brought to add to this wonderful melting pot that Mauritius turned out to be. Yet, paradoxically, this endeavour also transcends these considerations. Mandarin, the official Chinese language, is the most widely spoken language in the world by more people than English. China is fast becoming the second economic power and is expected to surpass the US in a not too distant future. Our population for economic reasons need to learn Mandarin. The hitch with the Bill is that it does not clearly specify which Chinese language we are referring to. Our Chinese

brothers and sisters mostly speak Hakka, while a disappearing minority that is concerned has connections with Cantonese. While all Chinese languages are written more or less in the same way, their pronunciation may differ. However, if we are to make any serious inroad in Chinese language for the Chinese language to be of any use from the economic, diplomatic, research and trading perspectives, surely we need to focus on Mandarin. This aspect need to be clarified as early as possible.

Language, Mr Speaker, Sir, is an integral part of the culture of a country or society. It is the expression of a particular civilisation at a particular period reflecting the artistic and social pursuit or tastes valued by society, the enlightenment or refinement from these pursuits as well as attitudes.

Language and culture are now recognised as a mainspring contributing to sustainable development. No strong economy or civilisation can be divorced from its culture or its language. The Government, through the current endeavour, provides a strong signal that development is not limited to balancing the book. UNESCO recognises that the cultural aspects of which language is an important vehicle are as important as its economic components and do contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

UNESCO emphasises the need to incorporate culture as a strategic element in national and international development policies as well as in international development cooperation frameworks and programmes, taking into account the UN Millennium Declaration. Linguistic policies are, however, not shaped only by the work and discussions of Government officials, but also through the activities of NGOs, the private sector....

Mr Speaker: I am sorry; I think you are going too far from the Bill. You have to speak on the Bill.

Mrs Juggoo: The Bills are in line with international conventions with regard to conventions, especially concerning the provision of greater transparency and accountability, international cooperation, etc.

As a woman Member of the Assembly, it will be incomplete if I do not refer to some language references that demarcate the gender. In many languages women were presented as the fairer or weaker sex, although with the emancipation of women, such diminution of women's ability is called upon to disappear. The contribution of these languages we are promoting can certainly shed light on sensitive socio-economic issues like racism or sexism. Associations

between language and gender, for example, are illustrated by psychologist Lera Boroditsky. Languages that are gender-based can influence opinions formed. Does treating chairs as masculine and beds as feminine in the grammar make Russian speakers think of chairs as being more like men and beds more like women in some ways? To complete, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Minister for taking concrete action in giving full recognition to these languages and in creating the propitious climate to promote their development. If you will allow me, I would like to say thank you in these languages. Creole: *mo ti contan dire zot tou merci zone ecoute moi*. Arabic : *Shukhran*. Hindi : *Bahut abhari houn*. In Chinese *Tchie Tchie* and Bhojpuri: *bahut dhanyavad*.

Mrs A. Perraud (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like first of all to congratulate the hon. Minister of Arts and Culture for presenting the Arabic-Speaking Union Bill, the Bhojpuri-Speaking Union Bill, the Chinese-Speaking Union Bill, the Sanskrit-Speaking Union Bill and the Creole-Speaking Union Bill.

This Government shows that it is willing to give those languages their legitimate place *dans le paysage linguistique de notre île Maurice*. Mr Speaker, Sir, dealing with languages is always a sensitive issue as it appeals to the emotions, to the culture, to the history, to the sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group. *C'est encore plus sensible dans un pays multiculturel comme le nôtre*.

Ayant dit cela, je voudrais, durant mon intervention, m'appesantir sur la langue créole. Mr Speaker, Sir, through the Creole-Speaking Union Bill, Government shows its courage and determination to treat the Creole language and culture on the same footing as the other languages spoken and used in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the main objectives of the Creole-Speaking Union Bill is to promote the Creole language in its spoken and written forms. It is worth underlying that Creole language is the language spoken and understood by almost all Mauritians *et c'est une langue qui a pris naissance dans la souffrance; la souffrance des esclaves. Le créole, la langue ancestrale des descendants d'esclaves, est aujourd'hui la langue maternelle de la majorité des mauriciens*.

M. le président, après le festival kreol, Grafi Larmoni, le dictionnaire de la langue kreol, lakademi kreol, l'introduction de la langue kreol comme sujet optionnel à l'école, c'est naturel que le Creole-Speaking Union Bill soit présenté à la Chambre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since a long time the Creole language has been paving its way to get recognition in Mauritius. The only way to nation building, peace, unity and prosperity is through the respect of different cultures present in Mauritius.

For the linguist, Dev Virahsawmy, Creole language is an ancestral language as it is the first language spoken by children born during slavery period. This is why Creole is an ancestral language for slave descendants and is linked to the cultural identity of slave descendants. However, Creole is also a national language for it is widely spoken by other Mauritians and also because it is not an imported language.

Mr Speaker, Sir, culture is transmitted through language, material objects, ritual, institutions and art, music and drama. Nous devons ici, saluer la grande contribution des artistes mauriciens dans la lutte de la reconnaissance et la valorisation de la langue créole à Maurice. A commencer par le griot Alphonse Ravaton, Ti Frère, qui, de par les ségas qu'il a composés, a donné à la langue créole ses lettres de noblesse. On se rappellera aussi de l'apport musical de Fanfan avec « Ile Maurice *ki joli joli* » entre autres, et de tous les autres ségatiers qui ont suivi, ainsi que les dramaturges, les écrivains, les poètes qui ont été les défenseurs de la langue créole.

M. le président, la langue créole est une langue qui est née dans la souffrance et qui a beaucoup souffert pour se frayer un chemin et s'épanouir dans le paysage linguistique mauricien.

Le créole a toujours été considéré comme une langue inférieure, dévalorisante et même vulgaire par certains. A voir le temps qu'il a fallu pour accepter et faire accepter le créole à l'école comme une des langues optionnelles nous donne une idée du statut du créole à Maurice.

De facto, les utilisateurs de la langue créole ont été stigmatisés et, pendant longtemps ont eu le sentiment d'être inférieurs, d'être moins bien que les autres, ont eu un sentiment de malaise, de mal être. Il y avait même un sentiment de culpabilité. On a sans doute déjà entendu un créole francisé, par exemple : *mo pé ale la maison* ; au lieu de : *mo pé ale la caze*. Ou encore *monn vinn regarde twa* au lieu de *monn vinn guette twa*, car le français est considéré comme supérieur.

Le séga, ambassadeur de la langue créole, a pendant longtemps connu la censure, le rejet même dans la société. Si aujourd'hui on ne peut s'amuser sans un bon séga ou on choisit le séga pour représenter la culture mauricienne dans des promotions touristiques, autrefois on qualifiait les chanteurs et les fans du séga de « *noirs tiolo* ». Si aujourd'hui, Serge Lebrasse est incontestablement un des meilleurs ségatiers mauriciens, il a connu l'humiliation, la

discrimination et a été mis à l'écart au tout début de sa carrière à cause de son choix musical et de la langue créole.

M. le président, la langue créole qui est indubitablement associée à la culture créole a connu des moments difficiles. Mais grâce au courage, à la volonté, à la détermination et surtout à l'amour de la langue, de nombreux mauriciens, individus et organisations privées ont aplani le chemin pour le *Creole-Speaking Union Bill*. Nous qui sommes assis au sein de cette auguste Assemblée, on ne peut que saluer la contribution de toutes ces personnes. Ceux qui ont œuvré pour la formulation des règles d'orthographe standardisées, le Dr Arnaud Carpooran, et ses collaborateurs, pour la publication du dictionnaire créole, les écrivains pour leurs œuvres littéraires en créole; ceux qui ont eu le courage de traduire les textes sacrés en créole et j'en passe.

M. le président, je voudrais, encore une fois, féliciter le ministre des arts et de la culture pour la présentation du *Creole-Speaking Union Bill*. C'est un grand pas pour la promotion de la langue créole et la valorisation de la culture créole. L'heure n'est plus au malaise Créole, mais à l'appropriation et la valorisation de l'identité et la culture Créole. Les artistes choisissent des noms de groupes pour montrer avec fierté et revendiquer leur identité et leur culture Créole. Par exemple, nous avons des groupes tels que « *negro pu la vie* », « *nasty black* », « *blackman blues* », entre autres. Les tenues vestimentaires, les coiffures symbolisant la culture créole sont portées avec fierté et beaucoup d'aisance. Avec le *Creole-Speaking Union Bill*, la langue créole a un avenir prometteur.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the functions of a language is to express emotions, feelings, thoughts. The Creole language does not depart from this. The sega of Marie Josée Clency "*re pran mo mari anglais*" clearly illustrates this. The Mauritian speaking English expresses himself in his mother tongue, Creole, when he gets hurt. A simpler example of Creole as a language of emotions and feelings is here in this august Assembly. When hon. Members of this Assembly get angry, they swear, comment, criticise in Creole. Aussitôt qu'on quitte l'hémicycle, instinctivement c'est le Créole qui prend le dessus. Ne dit-on pas : « chasser le naturel, il revient au galop. »

The Government is indeed making efforts to give the Creole language its due. However, is it not time to tackle the situation here at Parliament? Are we not sending an ambiguous message to the public? We are giving the signal that we are moving towards valuing Creole

language, giving it its due through all decisions taken in favour of this language and, at the same time, showing people that Creole compared to English and French is banned in this Assembly, but it is often broadcasted as the language that is used to swear. Is it not a way of increasing the perception that people using this language is worthless? *C'est encore une fois placer la langue créole à un niveau inférieur dans la hiérarchie linguistique.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, we, Members of Parliament, represent the people of this country. We take important decisions concerning the life of the Mauritian citizens. We speak on behalf of our mandates in this august Assembly so it is of utmost importance that the public understands what we are talking about here. For example, the Budget Speech is read in English, but it is translated in Creole on air for a better understanding outside.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot make speeches on languages without talking of their importance in the process of nation-building of a country. We all know that one of the main objectives of this Government, as stated in the Government Programme 2010-2015, is nation-building.

M. le président, les différents *Speaking Union Bills* présentés à la Chambre aujourd'hui doivent contribuer à cimenter davantage la nation mauricienne. Ils doivent aider à valoriser et à promouvoir la langue et la culture de tous les mauriciens. Ces différents *Speaking Union Bills* doivent travailler vers plus de partage, d'ouverture. Nous devons nous enrichir de nos différences et non nous enfermer dans des ghettos culturels. L'île Maurice parviendra quand chaque mauricien sera reconnu, accepté et valorisé dans sa culture et c'est un des objectifs de ces cinq *Bills* présentés aujourd'hui.

Comme le Premier ministre lui-même l'a dit, les communautés à Maurice sont comme les doigts d'une seule main. Sans unité, égalité et respect, la nation mauricienne sera qu'un mythe, sera que pire hypocrisie.

Merci, M. le président.

(6.47p.m.)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue):

M. le président, les cinq projets de loi devant la Chambre ce soir, c'est-à-dire the Arabic-Speaking Union Bill, the Bhojpuri-Speaking Union Bill, the Chinese-Speaking Union Bill, the Creole-Speaking Union Bill and the Sanskrit-Speaking Union Bill nous permettent d'apprécier à sa juste valeur le paysage linguistique de notre pays; pays d'hommes et de femmes venus de

divers horizons dans des conditions extrêmement difficiles et ce soir, encore une fois, à travers cette Chambre, nous rendons un vibrant hommage à ces hommes et ces femmes.

Je suis heureux, M. le président, car je constate avec quelle verve les honorables membres de cette Chambre défendent deux de nos langues maternelles, car il faut le dire tel n'a pas été le cas dans le passé, c'est-à-dire, concernant le Créole et le Bhojpuri. Le terme 'langue' peut être défini comme un idiome remplissant deux fonctions sociales fondamentales. La première, la communication où les acteurs sociaux mettent en commun leurs idées, leurs pensées et leurs sentiments ; la seconde, l'identification, celle qui a un double aspect: l'aspect identitaire et aussi l'appartenance sociale d'un individu ou d'un groupe d'individus.

Selon les estimations, M. le président, il existerait aujourd'hui entre 3,000 à 7,000 langues vivantes de par le monde. Selon une prévision, en 2100 les langues majoritaires seront l'Anglais, c'est-à-dire la langue pour le commerce et la science ; l'Espagnole, langue de l'Amérique Latine ; le Portugais, langue de l'Amérique du Sud ; l'Arabe sera parlé naturellement dans le monde Arabe, le Mandarin et l'Hindi en Asie et le Swahili et le Wolof en Afrique. Arnaud Carpooran, professeur à l'Université de Maurice, dans son livre 'Ethno-glossonymie et Gestion des Langues à Maurice' disait ceci et je cite –

« L'histoire d'une langue est souvent inséparable de celle du pays qui la porte, en particulier lorsqu'il s'agit d'un pays tendanciellement unilingue. Dès que l'on aborde le cas des pays plurilingues en revanche, - comme le nôtre, M. le président - c'est surtout l'histoire des conflits de langues et celle de la gestion de ces conflits qui donnent en général une idée des forces sous-jacentes à la structuration sociolinguistique du pays. »

Dans certains pays, ces conflits sont souvent à la base des enjeux sociopolitiques ou ethno-politiques profonds. Je prends l'exemple de la langue Serbo-croate, langue qui fut utilisée dans l'ancienne Yougoslavie. Avec l'éclatement de la Yougoslavie, après autant d'années de conflits, nous retrouvons trois langues très distinctes, c'est-à-dire la Serbe parlée en Serbie et Monténégro, la Croate en Croatie et la Bosniaque en Bosnie.

Ce qui est intéressant ce soir, M. le président, dans ces cinq projets de loi, c'est qu'ils nous permettent de mettre à l'avant deux de nos langues maternelles.

Avant d'aborder ces textes de lois en profondeur, peut-être qu'il faudrait faire un survol de la situation linguistique dans notre pays et prendre comme référence le dernier recensement qui a été fait en 2000, surtout la partie concernant ou traitant les langues parlées par les mauriciens. On note que le rapport recense une liste de pas moins de 15 langues parlées dans le pays : le Créole d'abord, les langues Chinoises parmi lesquelles on retrouve le Cantonais, le Hakka, le Mandarin et le Chinois ; les langues européennes : l'Anglais et le Français, les langues orientales : l'Arabe, le Bhojpuri, le Gujarati, l'Hindi, le Marathi, le Tamil, le Telugu et l'Urdu. En parcourant ces documents, j'ai pu comprendre pourquoi le député, l'honorable Li Kwong Wing avait fait cette requête auprès du ministre des arts et de la culture qui a bienveillamment accepté de changer l'appellation d'un texte de loi en appelant ce texte de loi '*The Chinese-Speaking Union Bill*'.

M. le président, je vais me référer aussi à un recensement qui avait été fait en 2000 concernant les langues habituellement parlées à la maison et le nombre de locuteurs associés à ces langues. Par exemple, le Créole est parlé par 826,152 personnes - c'est le chiffre du bureau des statistiques ; le Cantonais est parlé par 134, le Chinois par 6,796, le Hakka par 610, le Mandarin par 996 et les autres langues Chinoises par 212, l'Anglais par 3,512, le Français par 39,953 et les autres langues européennes par 756, l'Arabe par 82, le Bhojpuri par 142,387, le Gujarati par 241, l'Hindi par 7,250, le Marathi par 1,888, le Tamil par 3,623, le Telugu par 2,169, l'Urdu par 1,789 et les autres langues orientales par 722.

M. le président, on remarque que le Chinois figure dans le groupe des langues Chinoises à côté des variétés orales comme le Hakka, le Mandarin et le Cantonais, alors que le terme Chinois ne correspond à aucune variété orale propre. Je pense que quand les sinophones ont été sondés, ils ont répondu de cette façon et c'est pourquoi le Chinois, langue populaire se retrouve en tête des autres langues officielles chinoises.

Ce qui est plus étonnant dans ce recensement, M. le président, c'est que les langues Chinoises des langues de l'Orient ne font pas partie de la catégorie des langues orientales. Par contre, l'Arabe qui est la langue parlée et écrite dans des pays Arabes mais aussi en Afrique du Nord, est catégorisée comme une langue orientale.

M. le président, aujourd'hui nous rendons, comme je l'ai dit plus tôt, un vibrant hommage à deux de nos langues maternelles, c'est-à-dire le Créole et le Bhojpuri. Ces deux

langues maternelles, je les reconnais, les autres l'ont dit avant moi, qu'elles n'ont pas eu le même traitement que d'autres langues dans notre pays. Aujourd'hui, ces deux langues maternelles se retrouvent associées à deux autres langues très importantes : le Sanskrit et l'Arabe, deux langues éminemment religieuses, je dirai même langue des dieux, deux langues dont les vecteurs de rayonnement sont la religion et la littérature.

M. le président, en dépit d'une forte popularité du Créole et du Bhojpuri, elles ont été considérées dans le passé comme des langues moins prestigieuses. Pas seulement à Maurice, en Inde il y a eu un mouvement identitaire pour le Bhojpuri. Le mouvement Bhojpuri est né d'un contraste perçu comme une injustice envers une langue utilisée par un nombre impressionnant de locuteurs, de par le monde soixante millions de locuteurs. M. le président, elle est considérée comme un dialecte, un moyen d'expression purement orale et déjà qu'on sait que de cette population une bonne partie est venue vers l'Océan Indien, principalement chez nous, en Afrique du Sud et aux Caraïbes. Dans le cas du Bhojpuri à Maurice, on notera une absence quasi absolue du vocabulaire avant les années 80. Avant 1980, quand on listait officiellement les langues indiennes présentes à Maurice, le Bhojpuri n'apparaissait pas. Au fait, M. le président, il faut le dire, c'est pendant la campagne des élections de 1982 que fut dégagée une forte mouvance en faveur de la reconnaissance et de la promotion du Bhojpuri.

C'est sous un gouvernement MMM, en alliance avec le PSM, que fut créé pour la première fois un *Bhojpuri Institute* au sein du MGI. C'est aussi sous ce même gouvernement qu'on introduit, en première ligne, le vocable du Bhojpuri dans un texte de loi. Il s'agit du *MBC Act* de 1982, loi qui régule la gestion des langues dans la presse audiovisuelle mauricienne. La *MBC Act* de 1982 avait remplacé celle de 1972 en mettant en première ligne et, pour la première fois dans notre pays, le créole et le bhojpuri. Sans cette visibilité, il faut le dire, M. le président, le bhojpuri aurait été considéré comme une variété dérivée ou corrompue d'une langue prestigieuse. Elle n'aurait jamais eu cette dimension et reconnaissance nationale.

Au fil des années, on a vu, premièrement, ce gêne des autorités du pays à accorder certains traitements au vocable créole et bhojpuri, mais nous avons aussi vu des progrès. Toujours, M. le président, dans ce recensement de 2000 - je fais référence au tableau comparatif du traitement des termes créole et bhojpuri lors des recensements. En 1962, dans le formulaire, le créole était considéré comme une langue pour le besoin de ce recensement, mais considéré et

appelé le patois/créole. En 1972, on ajoute une précision restrictive aux mêmes colonnes, c'est-à-dire, ici, 12 et 13. Et cette précision restrictive se lit comme suit -

« Pour le besoin du recensement seulement le patois/créole sera considéré comme une langue. »

En 1983, à ce moment-là, toujours sous le même item, il y a un changement. On vient dire : « Pour le besoin du recensement également le créole et le bhojpuri seront considérés comme deux langues. » On retire ce qualificatif 'seulement' pour le remplacer par 'également', et c'est en 1983 que le bhojpuri fait officiellement son entrée comme une langue à être servie dans un recensement. Au fil des années, cela va s'améliorer comme en 1990 sous le même item, c'est écrit comme suit : « Considérez le créole et le bhojpuri comme deux langues. » Et en 2000, on retrouve sous ce même thème, la même phrase, c'est-à-dire : considérez le créole et le bhojpuri comme des langues. Nous constatons à partir de là que, de 1962 à 2000, ces deux langues maternelles ont connu un progrès considérable.

M. le président, je suis toujours sur la langue créole. Un orateur avait précisé - il faudrait le préciser à cette Chambre - que le créole est la langue maternelle par excellence de la majorité des mauriciens mais elle n'est pas la langue maternelle de tous les mauriciens. Il y a d'autres langues maternelles comme le Français ou le Bhojpuri. C'est très bien que cette année-ci le ministre des arts et de la culture a célébré la journée internationale dédiée à la langue maternelle, M. le président. Le créole, langue de communication par excellence de la population mauricienne, pays de peuplement, langue de résistance et le créole est un phénomène linguistique d'une importance considérable.

Un créole - je dis bien un créole, M. le président - se forme au contact des langues pour en former une nouvelle langue. Tout créole est essentiellement le résultat des mixages de langues différentes. Il existe plusieurs langues créoles et très souvent ces langues sont associées à d'autres langues. Certaines à base française, d'autres anglaise ou d'autres portugaise et espagnole. Mais, malheureusement, le statut de cette langue reste inférieur, que ce soit sur le plan social, culturel ou politique. Mais on notera, M. le président, plusieurs tentatives de mise en valeur de cette langue de part et d'autre surtout pendant la période post-indépendance.

Toutefois, M. le président, ces avancées sont considérables au niveau des discours, quels soient scientifiques, politiques ou populaires dans le pays, mais on continue à entretenir une certaine ambiguïté sur la question créole au niveau des autorités. Par exemple, au Parlement - le

Leader de l'opposition l'a signalé - on ne travaille toujours pas dans la langue créole. Cela se fait aux Seychelles. Il viendra un jour où nous-aussi, j'espère, on va travailler dans la langue créole.

M. le président - j'arrive à la conclusion de mon discours - les récents événements nous permettent d'être un peu plus optimiste sur l'utilisation de la langue créole. *Ledikasyon pu Travayer*, les écoles catholiques, à travers le projet Prevoc-BEC, ont inlassablement milité pour la langue créole. Mais c'est principalement la Fédération Créole Mauricienne, à travers le Père Jocelyn Grégoire, dans son combat ethno-identitaire pour l'avancement de la cause créole qui porte cette bataille sur la place publique et force tous les acteurs à réagir. Lors des rencontres avec les *leaders* politiques de notre pays avant les élections de 2010, il avait insisté sur la reconnaissance de la langue créole et son inclusion dans le cursus scolaire. Lors de ces rencontres, les *leaders* du MMM, du Parti Travailleiste et du PMSD l'avaient rassuré sur leur soutien et d'autres non. Aujourd'hui, nous sommes à la croisée des chemins. Nous donnons une autre dimension, M. le président, surtout à ces deux langues maternelles, le créole et le bhojpuri. Comme je l'ai dit plus tôt, tel n'a pas toujours été le cas et je suis fier ce soir, M. le président, d'être parmi ceux qui honorent ces deux langues.

Merci, M. le president.

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Seetaram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not propose to move the Second Reading of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (Amendment) Bill (No. VIII of 2011) today.

ADJOURNMENT

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the House to Tuesday 24 May 2011, at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Bachoo rose and seconded.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dayal is not here. Hon. Bhagwan!

ILE AUX CERFS/ILOT MANGENIE – WATER PIPE

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): I have a few questions, but I will be very short. My first question is addressed to the Minister of Environment to express again my concern regarding the situation at Ile aux Cerfs - the problem which the operators have again brought to the attention of the Minister of Tourism, who is not here. So, we will wait for him for another question.

My concern is about the pipe which was there from Ilôt Mangénie to the mainland. The water pipe has been removed by the hotel administration and this is causing a lot of harm to the ecosystem. I will just quote what the fishermen are saying: *‘bizin faire démarse enleve sa tuyau la ek debousse passage entre l’Ile aux Cerfs ek l’ilôt Mangénie. Sa pé provoke enn érosion dépi trois ans’*, since three years, *‘di sable pe ale ar sa tuyau là’* everywhere.

I am asking the hon. Minister of Environment to have an urgent site visit with his responsible officers to take cognizance of the site where they have put sand bags on both sides of the pipe which is causing a lot of harm. Normally, when we go from the mainland to Ile aux Cerfs, *il y avait un certain courant mais maintenant il n’y en a plus*, it is completely dead. Above that, Sir, *cela est en train de causer une odeur nauséabonde*. So, I rely on the Minister of Environment to do the needful.

ALBION (i) CITÉ MARCEL CABON HOUSING ESTATE - SEWERAGE

(ii) ALBION PLAGÉ – AMENITIES

(iii) MORCELLEMENT BELLE VUE - BUS SERVICE

I have a few questions concerning the Minister of Public Utilities. There is an urgent problem of sewerage overflow at Cité Marcel Cabon Housing Estate at Albion which has been raised by the inhabitants who have done some representations on the streets. Also, to the Minister of Local Government concerning the situation at Albion *Plage* following the investment made through funds and available under the construction of the Club Med project. There have been several Parliamentary Questions for which replies have been given, but up to now, the facilities have not yet been commissioned. I leave it to the Minister of Local Government, apart from the Children Playground of the region and other amenities which have not been repaired as

far back as 2006. I believe that the District Council must be taken to task and the Minister of Local Government should act accordingly.

The third one, Sir, is the National Transport Corporation irregular bus service at Morcellement Belle Vue at Albion. I have spoken to the General Manager of the National Transport Corporation and apparently the National Transport Corporation is putting old buses at the disposal of the inhabitants and instead of providing service to the region, we are having breakdown of the buses and people in this region are unable to attend work. I appeal to the Minister if he could rapidly liaise with the National Transport Corporation to see to it that the bus service is operational as rapidly as possible.

Thank you.

The Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr D. Virahsawmy): Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the sewerage problem, I have taken note and I will pass it on to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Utilities.

With regard to the pipe at Ilot Mangénie and Ile aux Cerfs, I must say that this is most probably illegal as laying of a pipe requires an EIA licence which I think they have not received. I shall take action immediately on this.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will convey the concern of the hon. Member to the Director of the NTC.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken note. I will look into the matter and report back to Parliament.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, please! I think we have been given the number of hon. Members who have asked permission to intervene. I will allow one issue per Member.

BERJAYA HOTEL – EMPLOYEES - DISMISSAL

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): We should have started earlier.

Mr Speaker: Yes, and that is going to be the case every time.

Mr Ganoo: Thank you. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to intervene on behalf of the employees of the former Berjaya Hotel. I have given notice to the hon. Minister, informing him of my intention tonight.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this hotel was one of the *joyaux* of our *parc hôtelier* in the country. Then, in 2010, the hotel underwent renovations after the ownership had passed into the hands of new owners. Since then, the workers had started to make representations about their security, rights and interest. I have myself asked no less than five PQs and, on one occasion, I had intervened at Adjournment Time. The Minister concerned was then hon. Dr. Bunwaree, the then Minister of Labour who enlightened the House and replied to the questions.

On three occasions, in this very House, the then Minister had reassured the employees and the House about the protection, rights and interest of the workers. Mr Speaker, Sir, in my first PQ, the House was informed that the workers would be employed by the new management with continuity of service and on the same terms and conditions of employment. I am reading from the PQ again –

“The Executive Director has given the assurance that the interest and rights of the workers will be safeguarded in accordance with law”.

On several occasions, the Minister himself had replied that workers would be taken care of through training, but there would be no *perte d’acquis* and so on and so forth. The situation today, Mr Speaker, Sir, after the commitment and pledge that have been taken with regard to the future of these employees is different. What has happened in practice is that in 2010 when the sale of the Berjaya Hotel took place, the labour force consisted of 304 employees. But, within the course of four years, the labour force, with a strength of 304 employees, has dwindled slowly, but surely to 21 today! Again, through the different PQs, the House was informed that the figure of 304 in 2007 had dwindled to 190 in July 2008, in March 2009 to 124 and today it has dwindled to 21 only. There are only 21 employees of the Berjaya hotel today! Two weeks ago, 16 of these employees have received a letter from the new management that their services were no longer required.

During these four years, the employees have been requested to stay in a building at Case Noyale during the whole day doing nothing. In fact, this was a way to put pressure on them to weaken their morale in order for them to leave and put an end to their employment. Psychological pressure yielded the expected results for management. In fact, the majority left

and management negotiated with them on an individual basis, in small groups, sometimes under the trees in Case Noyale and sometimes in parkings at shopping areas in Plaines Wilhems and most of the workers have given up. They have surrendered and, as we say in our *bon créole*, they have '*rendre lé corps*'. Some managed of course to wrest an ex-gratia payment of two months, 2.2, 2.5 and 2.8.

The point that I wish to make today, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the commitment given has not been respected, the workers have been humiliated by the treatment given to them, *sequester*, and under duress and oppression, they have been offered an ex-gratia payment according to the whims and caprices of the representatives of the management. There was no principle of uniformity which was adhered to. Many of the employees today, *les derniers des mohicans*, the small batch of 21 are above 50, they were expecting to offer their services in the new hotel. Now a new hotel has been constructed on the premises of the old Berjaya Hotel, the villas are ready, but because they are more than 50, they would not be easily employed by a new employer. Instead of being asked to start working in the new hotel, they have been royally kicked out, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I am appealing to the hon. Minister who has openly and, on many occasions, pledged his support to the workers of this country. I appeal to him to look into this case. The employees have already been informed of their dismissal. They have been patiently waiting for four years to offer their services in the new hotel, unfortunately, as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, they have been dismissed. I would ask the hon. Minister to intervene, look into the matter and to see to it that this employer pays punitive rate, *trois mois par année de service*, because Mr Speaker, Sir, this is clearly a case where the employers have acted dishonestly and have terminated the services of these employees without any justification. I am sure that my appeal will not fall on deaf ears and the Minister will listen with sympathy to the plea of these workers who have already contacted his Ministry.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Mr S. Mohamed):
Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for raising this issue. He had raised this issue with me earlier on approximately ten days ago. We have had meeting at my office, my officers have met with the *préposé* of a new company that have bought over the Berjaya Hotel approximately two years ago and initially they were offering one month on average in terms of compensation. We

are meeting again this Friday, in a few days' time in order to conclude that meeting and I am informed by my officers that what is on the table right now on the part of the employees, they would like to obtain a minimum of two and a half months whereas what is being offered now, we manage to force into negotiations two months that have been offered by the employer.

However, I am also informed that, at that particular lieu where Berjaya used to stand once upon a time, there is a new hotel that will open and it is called the St Régis which is a 7-Star hotel. According to their website, it belongs to Starwood Hotels and according to that website they are supposed to open in November of 2011; now they are flattering themselves as being a 7-Star hotel and they are saying that they are here to attract only people above 45 years old who earn a minimum of 400,000 dollars a month in terms of salary, in other words, the high-end clientèle.

I totally agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the hon. Member that this is an unacceptable situation. There again, as I have stated earlier on last week, in this Parliament, that there are certain employers who make an abuse of this *soi-disant* economic reason and there we have it, we all have seen it and we believe that this situation should not go on because this is unacceptable. They have dwindled to 21 workers and I can reassure the House that I will personally be looking into it in order to conclude it to the advantage of those employees.

Thank you very much.

WOOTON, CAMP LEVIEUX & EAU COULÉE - FLYOVER

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): M. le président, l'an dernier j'ai évoqué, à l'adresse du ministre Bachoo, le problème des habitants de Wooton, Camp Levieux et Eau Coulée qui prennent l'autobus le long de la route qu'on appelle communément la route de la Vigie pour descendre vers les basses Plaines Wilhems et Port Louis. Les jeunes collégiens et les employés qui, l'après-midi, en remontant, doivent traverser la route de La Vigie durant les heures de pointe. J'avais fait un appel pour qu'on envisage dans l'urgence de placer une passerelle au-dessus de la route de La Vigie et le ministre avait répondu qu'il était bien conscient de ce problème et qu'il s'en chargerait. Depuis rien ! Je voudrais bien - au nom des habitants qui me pressent de soulever de nouveau la question - avoir des explications du ministre quant au progrès eu égard à ce projet.

Merci, M. le président.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I had earlier informed the House that tenders were invited for the flyover and, unfortunately, no bids were received. We have again prepared tender documents and I hope that this time bids will be received.

TRANQUEBAR – MAHATMA GANDHI ROAD – SPEED BREAKERS

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and NDU of a dangerous state of affairs that exists along the road of Mahatma Gandhi in Tranquebar. This is the road which comes immediately after Wellington Street going towards Champ de Mars where there is a steep slope and buses tend to come very quickly down that slope, then suddenly there is a bridge where the road suddenly becomes very narrow and accidents are not infrequent. Last week there was an accident where a bus hit a motorcyclist and, unfortunately, the person had had his leg amputated. So, we urge the hon. Minister if he could look into the matter and see whether there is any possibility of putting speed breakers.

Also we had a request from the inhabitants to have a pedestrian crossing because there are many students who unload the bus and have to cross the street to go into Tranquebar.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): I will request the RDA to have a look at it urgently.

RICHELIEU - FOOTBALL GROUND – MAINTENANCE

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Mr Speaker, Sir, I address myself to the hon. Minister of Local Government following a request made by the youngsters of Richelieu. There is in Richelieu a football ground which is unfortunately not maintained and there is a demand by the youth that the pitch be maintained and, if possible, to be provided with lighting facilities. Some of them are students and some are working and they can reach their place at five, so they start to play at night. Perhaps they could have floodlights on that pitch at Richelieu football ground.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): I have taken note, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I will look into it.

CHEBEL – NHDC - MILLIPEDES

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, j'avais en effet soulevé le 19 avril dernier le problème de mille-pattes à Chébel et le ministre de l'agriculture nous avait donné l'assurance que le problème allait être réglé rapidement. Je sais qu'il s'est rendu lui-même sur place hier et qu'il a pu constater, de visu, l'ampleur de la situation et, bien sûr, cette psychose qui règne dans ce quartier de Chébel.

J'ai cru comprendre, M. le président, que la propriété sucrière de Médine et le ministère de l'agriculture ne peuvent s'entendre par rapport à qui devrait faire quoi, chacun campant sur sa position, alors que nous savons tous que ces insectes proviennent des champs de cannes avoisinants. Donc, le ministre de l'agriculture nous dira sûrement où en sont les choses à ce jour.

Concernant le même problème et la même région, M. le président, je fais un appel au ministre de l'environnement pour faire nettoyer tous les terrains vagues appartenant au gouvernement se trouvant, bien sûr, dans la même région, les habitants craignant cette fois-ci que ces mille-pattes y trouvent refuge, ainsi aggravant la situation.

Toujours concernant cette région de Chébel, je sollicite aussi le ministre du logement et la NHDC afin de faire clôturer ce complexe, comme prévu et promis depuis son aménagement.

Mr Speaker: Non, j'ai dit un seul item.

Mr Quirin : C'est la même région, M. le président.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would recall that on 19 April I informed that my Ministry had taken prompt actions to deal with the problem of millipedes near NHDC at Chébel. In fact, the problem was solved more or less, but apparently there has been resurgence of millipedes in the area. I made a visit yesterday personally, I went there and I saw, in fact, it is true that there are the presence of millipedes in some of the yards in the region. I have asked the Entomology Division of my Ministry to do the larviciding again in the vicinity and also in the sugar cane field, at least, ten metres within the sugar cane field. It would appear that it is coming from the sugar cane fields and we have also asked Médine to take appropriate action or, at least, to collaborate with us, to do the needful. In fact, tonight also, one team will be going there to do the spraying outside in the yards.

RIVIERE NOIRE – YVES CANTIN HOSPITAL - UPGRADING

Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to make an appeal to the Minister of Health and Quality of life - she is not here, but I am sure that the message will be conveyed to her. Mr Speaker, Sir, Constituency No. 14 - as many other regions in Mauritius - has a growing population, this concentration of hotel industry and new residential areas and other businesses and in addition we have a concentration of low income family. These families often have to choose between putting food on the table and children's education and enjoying a better health since they cannot afford to pay health services out of their pocket. In case of emergency, they have to rely on the public health services. Given that there are many social administrative and legal barriers to access the health services in Candos, or Nehru Hospital most specifically, the socio-economic situation of the inhabitants, as I have just said, sometimes do not allow them to pay for a taxi to reach the hospital.

Concerning the legal barriers, as we heard this morning, about the SAMU situation, the lack of space in the waiting rooms and long waiting lists for patients who needed surgery or other special treatments, I would like to make a request to the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life to consider the advisability of upgrading the Yves Cantin Hospital in Rivière Noire to a District Hospital that can reduce the time consuming or burden put on low-income families in accessing the health services in Candos or Nehru Hospitals, and also to promote better health services in this Constituency.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the message, but I can assure the hon. Member that there is a scheme whereby we have a mobile clinic that goes around the island. I do not have the date when this clinic will be in Constituency No. 14. But I will certainly pass on the message and my hon. friend can rest assured that everything will be done so that everybody gets access to the necessary health services they require.

(7.31 p.m.)

EUGENE DUPONSEL STREET, PORT LOUIS – BRIDGE

Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): M. le président, le point que je soulèverai, je l'ai déjà fait le mois dernier, à l'ajournement, et aussi à

travers une question écrite. C'est concernant le pont qui se trouve à la rue Eugène Duponsel, notamment dit, la rue Pont Rouge.

Le pont étant très bas, des barres de fer sont apparues. Cela constitue un danger pour les enfants qui jouent dans la rue et même pour les passants. Donc, je fais un appel au ministre des administrations locales et régionales de traiter cette affaire d'une façon urgente.

Merci, M. le président.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): I have taken note, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will look into the matter.

(7.32 p.m.)

VERGER, BEL AIR RIVIÈRE SECHE - WATER ACCUMULATION

Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Mr Speaker, Sir, my question would go to hon. Anil Bachoo, the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping. It concerns water accumulation after heavy rainfall in the region of Verger, Bel Air Rivière Sèche. It is the road going towards Trou d'Eau Douce and it is in the corner of Verger. When there is heavy rainfall there is water accumulation and it prevents the inhabitants of the region to circulate and to drive.

I would be extremely grateful if the hon. Minister could attend to the request and I shall also do the needful to send to the hon. Minister an exact location plan of the alleged complaint.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): I will look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(7.33 p.m.)

VALLÉE PITOT & PAILLES – BUS SERVICE

Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to raise an issue concerning passengers using Route No. 150, Vallée Pitot to Pailles and *vice versa*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since long the passengers, the inhabitants and the social workers have tried to draw the attention of the authority concerned regarding the need to have more buses on that route at peak time. I have myself witnessed the bus carrying twice more passengers than is authorised. They cannot do otherwise and people fight in the morning in order to have a seat in the bus.

Since long, this matter has been raised in this august Assembly, but, unfortunately, nothing has been done. So, may I, again, appeal to the hon. Minister to see to it that more buses could be provided on this route so as to alleviate the problem of the passengers?

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will take it up with the NTA.

At 7.35 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 24 May 2011, at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

AGALEGA – MPs - VISITS

(No. B/314) 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 Agalega Island, he will state if consideration will be given for the provision of the necessary facilities to the Honourable Members of the National Assembly for the Constituency No.3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, to effect visits thereto.

Reply (Minister of Local Government): I very much appreciate and warmly welcome the proposals of the hon. Members of Constituency No. 3 to visit Agalega, an Island which really deserves our attention. In fact, in one of my speeches before the House, I deplored the fact that there were Members of Constituency No. 3 who were elected and remained five years in this House, but never thought it necessary and useful to pay visits to the Agalean community.

This being said, I wish to inform the hon. Members of Constituency No. 3 that, Agalega Island, being part of the Republic of Mauritius, any Mauritian citizen is free to travel to Agalega, subject to availability of passenger seats on board ships travelling to and from Agalega.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Outer Islands Development Corporation that the Mauritius Pride effects two voyages per year to Agalega, one around the first quarter of the year and another one in November. Passengers travelling through Mauritius Pride normally stay over a period of 2 nights/3 days in Agalega. Outer Island Development Corporation has always offered proper and decent accommodation to persons visiting Agalega.

The House may also wish to note that currently, the Dornier flies to Agalega only in case of emergencies, in view of the current state of the airstrip. The Dornier can take only 2 persons

on the Mauritius-Agalega leg and 3 to 4 persons on the Agalega-Mauritius leg. However, Government is taking necessary measures to upgrade the airstrip at Agalega which would definitely improve air access to the island. The recommendable means to go to Agalega for the time being is by ship.

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – TERMINAL EXPANSION

(No. B/318) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the project for the expansion of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport terminal and the construction of the new passenger terminal, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Airports of Mauritius Ltd., information as to the –

- (a) total contract value thereof;
- (b) name of the main construction contractor, and
- (c) names of the Mauritian sub-contractors, indicating the value of the contracts awarded to each of them.

Reply: The objective of the Terminal Expansion project at Sir Seewoosagur International Airport is to transform it into a modern state-of-the-art airport in the region. The main components of the project are as follows –

- (a) a surface area of 57,000 square metres with a capacity to accommodate 4 million passengers;
- (b) 5 boarding gates one of which will be A380 compatible;
- (c) a new terminal with a pedestrian bridge leading to the existing terminal;
- (d) a new large aircraft parking area;
- (e) 5 telescopic passenger boarding bridges;
- (f) 6 baggage claim carrousel;
- (g) 52 check-in desks;
- (h) a landside car park located in front of the new terminal with new roundabout;
- (i) a viaduct with elevated access roadway, and

(j) new cooling and emergency power plants.

The design of the terminal has taken into consideration the “*Maurice Ile Durable*” concept. Amongst other things, photovoltaic panels will be installed on the glass canopies at the entrance of the terminal for solar energy use. Rain water will be collected and used for the patios and sanitary blocks. Besides, the building facades will be thermo-insulated to reduce the heat.

Airports of Mauritius Ltd. has entered into a strategic partnership with Aéroports de Paris Management for the construction of the new terminal. A new company, Airport Terminal Operations Ltd., was jointly incorporated on 24 July 2008 whereby Airports of Mauritius Ltd. holds 90% of shares and Aéroports de Paris Management 10%. Airport Terminal Operations Ltd. is now responsible for the implementation of the project.

As the House is aware, for the financing of the project, a loan of USD 260 million has been secured by Airports of Mauritius Ltd. from EXIM Bank of China at a concessionary rate of 2% for a period of 15 years. The contract with EXIM Bank of China, which was signed in February 2009, sets out the terms and conditions of the loan, one of which is the selection of a Chinese company as the project contractor.

Tenders for the project were called on 08 June 2009 from three Chinese companies which were pre-selected by the Chinese authorities.

I wish to add that another selective tender exercise was carried out in March 2009 by Airports of Mauritius Ltd. and Aéroports de Paris Management for the selection of a consultant for the project. Six consultancy firms were invited to submit their bids. The Louis Berger Group, an internationally recognised American consultant was selected for supervision of works, monitoring of progress and issuing of completion certificates, among others.

The Louis Berger Group evaluated the bids received from the three Chinese companies. Thereafter, the contract was awarded to the firm China State Construction Engineering Corporation Ltd. on 30 December 2010 for an amount of US \$ 305, 813, 752.30 m.

In regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to point out that according to the contract, the primary responsibility for subcontracting of works rests with the main contractor. The latter may subcontract part of the works, subject to Airport Terminal Operations Ltd. being informed and the consultant for the project certifying that the appointment of the subcontractor is in accordance with the project requirements as spelt out in the contract. The contractor bears the sole responsibility of the works carried out by its subcontractors. Airport Terminal Operations

Ltd. and the consultant supervise and monitor the works, but they do not deal directly with any of the subcontractors. It would therefore not be appropriate to disclose the names of the subcontractors as well as the value of contracts awarded to them as this information pertains to private transactions carried out by the main contractor.

STUDENTS - SECURITY

(No. B/319) Mrs A. Perraud (Fourth Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the security of students, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if consideration will be given for the posting of Police Officers in front and in the vicinity of the colleges which are found in regions where the security of students may be at risk.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during school days at peak hours (i.e. from 07.45 to 08.45 hrs in the morning and 14.00 to 15.00 hrs in the afternoon), Police officers are on duty in front and in the vicinity of colleges and primary schools, both public and private, around the island. One hundred and thirty-three Police officers are deployed at 129 colleges, and 284 Police officers at 274 primary schools.

Their main duties are to protect life and property, to ensure safety and security of students, and to regulate traffic.

In addition, other units of the Police, such as the Divisional Support Unit and Emergency Response Service, also provide mobile patrols near colleges and primary schools when students are attending classes.

The *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*, in collaboration with the regular Police and other units of the Force, also provide security to students and contribute to the prevention of incidents at Traffic Centres and Bus Stops, which are regularly frequented by students. These units carry out crack down operations on a regular basis throughout the island with a view to –

- (a) providing protection, safety and security to students when they are away from home, paying particular attention to places where there have been complaints so that they do not fall prey to wrongdoers and other anti-social elements of society;

- (b) addressing the issue of street children by preventing children from loitering/roaming about in streets/public places in particular during school hours or before/after school hours, and
- (c) tracking down licence holders of places of amusement operating during prohibited/school hours and prevent minors/students to have access to these places.

As part of their preventive campaign, the Crime Prevention Unit together with the *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*, organise awareness sessions to sensitize the whole community and, in particular, parents and students, regarding discipline, the responsibility/duty of all to protect minors/students against any exposure to potential risks of being abused or harmed, and good conduct outside school premises, particularly at Traffic Centres and Bus Stands. Working sessions are also carried out with College/School Administration and Staff as well as other stakeholders in respect of the general safety and security of students both at and outside school premises.

Furthermore, through Community Policing meetings the Police work in close partnership with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources as well as with parents and staff of the colleges and members of the public to curb down indiscipline and violence among the student population; and to establish a control system to prevent truancy and anti-social behaviour among them.

Finally, notwithstanding the vigilance of the Police, I have impressed upon the Commissioner of Police the need to ensure conspicuous Police presence at schools and colleges.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES – SALE

(No. B/320) Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the sale of alcoholic beverages, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, since 1 January to 30 April 2011, for each of the Brisée Verdière, Lallmatie, Belle Mare and Central Flacq Police Stations, information as to the number of contraventions booked against general retailers, holders of on and off license for the selling of alcohol and liquor, for having sold same after closing hours.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from January to April 2011, 75 checks were carried out on licenced premises in the catchment area of Brisée Verdière Police Station and no contravention was established for selling liquor after closing hours, 67 checks in the catchment area of Lallmatie Police Station, one contravention was established, 36 checks in the catchment area of Belle Mare Police Station, no contravention was established and 35 checks in the catchment area of Central Flacq Police Station and one contravention was established.

Both cases which relate to selling of liquor after closing hours are under Police enquiry.

The number of contraventions other than for selling of liquor after closing hours for the same period are as follows –

Brisée Verdière	-	4
Lallmatie	-	7
Belle Mare	-	2
Central Flacq	-	27

These contraventions relate to, for example, persons found within licensed premises during prohibited hours.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Police has intensified its efforts to curb down illegal sale of liquor. And as recently as last night, Police carried out 109 shops checks throughout the island and has established 28 contraventions.

The Police will further step up checks, including surprise checks to enforce the relevant provisions of the law.

POLITICAL PARTIES – FUNDING

(No. B/321) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the funding of political parties, he will state if Government has taken any step for the regulation thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: As the House is aware, the Sachs Commission has examined the issue of funding of political parties and made recommendations thereon as per its terms of reference. It has also proposed a draft Bill pertaining to public funding of political parties.

However, the Commission has at the same time underlined that the draft Bill is not a “*definitive text*” but only a “*coherent*” and “*motivated*” scheme that can “*serve as the basis for further elaboration*”. The Commission has also recommended that the draft Bill be

supplemented by further legislation to cater for private donations and contributions to political parties.

The House will also recall that a Parliamentary Select Committee had been set up in 2002 under the chairmanship of the former Attorney General, Honourable Emmanuel Leung Shing, QC, to examine further the above recommendations and to propose appropriate legislative measures to give effect to those recommendations. The Select Committee submitted its Report in October 2004. However, matters were left there and no Bill was brought to the House for debate.

The funding of political parties is still being debated in a number of democracies without any clear guidelines emerging and the debate is ongoing. In fact, funding of political parties is a source of a large number of difficulties in many parts of the democratic world. While the problems are obvious to most experienced observers, there is no agreement among politicians, or among experts, about specific solutions. Even the principle that political donations should be transparent – seemingly the simplest and most obvious rule of all – turns out, on examination, to be not so simple after all. This is why recent attempts to draw up international conventions with regard to political funding have been open to criticism. One of the main problems is that of enforcement. Laws about political funding are of little value unless they are properly and fairly enforced. Problems and solutions vary from country to country. No single set of laws is likely to suit every country.

Besides, the Handbook of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance on Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns, published in 2003, concluded that, and I quote –

“It is clear that no one model of regulation can fit all circumstances. Every country will need to develop its system according to its political values and culture, its political and electoral system, the stage of development of its democracy, its institutional capacity and so on. There will undoubtedly be a mixture of motives and tools..... However, the issue of political finance can scarcely be treated in isolation, since it reflects more broadly on the role and regulation of political parties in general and on the potential for reform and development of the party system as an essential component of sustainable democracy.”

As a matter of fact, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance considers funding of political parties to be one of the key challenges for the future of democracies.

This is why I believe the issue of funding of political parties cannot be viewed in isolation. For these reasons, I believe that the whole issue regarding the funding of political parties should be left to be examined thoroughly by the team of constitutional experts that would be set up to consider, *inter-alia*, the reform of our electoral system as announced in the Government Programme 2010-2015.

STATE BANK OF MAURITIUS LTD. - CHAIRPERSON

(No. B/325) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the State Bank of Mauritius Ltd., he will state –

- (a) the names of the persons nominated by Government to the Board of Directors thereof, and
- (b) if Mr M. K. R., has been reappointed as Chairperson, and if so indicate the –
 - i. reasons therefor;
 - ii. causes of the termination of his previous contract as Chairperson, and
 - iii. terms and conditions of his re-appointment, including his scheme of duties and scope of powers.

Reply (The Prime Minister): As the House is aware, the State Bank of Mauritius Ltd is a public Company listed on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius Ltd. As per the Articles of Association of the Company, the Chairperson of the State Bank of Mauritius Board is appointed by the Board of Directors and the Directors are annually elected by the shareholders at the Annual Meeting. Public Notice is given of persons who stand for election as Directors of any listed company; this is the procedure that has been followed by the Company. The Directors that were elected at the last Annual Meeting held on 17 December 2010 is given in the list which I am tabling, with your permission.

In regard to parts (b)(ii) and (iii) of the question, I wish to point out that these are matters which fall under the responsibility of the Company. However as a public listed Company, the Bank does disclose, in its Annual Report, in the part dealing with corporate governance, the

emoluments paid to Directors and the terms and conditions of any contract held by any Director or the Chairperson of the Company.

The attention of the hon. Member is drawn to page 37 of the Annual Report 2010 of the Bank where all these details pertaining to the year 2010 are disclosed.

The remuneration and terms and conditions of the Chairperson and Directors will no doubt be again disclosed in the Bank's next Annual Report.

SOVEREIGN WEALTH FUND - SETTING UP

(No. B/324) 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 project for the setting up of a Sovereign Wealth Fund, he will state if consultations have been held with the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius for changes to be brought to the Bank of Mauritius Act and the Banking Act for the setting up thereof and the transfer of the country's reserves thereto and, if so, indicate -

- (a) when will the fund be set up,
- (b) its target rate of return, and
- (c) where matters stand.

Reply: The proposals for a Sovereign Wealth Fund originate in discussions between the Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Mauritius going back about three years. Action in this area was, however, delayed due to the complexities of the subject and the emergence of other priorities in view of the Great Recession and its aftermath as well as having to deal with the Euro crisis.

I can inform the hon. Member and the House that consultations are ongoing with the Bank of Mauritius. A concept paper is being worked upon on the governance and management structures of the Fund and on the funding for discussion. We have requested assistance from the Commonwealth Secretariat to finance an expert who will assist in the setting up of the Fund, in particular on the governance structure, management structure, legal framework, decrees and management agreements.

The Bank of Mauritius and the Ministry of Finance are also continuing consultations with other Sovereign Wealth Funds and Central Banks having Sovereign Wealth Funds as well as the

IMF. The IMF has offered its assistance to advise on how to make the Fund operate within an asset-liability framework so that the risk parameters are well defined, risks are minimized and the right investment strategies are selected.

At this stage, it would be premature to give a date for the setting up of the Fund.

HSC – ADMISSION - CRITERIA

(No. B/364) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the criteria of two or three credits obtained for School Certificate for admission to the Higher School Certificate, he will -

(a) state -

- (i) the number of students possessing three credits who have attempted/passed the Higher School Certificate in 2010;
- (ii) the number thereof possessing such qualifications registered this year for Higher School Certificate, and
- (iii) if the Public Service Commission has been requested to alter entry requirements at School Certificate for recruitment in the Public Sector, and

(b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Private Secondary Schools Authority, information as to if it has issued a letter to the private secondary schools regarding same.

Reply: As the House is aware, my Ministry has successfully implemented the measure announced in the Government Programme 2010-2015 to improve access to upper secondary education of those students who have completed the S.C./G.C.E. 'O' level. This measure which involved a review of criteria for admission to Lower VI was approved by Government on 28 January 2011 and has provided new opportunities for a greater number of students to have access to upper secondary by introducing more flexibility in the system without compromising on the quality of education and its outputs.

With regard to part (a) (i) of the question, 351 students with 3 credits sat for H.S.C in 2010 and 148 passed. In addition, 59 candidates obtained a G.C.E. Award with 2 or 3 'A' levels out of the 351 students who sat for the H.S.C. examinations.

As for part (a) (ii), the relevant information on students having passed the S.C. with three credits and promoted to Lower Six this year is being compiled.

As regards part (iii) of the question, my colleague, the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms has just replied to Parliamentary Question No. B/350 which directly relates to the subject.

Concerning the last part of the question on the circular issued by the PSSA, the reply is in the affirmative. In fact, in the wake of the decision to review the criteria for promotion to Lower Six, we had informed Heads of Schools that taking into consideration the competitive employment market conditions and future employment prospects, students should be encouraged to improve their overall S.C./G.C.E. 'O' Level qualifications while they are in Lower/Upper Six during the two year period.

I wish also to inform the House that in April 2004, the Ministry had issued a Circular letter to Heads of Schools advising students having been promoted to Lower Six in 2004 but who had 'Passes' in subjects like English, French, Mathematics to sit for the 'O' level examinations in the relevant subject to obtain a credit therein in the course of the two year period.

However, that Circular was limited in that it focused on upgrading of 'Pass' to 'Credit' in specific subjects rather than the need to upgrade the overall S.C./G.C.E. 'O' level qualifications.

This Government has gone beyond the 2004 Circular issued to students which advised them, to only upgrade their 'Pass' to a 'Credit' in a specific subject. This year, in parallel with the implementation of the decision to review the admission criteria to Lower Six, we have recommended that, in the interest of the students and to enhance their future employment prospects, they upgrade their overall 'O' Level qualifications.

As pointed out at earlier, last year some 207 out of the 351 students having 3 credits at S.C. Level have passed the H.S.C. and obtained a G.C.E. Award with at least 2 subjects at 'A' Level, which is the minimum entry requirement to universities.

We are confident that still more students with 3 credits promoted to Lower Six this year, will be able to pass the H.S.C. or obtain a G.C.E. with at least 2 'A' Levels in 2012 and at the same time upgrade their overall 'O' Level qualifications.

POLICE QUARTERS

(No. A/122) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether,

in regard to the Police Quarters, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) location thereof, and
- (b) number thereof which –
 - (i) are occupied;
 - (ii) are unoccupied;
 - (iii) have been converted into offices, and
 - (iv) are presently occupied by retired Police Officers or relatives of Police Officers who have already passed away, indicating where matters stand in relation to the vacation thereof.

Reply: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows –

LOCATION	NO. OF POLICE QUARTERS	OCCUPIED	UNOCCUPIED	QUARTERS CONVERTED INTO OFFICE	QUARTERS OCCUPIED BY RETIRED POLICE OFFICERS	QUARTERS OCCUPIED BY FAMILY OF DECEASED POLICE OFFICERS	QUARTERS – RENOVATION OR DEMOLITION
Port Louis (South)	123	116	2	1	1	-	3
Port Louis (North)	32	6	-	10	-	-	16
Lower Plaines Wilhems/Black River	350	292	5	48	2	1	2
Moka/Flacq	42	39	-	-	-	-	1
Pamplemousses/Riv. du Rempart	35	18	-	14	-	-	3
Grand Port/Savanne	32	26	2	2	-	-	2
Upper Plaines Wilhems	25	11	2	12	-	-	2
SMF (Vacoas)	159	121	-	1	1	1	35
Quarters from M/Public Infrastructure (Vacoas)	32	31	-	-	-	-	1
Total	830	660	11	88	4	2	65

In regard to part (b)(iv) of the question, there are four Quarters which are still being occupied by retired Police officers and two Quarters by the relatives of Police officers who passed away. In four cases, Police have already initiated action for eviction and notices to vacate have already been served. In regard to the two remaining cases, where one officer passed away and one retired in February this year, notice to vacate will be served on them.

RODRIGUES – MAURITIAN POLICE OFFICERS

(No. A/123) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the Mauritian Police Officers posted in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof, indicating in each case –

- (a) their grades, and
- (b) the Branch/Unit to which they are attached.

Reply: There are 54 Mauritian Police officers posted in the different Police stations, Units and Branches in Rodrigues. Their grades are as follows –

Superintendent of Police	1
Assistant Superintendent of Police	1
Chief Inspector	1
Inspector	2
Sub Inspector	1
Police Sergeant	4
Corporal	5
Police Constable	38
Woman Police Constable	1

In regard to part (b) of the question, the posting of Police Officers to a particular unit or branch is a matter which directly concerns national security and consequently it would not be in order to give such information as requested.

BELLE ROSE MARKET – TRAFFIC CONGESTION

(No. A/124) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the traffic situation in the region of the Belle Rose market, at Ollier Avenue, Quatre Bornes, he will state if he will impress upon the Commissioner of Police for the

urgency of ensuring the presence of Police Officers thereat to alleviate same, especially during market days.

Reply: Belle Rose market is operational only on Sundays from 05.30 hours to 12.00 hours and occupies some 300 metres along the Ex-railway track. The whole area falls under the jurisdiction of Rose Hill Police Station.

Two Police officers perform foot patrol there on every market day to –

- (a) maintain law and order;
- (b) facilitate pedestrians using crossings, and
- (c) ensure the fluidity of traffic and take remedial measures to prevent unnecessary parking.

The two Police officers are supported by the Divisional Traffic Police (DTP), Divisional Support Unit (DSU) and the Emergency Response Service (ERS), which carry out frequent mobile patrols in the area.

During peak hours, traffic in the area is slow but remains fluid. The Police are proposing to invite road users travelling in that region to use alternative roads.

FLACQ HOSPITAL - RENAMING

(No. A/125) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Flacq Hospital, he will state if consideration will be given for the naming thereof after late Dr Maxime Shun Shin and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: It is not proposed to change the name of Flacq Hospital.

BELL VILLAGE - KIT LOCK – LIGHTING & TARRING

(No. A/126) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the street leading to the kit lock at Bell Village, he will state if consideration will be given for -

- (a) reviewing the lighting system thereat, and
- (b) the tarring thereof and, if so, when.

Reply: The review of the lighting system is being dealt by the Municipal Council of Port Louis. As regards the tarring of street leading to the kit lock at Bell Village, the scope of work is under preparation.

CLUB MED HOTEL ALBION - TAXI PERMITS

(No. A/127) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the taxi permits given for Club Med Hotel Albion, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to the number of –

- (a) applications received therefor, and
- (b) permits given, indicating –
 - (i) the names and addresses of the beneficiaries, and
 - (ii) if it is contemplated to issue additional licences and, if so, when.

Reply: A Communiqué inviting application for the grant of taxi licences, on transfer to operate from Club Med, Albion was published on 06 October 2007.

50 applications were received and no objection was raised against them. All applicants were heard at the Licensing Committees on 24 January 2008, 25 January 2008 and 19 February 2008. However, six taxi operators who were not qualified to apply as they did not satisfy the criteria laid down by the Authority submitted an application for leave to the Supreme Court for a judicial review against the decision making process of the National Transport Authority not to entertain their applications for the grant of taxi licence, on transfer to operate from Club Med, Albion. The leave for Judicial Review was refused.

At its meeting held on 30 September 2009 the Board agreed to continue with the processing of the applications.

As regards part (b), the Authority has not granted any licences so far.

PETITE RIVIÈRE – HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURAL WORKS

(No. A/128) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to Petite Rivière, he will state the number of houses being constructed thereat, indicating if he has received any request from one Village Councillor thereof in relation to the –

- (a) construction of a lay-by along the Albion Road;

- (b) widening of the Lobin Lane, which is situated between the construction site and the nearby inhabited area, and
- (c) installation of a drainage system in the project in view of the high volume of rain water flowing directly on the site.

Reply: The National Empowerment Foundation proposes to construct some 59 concrete houses on a plot of State land situated at Gros Cailloux, Petite Rivière.

No request from any village councilor, whether verbal or written, has been received concerning the construction of a lay-by along the Albion Road, the widening of the Lobin Lane and the installation of a drainage system.

However, the project does provide for the construction of a lay-by at the entrance of the new residential village, at the corner of Albion Road and Lobin Lane, and for a drainage system.

With regard to the widening of Lobin Lane, consultations may be held with the Road Development Authority to determine its necessity.

BAIE DU CAP - BUS SHELTER

(No. A/129) **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 the village of Baie du Cap, in Constituency No.14, Savanne and Black River, he will state if there is no sheltered bus stop going east, in the vicinity of the St François d'Assise Primary School and the church and if so, if consideration will be given for the construction of a sheltered bus stop thereat.

Reply: I have been informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit that there is indeed a bus stop in the eastbound direction near the school at Baie du Cap. However, the bus stop is not equipped with a bus shelter due to the fact that the footpath is too narrow to accommodate a proper bus shelter.

A survey will be carried out to investigate whether a stretch of privately owned land can be acquired for the enlargement of the footpath thereby allowing the construction of bus shelter.

SURINAM - CHEMIN BALANCE – TRIMMING OF TREES & STREET LIGHTING

(No. A/130) **Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to road safety and security, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Grand Port/Savanne District

Council, information as to if the trees and the absence of street lighting in the region of Surinam, Chemin Balance, are obstructing the view of the pedestrians and of the motorists and, if so, if consideration will be given for the –

- (a) trimming of the trees, and
- (b) reviewing of the street lighting system.

Reply: I am informed by the Grand Port-Savanne District Council that a total of twenty-eight trees have been found to be obstructing the lighting over Balance Road, Surinam.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that necessary action is being taken by the Council to have the trees trimmed.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, the Council has indicated that there are twenty-eight Sodium High Pressure lamps which are in good condition. However, there are still six poles where no lamp exists and two Central Electricity Board poles with two transformers where no lamp can be fixed. Appropriate arrangement is being made by the Council to fix the remaining six lamps.

DR. JEETOO HOSPITAL – INCINERATOR

(No. A/131) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the incinerator of the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, she will state the remedial actions that will be taken by her Ministry in relation to the thick smoke emanating therefrom.

Reply: Presently waste produced at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital is incinerated into the incinerator located within the premises of the said hospital. This incinerator has been used for years.

Several recommendations have been made to minimize black smoke from the incinerator.

As a long-term measure, my Ministry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, will enlist the services of a consultant with a view to advising on the -

- determination of technology for the types and quantities of waste generated;
- assessment of the capacity of the different types of technology and facility available for treatment and destruction of waste;

- comparison of alternatives on the basis of capital cost, operation cost, ease of operation, local availability of spare parts, local availability of operational skills, demonstrated reliability, durability and environmental impact;
- the technologies that are more appropriate for safe disposal of waste and appropriate site for such facilities and
- the relocation of the incinerator and/or an alternative solution.

Meanwhile, short and medium term measures have been taken as follows -

- (a) The height of the chimney of the incinerator has been extended by 3 metres to a maximum permissible of 12.6 metres high to provide for the dispersion and dilution of the emissions over longer distances;
- (b) The maintenance contractor of the incinerator has been apprised of the prevailing situation and has been requested to investigate into the possibilities of minimizing the smoke emission;
- (c) No incineration is allowed on Sundays and public holidays and after 15 30 hours on week days. It is envisaged not to undertake incineration on Saturdays as well;
- (d) No over accumulation of waste likely to give rise to odour nuisance is allowed, and
- (e) Loading of wastes has to be done only when the set temperatures for the combustion and post-combustion chambers of the incinerator (850⁰C and 1100⁰C respectively) are reached to ensure proper combustion of same.

DR. JEETOO HOSPITAL – FURNITURE AND FITTINGS - CONTRACT

(No. A/132) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the supply and installation of furniture and fittings at the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, she will state if any contract has been awarded and, if so, indicate the -

- (a) name of the successful bidder;
- (b) contract amount;
- (c) description of the furniture and fittings, and

(d) tender procedure used.

Reply: There are two different types of furniture that are being procured for the Dr Jeetoo Hospital, namely (i) hospital furniture and (ii) office furniture and soft finishing.

With regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, the information requested is as follows -

(i) Hospital Furniture

SN	Bidder	Amount	Item Description
1	Technitrade International Ltd	€ 1,798,879	beds and cabinets
2	FTM (Mauritius) Ltd	Rs 2,154,881	chairs
3	Furnicon Ltd	Rs 10,538,696	tables & carts/trolleys
4	Chem Tech Ltd	Rs 8,014,664	treatment/examination tables

(ii) Office furniture and soft furnishing

SN	Bidder	Amount	Item Description
1	Furnicon Ltd	Rs 3,896,858.09	chairs, desks, stools, tables, tiling cabinets, bins, curtains, etc
2	Eastern Properties Ltd	Rs 5,255,356.25	chairs, cupboards, metal cabinets, drapes, etc
3	Joonas Industries Ltd	Rs 4,602,070.00	desks, tables, screens, etc

With regard to part (d) of the question, the tender procedures used were the Open Advertised Bidding Method.

**ST FRANÇOIS XAVIER STREET, PORT LOUIS – BUS STOP – TRAFFIC
CONGESTION**

(No. A/133) 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 bus stop found at the Saint François Xavier Street, Port Louis, in the vicinity of the Casablanca Snack, he will state if traffic congestion is caused thereat when buses stop to embark passengers as vehicles are parked on the other side of the road and, if so, will he state if consideration will be given for the marking of double-yellow lines thereat.

Reply: St. Francois Xavier Street is a one-way road and is 7.00 wide. It is densely built-up on both sides with predominantly commercial buildings. As such vehicles have the tendency to park in a disorderly manner. Such disorderly parking obstructs the free flow of traffic near the building, especially at the moment buses stop to embark/disembark passengers.

The marking of double yellow lines is not recommended as with such marking, parking and standing will be prohibited. Accordingly, the most appropriate solution is the painting of single yellow lines on both sides of the road near the bus stop. Necessary action to that effect is being initiated by the TMRSU.

DESPEROUX STREET, CITÉ ROCHE BOIS – TRIMMING OF TREES & STREET LIGHTING

(No. A/134) 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 Desperoux Street, Cité Roche Bois, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if there is a lack of street lighting points thereat and, if so, will consideration be given for the -

- (a) installation of additional street lanterns thereat, and
- (b) cutting and trimming of trees which deprive visibility at night.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that following a survey effected by its Works Department in February 2011, it was observed that there were inadequate lighting points at Desperoux Street, Cité Roche Bois as there were only nine lanterns.

I am informed that five additional lanterns will be installed as soon as the conductors for which orders have already been placed, will be made available. Furthermore, there are no trees along Desperoux Street which deprive visibility at night.

NTC – CHAIRPERSON

(No. A/135) **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 Chairperson of the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the name of the incumbent, indicating -

- (a) his salaries and the benefits to which he is entitled;
- (b) the date of his appointment, and
- (c) the make and model of the car put at his disposal, indicating the -
 - (i) cost, and
 - (ii) date of purchase thereof.

Reply: Mr Chetan Rambans Dookun, the current Chairperson of the National Transport Corporation (NTC) was appointed on 27 March 2008.

As regards part (a), his monthly salary is Rs21,000, in accordance with the rate applicable for Chairpersons of Statutory Boards and Committees categorised in Group A. As was the case with previous chairpersons, he enjoys the following benefits -

- (i) E-mail and Internet facilities (ADSL) at residence at the rate of Rs750 per month;
- (ii) A car for official travelling;
- (iii) Mobile phone facilities for local calls.

As regards part (c) of the question, the Chairperson's car is a Jaguar X-Type 2.0 SE V6 with automatic transmission of a value of Rs2,250,000.00, inclusive of duties and taxes.

It is to be noted that the car was purchased on 19 June 2008 following a bidding exercise.

Previous chairpersons of the NTC have also been provided with a car.

FOREST SIDE - SHIVAJI ASHRAM - ACCESS

(No. A/136) **Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he has received a request from the Shivaji Ashram, Camp Bombaye, Forest Side, for the construction of a safe and practical access to the land belonging to them which has been earmarked for the putting up of a cultural centre and if so, will he state where matters stand.

Reply: To date, my Ministry is not in the presence of any request regarding the construction of a safe and practical access to the land belonging to the Shivaji Ashram, Camp Bombaye, Forest Side.

DANGEROUS DRUG ACT & HIV AND AIDS ACT - AMENDMENTS

(No. A/137) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the possession of syringes, he will state if Government proposes to bring appropriate amendments to the Dangerous Drug Act and the HIV and AIDS Act, in view of the contradictory provisions.

Reply (Minister of Health and Quality of Life): Under Section 34(1)(c) of the Dangerous Drugs Act 2000, any person who unlawfully has in his possession any pipe, syringe, utensil, apparatus or other article for use in connection with smoking, inhaling, sniffing, consuming or the administration of any dangerous drug, shall commit an offence.

The HIV and AIDS Act 2006 provides for measures for the control and prevention of the propagation of HIV and AIDS and for the protection of the human rights of persons affected or not with the virus. This Act also provides for the possession, exchange and disposal of syringes and needles for those who are dependent on drugs.

Moreover, Section 16 of the HIV and AIDS Act specifically provides that where a person is in possession of a syringe or needle, in compliance with the Act, that person shall not, by reason only of that possession, be considered as having committed an offence under the Dangerous Drugs Act.

As such, there is no contradiction between the Dangerous Drugs Act and the HIV and AIDS Act which necessitates any amendment to these laws.

PASTEUR AVENUE, QUATRE BORNES - DRAIN - CONSTRUCTION

(No. A/138) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the region of Pasteur Avenue, along the Mosque compound, in Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to if consideration will be given for the construction of a drain thereat while providing at the same time adequate pavement.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that it has already included the project for the construction of drain in the region of Pasteur Avenue along the Mosque compound in its priority list and same would be constructed once funds are available.

I am also informed that consideration would also be given to the construction of pavement in the region.

POINTE AUX SABLES - DEBARCADERE - CLEANING WORKS

(No. A/139) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Débarcadère area at Pointe aux Sables, he will state the authority which is responsible for the cleaning thereof, indicating the reasons why no cleaning works are being performed thereat.

Reply: I am informed that the Débarcadère area at Pointe aux Sables is constituted of the residential zone (Cité Débarcadère) and the beach. The Beach is not a proclaimed public beach and as such it does not fall under the responsibility of the Beach Authority. According to information available, the land has been leased by the Ministry of Housing and Lands to a private owner.

I am informed that the Municipal Council of Port Louis is responsible for cleaning and collection of refuse in the residential area whereas the beach is cleaned by the Field Services Unit of my Ministry upon, request from the inhabitants of that region. I am informed that the last time cleaning was effected was on 05 and 06 May 2011.

LA TOUR KOENIG - LOW COST HOUSING UNITS

(No. A/140) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the low-cost housing units which are nearing completion, at La Tour Koenig, he will state the selling price thereof, indicating the criteria for eligibility therefor.

Reply: The construction of some 37 housing units at La Tour Koenig forms part of the Firinga V housing project, which comprise the construction of some 508 housing units on 10 sites across the island. The construction of these 37 units is nearing completion and the allocation exercise is expected to start soon.

My Ministry has been informed by the NHDC Ltd that the selling price per unit will be Rs465,000. The eligibility criteria for low-cost housing units are as follows -

- (i) the monthly household income of applicants should not be more than Rs12,000;
- (ii) applicants should have the repayment capacity to service the mortgage debt for the purchase of a house, and
- (iii) applicants should not be owner of a housing unit or residential plot of land.

MORCELLEMENT ST. ANDRÉ - FOOTBALL GROUND

(No A/141) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the football ground at Morcellement St. André, he will state the –

- (a) renovation works that are being carried out thereat;
- (b) cost of the project;
- (c) starting and completion dates thereof, and
- (d) re-opening date thereof.

Reply: The renovation works that have been carried out at the Morcellement St André Football Ground are as follows –

	Projects	Start Dates	Completion Dates	Costs
1	High level fencing	Feb 2010	Nov 2010	Rs 4,430,000
2	Lighting facilities	Nov 2010	Feb 2011	Rs2,647,738
3	Levelling/planting of grass and fixing of goal posts	March 2011	June 2011	Rs80,000

The football ground will be re-opened in June 2011.

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL - MANAGING COMMITTEE

(No. A/142) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the National Youth Council, he will state –

- (a) the composition of the present managing committee thereof;
- (b) the activities organised over the last six months by all the Regional Youth Councils, and

(c) if any General Assembly has been scheduled and, if so, the proposed date thereof.

Reply: The composition of the present Managing Committee and the activities organised by Regional Youth Councils over the last six months are being tabled.

Regarding part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that no General Assembly has been scheduled because we are in the process of reconstituting the Managing Committee of the National Youth Council and same would be held after reconstitution of the Committee.