



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION

TUESDAY 19 JUNE 2012

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS (*Oral*)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

MOTIONS

BILLS (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

QUESTIONS (*Written*)

Members

Members

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

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues
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Hon. Lormus Bundhoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Sayyad Abd-Al-Cader Sayed-Hossen	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
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Hon. Jangbahadoorsing Iswurdeo Mola Roopchand Seetaram	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
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Members

Members

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 10 of 2012

Sitting of 19 June 2012

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office –

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill (No. XIV of 2012).
- (b) The Courts (Electronic Filing of Documents) Rules 2012 (Government Notice No. 118 of 2012).

B. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

- (a) The Freeport (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 116 of 2012).
- (b) The Statutory Bodies Pension Funds (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 117 of 2012).

C. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade

–

- (a) The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (Privileges and Immunities) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 113 of 2012).
- (b) The COMESA Infrastructure Fund (Privileges and Immunities) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 114 of 2012).

D. Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reforms Institutions –

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Non-Governmental Organisation Trust Fund for the period ended 31 December 2010.

E. Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security –

The Sugar Insurance Fund (Prescribed Area and Prescribed Percentages of Total Insurable Sugar) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 115 of 2012).

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS TERMINAL PROJECT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the project for the construction of the Liquefied Petroleum Gas Terminal in Port Louis, he will –

- (a) state the –
 - (i) reasons for the choice of United Petroil Ltd., to partner with the State Trading Corporation, and
 - (ii) shareholding of Petredec Investment in Cyprus, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to if –
 - (i) the Shareholding and Terminal Usage Fee Agreements between the Corporation, United Petroil Ltd. and Liquefied Petroleum Gas Terminal Ltd. are still in force;
 - (ii) the decision for the Corporation to buy-out United Petroil Ltd. in Liquefied Petroleum Gas Terminal Ltd. has been overturned, and
 - (iii) discussions are on-going between the State Trading Corporation/Government and United Petroil Ltd./Petredec Ltd.

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, to start with, I wish to inform the House that on 25 January 2008 Government agreed that Requests for Proposals (RFPs) be launched for the construction of additional storage tanks for a minimum capacity of 15,000 metric tonnes for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).

At the closing date of the request, 05 May 2008, two proposals were received for LPG as follows -

- (a) a consortium comprising Total/Shell/Indian Oil, and
- (b) Petroil Ltd.

Subsequently, Government agreed on 31 October 2008 to a joint project for petroleum products, but as regards Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), it was decided that

further discussions should be held with Shell/Total consortium and Petroil Ltd. Thereafter, on 12 December 2008, Government agreed to the following -

- (a) the construction of two additional storage tanks of a capacity of 5,000 metric tonnes each for the storage of LPG;
- (b) Government, through the State Trading Corporation (STC), to hold 20% shares in a consortium comprising Petroil Ltd as major shareholder, and
- (c) the LPG storage project be split equally between the consortium and another consortium comprising Total (Mtius) and Shell (Mtius) Ltd. with each being allocated a capacity of 5,000 metric tonnes storage tank.

On 25 February 2009, however, Petroil Ltd informed the Ministry that the shareholders of the Company have decided that to ensure the smooth running of the project, another company, namely United Petroil LPG Ltd (UPL) would represent the totality of their interests. The shareholders of UPL were to be –

- a) Petredec (Mauritius) Ltd (50%);
- b) Mer Rouge LPG Storage Ltd (25%), and
- c) United Corporate Investment Ltd (UCIL) (25%).

On 10 April 2009, a new company, namely LP Gas Terminal Ltd was created to execute the project whereby UPL had 80% of the shareholding and STC the remaining 20%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) (i) of the question, I wish to inform the House as follows –

- (i) Government decision was for the State Trading Corporation to partner with Petroil Ltd and not with United Petroil Ltd. The shareholding of Petroil Ltd at the time of Government decision was as follows -

Piat Marie Joseph Luc Francis	36%, and
CSS Holding Ltd	64%

CSS Holding Ltd is held by –

- (i) Freismuth Catherine Marie Louise;
- (ii) Freismuth Catherine Marie Louise;
- (iii) Piat Marie Joseph Luc Francis
- (iv) Piat Marie Joseph Luc Francis

- (v) Piat Marie Louise
- (vi) Piat Marie Louise
- (vii) Piquet Sophie Maire-Thérèse
- (viii) Piquet Sophie Maire-Thérèse
- (ix) Piat Stephane Luc Francis Raffray, and
- (x) Piat Stephane Luc Francis Raffray.

That makes up the 64% of CSS Holding Ltd. and the directors of Petroil with whom Government had agreed to partner the STC were then Piat Marie Joseph Luc Francis and Piat Stephane Luc Francis Raffray.

Whilst the decision for STC to partner with Petroil Ltd in an LPG Storage Project was taken on 12 December 2008, it was two and a half months later, on 25 February 2009 that Petroil Ltd informed the Ministry that to ensure the smooth running of the project, another company, namely United Petroil LPG Ltd would represent the totality of their interest.

Regarding the proposal received by the consortium comprising Total and Shell, as I have mentioned earlier, I further wish to inform the House that Energy Storage Company Ltd - that is the name of the consortium - submitted three options for storage fees ranging from Rs1,615 to Rs2,483 per ton as throughput fee whereas Petroil Ltd submitted only one proposal at Rs1,120 (subsequently brought down to Rs1,043) per ton as throughput fee. This is the main reason for the initial choice of Petroil Ltd, not United Petroil Ltd, inasmuch as STC was already paying Rs1,284 per ton as throughput fee for the same service under an existing contract.

As regards part (a) (ii) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Petredec Investment Ltd is a company incorporated in Cyprus and held wholly by Petredec Ltd itself a company incorporated in Bermuda, and held to the tune of 70% by Colaton Holdings Ltd. (British Virgin Islands) and to the tune of 30% by the National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, Colaton Holdings Ltd is itself held to the tune of 65% by Mr Charles Fearn, a UK National and by Mr Chris Steadman, another UK National, to the tune of 35%. Petredec Investments Ltd (Cyprus) holds 100% of Petredec Mauritius Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b)(i) of the question relative to the Shareholding Agreement between STC and United Petroil LPG Ltd in LP Gas Terminal Ltd., I am informed that the Agreement dated 16 July 2010 is still valid.

As regards the question relating to the Terminal Usage Fee Agreement between the STC and LP Gas Terminal Ltd. dated 27 April 2010, I am informed also that this agreement is still valid. However, it is to be noted that, as regards payment of the throughput fee according to the LP Gas Terminal Usage Fee Agreement, the effective date of the contract, I quote -

“Means the date of completion of all the following activities –

- (i) the completion of the construction of the Facility;
- (ii) the commissioning and operation of the Facility;
- (iii) the issue of the certificate of completion, and
- (iv) the discharge of the first cargo of imported LPG in the Facility”.

It is to be noted that Facility as defined in the Agreement means the terminal facility for handling and storage of LPG to be constructed by the Operator on the site allocated by the Mauritius Ports Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) (ii) of the question, I wish to inform the House as follows -

There is no decision - I repeat, there is no decision - for the Corporation to buy out the 80% of UPL in LPG Terminal Ltd., although, the idea was canvassed at some point in time by the State Trading Corporation. Moreover, according to the section 3A of the Statutory Bodies (Account and Audit) Act (as amended in 2009), it is stipulated that, I quote -

“Except where otherwise expressly provided in the enactment establishing or setting up a statutory body, the statutory body shall not –

- (i) establish or create any agency or body of persons, whether corporate or unincorporated;
- (ii) acquire or hold any interest in any other agency or body of, whether corporate or unincorporated.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, as there is no decision to that effect, the question of overturning a decision does not arise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) (iii) of the question, there are no on-going discussions between the STC/Government and United Petroil Ltd/Petredec Ltd. on that matter.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, is it not the fact - I am sure that the hon. Minister has gone through the files - that the then Minister for Industry and Commerce, before and during 2008, tried to hold the consortium that will have included Shell, Total, Indian Oil and Petroil Ltd. and that the three firms refused because Petroil Ltd. was a recently registered company, with no backup and with no real presence in that sector, and that, therefore, the then Minister decided to go ahead with Petroil Ltd.

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said in my reply that the decision to choose Petroil instead of the consortium was based on the offer, which was made, on the one hand, by Petroil Ltd, which was Rs1,120 per metric ton for throughput fee and then brought down to Rs1,043 as compared with Rs1,615 to Rs2,483; three options offered by the consortium of Shell and Total. So, the reason why Petroil Ltd. was chosen instead of the other two was simply on the basis of the cost of the throughput.

Mr Bérenger: In fact, they were going to operate separately completely. Can the hon. Minister tell us, after the then Minister had pushed things in the direction of Petroil Ltd, which became later on United Petroil Ltd. - I listened to him carefully - when deciding to set up a new company, LP Gas Terminal Ltd to carry out this project, why did Government in December 2008 favour to United Petroil Ltd, '*un cadeau*' of STC according to the Cabinet decision, having only 20% of the shareholding and the United Petroil Ltd. having *la part du lion* 80% and we all know when somebody has 20% of the shares in a given company, he is absolutely powerless. Why this '*cadeau*' made to United Petroil Ltd. and why did Government go ahead with this 80% and 20% share?

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't really understand what the hon. Leader of the Opposition means by '*cadeau*'.

(Interruptions)

As far as I can understand, the decision for the State Trading Corporation to join that operation to the tune of 20% was motivated by a very simple fact. It is the fact that, by law, the State Trading Corporation imports and distributes, at least, at the first level,

liquefied petroleum gas and it was found to be from an operational point of view highly desirable that STC has a say in the storage and initial distribution of that particular product. Again being given that there was no particular asset which was handed over by STC to LPGT, I don't see what '*cadeau*' the hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the shareholdings of Petredec Investment in Cyprus is concerned, can I know whether Government and the State Trading Corporation were already aware of this Bermuda, all over the world connections when it gave its green light for this company to be set up with United Petroil Ltd., which has 50% shareholding Petredec? Were Government and the STC aware of this international shareholding set up?

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, this information which I gave just now referring to the shareholding of Petredec Investment Ltd., a company incorporated in Cyprus, is available to everybody. The hon. Leader of the Opposition certainly knows and knows even more so because we are ourselves an offshore jurisdiction, that companies that are linked to other companies all over the world, as he says, is a normal thing in today's business. The important thing is the traceability. The important thing is that you can go to the source, to the origin of the funds.

As I have said in my reply, we can *remonter* totally the chain of investment from Petredec (Mauritius) Ltd right to the two UK nationals, Mr Charles Fearn and Mr Chris Stedman, who hold the original company which then - *en français, M. le président - s'éclate en différentes compagnies jusqu'à* Petredec Investment...

(Interruptions)

On s'éclatera après !

(Interruptions)

So, the original company is held by these two UK nationals, Mr Charles Fearn and Mr Chris Stedman, right to the final company that we are interested in, that is, Petredec (Mauritius) Ltd.

Mr Bérenger: May I know whether the hon. Minister is aware that, in fact, what was registered in November 2007, was a company in Cyprus called Panto Cils Investment Ltd changed 20 days later to Petredec Investment. Do we have the reason why?

Mr Sayed-Hossen: I am afraid, I don't have that information, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, is it a fact that the 'Terminal Usage Fee Agreements' was concluded - and that reminds me of Med Point - eight days before General Elections?

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Yes, this is a fact that the 'Terminal Usage Fee Agreements' within the STC and the LPG Terminal Ltd is dated 27 of April 2010.

(Interruptions)

This is not the issue. The issue is that there was an ongoing process, Mr Speaker, Sir. There was an ongoing process which started with Government agreeing to partner STC with Petroil Ltd and then which went on and on until such time as this 'Terminal Usage Fee Agreements' was signed and it is only natural that, at one moment in time, the agreement be signed.

Mr Bérenger: It is confirmed that the agreement like in Med Point was signed eight days before General Elections. Is it not a fact also that the agreement that was signed was a huge *cadeau* to United Petroil Ltd insofar as - as established in the report of Inside Forensic Ltd, which he has in his possession - the terms of that Terminal Usage Fee Agreements reached eight days before General Elections would have given 15 years of monopoly to that company, guaranteeing a maximum of 65 metric tonnes of imports annually like the case of Betamax, written into it, Mr Speaker, Sir, and whereas is it not a fact that the letter from the Permanent Secretary to the STC, did not mention any guarantee of - as in the case of Betamax - 65 million metric tonnes imported annually. This was put, although it was not in the PS letter, in the Terminal Usage Fee Agreement signed eight days before General Elections.

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the impression that the hon. Leader of the Opposition did not listen to my reply. I said, at the beginning of my reply that the agreement of Government was given for STC to partner not with United Petroil - I heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition continuing harping on United Petroil - but the agreement which the Government gave in 2008, I think, was for STC to partner with Petroil Ltd, and Petroil Ltd had nothing to do with the existing United Petroil Ltd; it was the decision of Petroil Ltd to open up its shareholding and to do what they have said here

“In order to ensure the smooth running of the operations.”

It was their decision; it was the decision of Petroil and not of Government. Petroil decided that, I quote them –

“In order to make sure that the operations were run in a smooth way that the totality of the interests were being *confiés à* United Petrol Ltd”.

Then, the shareholding of United Petroil Ltd changes, but the original agreement was with Petroil Ltd and I see no reason why Government now should be accused of making *cadeau* to United Petroil, etc. Again, I have given the reason why Government chooses Petroil instead of the other two. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has said that Petroil was assessed or can be assessed at that time not to have any experience but, at least, the people in Petroil had experience in that particular business. I have also to inform the Leader of the Opposition that, according to my information, Shell and Total were not keen at all to partner with individual shareholders instead of corporates like themselves. Furthermore, as I have said, again, I will need to repeat myself, Mr Speaker, Sir, the offer made by Petroil Ltd was much lower than the offer made by Shell and Total. Being given that we have to look after the interest of the country and after the cost ...

(Interruptions)

... of storage and being given at that time

(Interruptions)

Listen, you will be informed ladies and gentlemen! Being given that, at that time, STC was paying Rs1,240 as throughput fee per metric tonne, it was only highly appreciable that STC chooses to partner with a company which was offering Rs1,120 then brought down to Rs1,043.

Mr Bérenger: In fact, what happened is that Petroil Ltd, the original company, became United Petroil Ltd and it is with United Petroil Ltd that the STC signed this jackpot Terminal Usage Fee Agreement. Can I know whether it is not a fact also that the decision to go ahead and award a contract to start building the storage tank was taken on 09 August 2010 without the STC informing the new Minister, its parent Ministry not being informed and, in fact, and all that was placed for 15 million metric tonnes with Lloyd Jones Construction that is now claiming damages.

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, actually at one moment in time there were two different projects for building storage tanks for LPG. There was one project for Petredec Ltd and Petredec Ltd has a lease agreement with the Mauritius Ports Authority for a piece of land in the Port on which they are planning and, according to my information, they have started the basic works to build two bullets, that is, two underground tanks of 5,000 tonnes each, that is, 10,000 tonnes. LPGT had, according to my information, a project to set up or to build a bullet for storing 5,000 tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas, an additional one, which would have brought the total to 15,000 tonnes, not 15 million tonnes. According to my information, the works for the LPGT project have not started and, according to the information, which I have gathered from the Mauritius Ports Authority, there is to date no lease agreement for a piece of land in the Port area between LPGT and the Mauritius Ports Authority. So, the question of construction having started, according to my information, does not arise.

Mr Bérenger: The fact is that the order was placed for 15,000 tonnes of storage capacity on 09 August without STC informing the new Minister that they were going ahead. I heard the Minister say that no decision has been taken to have STC purchase the 80%. Is it not a fact that when the new Minister took his responsibilities and the new Manager at STC, they found out that this *cadeau* of 80%:20% was not in the interest of other countries and, therefore, came forward with the idea that STC would take over the project and buy the 80% of shareholding held by United Petroil Ltd. Is it not a fact that a decision was taken and is the hon. Minister aware that, in May 2011, the then Minister of Finance and the then Minister for Industry and Commerce met the hon. Prime Minister and briefed him on that decision taken?

Mr Sayed-Hossen: I will answer, Mr Speaker, Sir. Before replying to that question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition, further to the preceding question, I am informed - I have just received a note - that Petredec's work is ongoing on its 10,000 tonnes storage capacity in the Port area. As far as the 5,000 tonnes capacity storage tank for the Liquefied Petroleum Gas Terminal Ltd is concerned, there is no work which has even started.

Now, regarding the last question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition; Mr Speaker, Sir, a discussion is a discussion; a formal discussion is a formal discussion; an

informal one is an informal one and a decision is a decision. I have said that there has been no decision. There is no decision to the effect that STC will take over or will buy out the 80%. When I assumed my present office, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was briefed by my office and by the STC that the idea had been raised and we discussed it. Again, I must inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we cannot speak of a 'decision' to buy out the 80%, because there is no such decision. Hon. Pravind Jugnauth, having been the Minister of Finance at that date, should know better.

(Interruptions)

Was a decision taken, Mr Speaker, Sir? This is the issue.

(Interruptions)

He may have discussed with the hon. Prime Minister, but there was no decision.

Mr Bérenger: The key man in all this, as we know, is Dr. Sunil Guiness who is, in fact, the Chairperson of Liquefied Petroleum Gas Terminal Ltd. Can I know whether there have been representations made since the MSM has left Government, for this, I call it, 'decision' or for this idea, as the hon. Minister would put it, to go ahead and have STC purchase the 80% of United Petroil Ltd. and whether the hon. Minister has met Dr. Sunil Guiness or anybody else to receive representations for the STC and Government not to go ahead and, therefore, leave the 'cadeau' as it is in the hands of United Petroil Ltd.?

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, indeed Dr. Sunil Guiness, whom the hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to as the key man, I suppose we have different definitions of the key man; Present company, LP Gas Terminal Ltd., the shareholding of that company is as follows -

STC - 20%; United Petroil Ltd...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am just explaining why, the hon. Leader of the Opposition and myself, we have diverging definitions of key man. United Petroil Ltd. has 80%, Petredec Ltd. has 44%, and the so-called key man has 2.857% of the company. Great key man, Mr Speaker, Sir!

The second part of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir; indeed, representations have been made. Different shareholders including representatives of Petredec, including representatives of the ex-Petroil Ltd., including representatives of United Petroil Ltd.,

sought appointments, and I did see them in the presence of my officers. There have been diverging requests to that effect, but the end-result is that, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is for the moment a *status quo*: STC has 20% of the company; United Petroil Ltd. has 80% of the company. There is no decision to buy out and there are no ongoing discussions.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have different definitions of a key man. Can I table a document emanating from the Chairperson of LP Gas Terminal ltd., that is, the company set up with only 20% STC shares to carry out the whole project? Therefore, can I table a copy of the document signed by the Chairperson of LP Gas Terminal Ltd., addressed to the new Executive Director of STC who sits as a Director on the Board of LP Gas Terminal Ltd., and the name of the person signing as Chairman of LP Terminal Ltd. is Dr. Sunil Guiness. I will table this.

Now, is it not a fact that, in fact, discussions had started between STC, Government, and United Petroil Ltd. and a proposal of Rs80 m. was made by United Petroil Ltd., supposedly to sell its shares, and a compensation for work construction of storage tanks already started and for other Rs80 m.? Have discussions taken place on this proposal for Rs80 m. plus Rs80 m., Rs160 m. as made by United Petroil Ltd.? Have there been discussions?

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, it depends on what you call discussions. There have been representations made.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sayed-Hossen: I mean we have to agree on words, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Please, carry on!

Mr Sayed-Hossen: There have been representations made by United Petroil Ltd. that STC - and we have said that - buys out the 80% and the cost of the buying out would be Rs60 m. to Rs80 m., something like that, made up of forfeited profits, etc.

(Interruptions)

This must be a joke, Mr Speaker, Sir. This must be a joke!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, it becomes serious only when there is a decision made. We can receive all sorts of representation from whomever, Mr Speaker, Sir, the important thing is

how you take that representation. The important thing is what you do with that representation. Having received the representation, I have discussed with my colleagues, the Minister of Finance, my officers, and the State Law Office. I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude that...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Sayed-Hossen: How can I explain if they keep on shouting?

Mr Speaker: Please carry on! Don't put questions!

Mr Sayed-Hossen: The important thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that there is no decision which has been made. There is no decision and all advices received to that effect on that matter have pointed that we should not make a decision to buy out the 80%.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Bérenger: I will put the question to the hon. Prime Minister himself when he comes back, but I would like to know from the hon. Minister for it to be on record, being given all that we have learned today, that we have seen confirmed today. Would the hon. Minister, before I talk to the hon. Prime Minister, be agreeable to setting up either a Select Committee of the House or a Commission of Enquiry chaired by a former Judge of the Supreme Court to look into this whole mess?

(Interruptions)

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, where is the mess? Where is the mess if not in certain people's mind, Mr Speaker, Sir?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

(Interruptions)

Order! The Table has been advised that...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, can you, please, keep quiet! Everybody! Order! The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/298, B/302 and B/305 have been withdrawn.

MAURITIUS PORTS AUTHORITY – STRATEGIC PARTNER

(No. B/298) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Mauritius Ports Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to if it has launched international tenders seeking for a strategic partner and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

MBC - SECURITY OFFICERS - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/299) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Security Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if it has recently carried out a recruitment exercise therefor and, if so, give the list of the recruits, indicating their respective –

- (a) residential address;
- (b) date of recruitment, and
- (c) mode of recruitment.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that, with the approval of the MBC Board, the Corporation carries out, as and when required, recruitment exercises for such position.

On 02 May 2012, recruitment was made from the database of applications received at the Corporation and this is in line with the long standing policy and procedures of the Corporation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, the House was informed in reply to Parliamentary Question No. A/143 of 24 May 2011 that it would not be proper to give addresses.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. acting Prime Minister give reasons as to why Security Officers have been recruited though there is a police post there? There is also the

presence of SMF officers, CCTV cameras installed everywhere and the doors have a security door code?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been expansion of needs. There have been more needs especially with the new MBC building.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Is the hon. Ag Prime Minister aware or has his attention been drawn – though the hon. Prime Minister responsible for the MBC/TV is not in the House - that the Director General of the MBC/TV uses his Security Officers as *Gestapo*...

(Interruptions)

You are saying ‘no’, I will give you the proof – spying upon officers instead of doing their jobs as per their schedule and the contract which has been awarded to them? Can the acting Prime Minister order an immediate enquiry because the personnel of the MBC is being harassed by his Security Officers?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have no such information.

Mr Speaker: I have not given you the floor yet! Now, I give you the floor.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. acting Prime Minister inform the House what is their exact job?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Concerning the duties performed by Security Officers, I resume as follows -

- (i) to ensure security on MBC premises and on outside broadcast sites;
- (ii) to hand over and collect MBC office keys from authorized officers and to manage the key register;
- (iii) to ensure that all offices are locked and lights are off when not in use;
- (iv) to perform access control at building entrances and vehicle gates and ensure that employees and visitors display proper passes or identification before entering MBC premises;
- (v) to perform such other duties directly related to the main duties listed above or related to the delivery of the output and results expected from Security Officers in the roles ascribed to them.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. acting Prime Minister inform the House what is the role of the police officers posted there?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, they are complementary.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Has the attention of Government or the hon. acting Prime Minister been drawn to the fact that his Security Officers accompany the Director General as personal bodyguards during office hours and outside office hours? He has ordered an inquiry to be conducted as this is contrary to the assignment of duties as stated by the acting Prime Minister just a few minutes?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not believe all these things happen, but I will pass on the information.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. acting Prime Minister inform the House whether these Security Officers were asked to produce a Morality Certificate before being recruited because two of these officers ...

Mr Speaker: If you have the answer, you cannot put the question!

(Interruptions)

No, he is looking at his notes...

(Interruptions)

Please, I am on my feet! You have the right to put the first part of the question. If you have the answer, you cannot put the second part of the question.

Mr Jhugroo: I am asking whether they have produced a Morality Certificate before being recruited?

The Ag. Prime Minister: This is standard procedure, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Jhugroo: Are you aware hon. acting Prime Minister that two...

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair!

Mr Jhugroo: Yes. Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. acting Prime Minister aware that two of these recruited officers have been sacked because they have been found guilty of stealing powdered milk?

(Interruptions)

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of all that.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. acting Prime Minister inform the House whether he is aware that we have a proper Police post at the MBC and secondly, there is the Special Mobile Force Officers who use to carry out the work of security.

Mr Speaker: That question has already been put! I am sorry. Put the question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: We are asking questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are not joking here!

(Interruptions)

We are asking the question! So, whether the hon. acting Prime Minister can say what are the criteria for the recruitment of security officers?

Mr Speaker: He has answered!

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: No. Can the hon. acting Prime Minister say whether the criteria are on political backing that...

Mr Speaker: That is out of order! Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. acting Prime Minister inform the House how is it that most of the Security Officers recruited by the MBC reside in Constituency No. 5?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can reply to this question. It is absolutely false. There is no basis for that.

(Interruptions)

This is a gratuitous remark!

(Interruptions)

Recruitment is from all over the island.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Now, there is one thing that the hon. Member must know; it is under the Standing Order that when you make a statement of fact, you must ensure that your statement of fact is correct. I am just drawing your attention. Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

MBC – NEWS EDITORS - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/300) **Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the news editors, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if it has recently carried out a recruitment exercise therefor and, if so, give the list of the recruits, indicating –

- (a) the mode of recruitment thereof;
- (b) their salaries and terms and conditions of employment, including if they are employed on a free-lance, contractual or permanent basis, and
- (c) their respective qualifications

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that the Corporation has not carried out any exercise recently for the recruitment of News Editors. The other parts of the question do not, therefore, arise.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. acting Prime Minister aware that most of the persons, who were supposed to be recruited as News Editors, have not got the required qualifications and for that reason they have been assigned the post of News Editors?

Mr Speaker: That question does not arise! Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

(Interruptions)

MBC – TELEVISION LICENCE – MONEY COLLECTED

(No. B/301) **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, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the television licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to the total number of subscribers therefor, indicating the amount of money collected in terms of fees therefor in 2011.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that the Corporation has currently a total of 328,808 subscribers of television licence, that is, 317,551 domestic subscribers and 11,257 commercial subscribers, both in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

An amount of Rs 364,983,374 was collected in terms of television licence fees for the year 2011.

I also wish to inform the House that the television licence fees were last revised in February 2002.

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. acting Prime Minister if it is actually being considered to increase the licence fee which is Rs100 per month?

The Ag. Prime Minister: There is nothing as such at the moment.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: We have just been informed that ...

(Interruptions)

I am not making a statement! I will make a statement later on, in the press!

(Interruptions)

We have just been informed that the MBC is cashing nearly Rs365 m. out of public money - our poor Rs100! Can the hon. acting Prime Minister, at least, agree that it is a shame that a public corporation is cashing Rs365m. and the poor football fans of Mauritius are being deprived of the European matches?

(Interruptions)

There are only seven matches. How can this be?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this was comprehensively replied to in PQ No. B/50 by the hon. Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

NOUVELLE FRANCE - ROAD ACCIDENT - INQUIRY

(No. B/302) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the road accident which occurred in

Nouvelle France, on Thursday 10 May 2012, in which a cyclist, one Mr J. T. died, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MR T. M. - ARREST

(No. B/303) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if one Mr T. M. was arrested at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, on or about 15 May 2012, and detained at the Vacoas Police Station and, if so, indicate the reasons of his arrest, indicating if -

- (a) forged documents, passports and seal of the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations and of other companies were found in his possession and, if so, where same have been secured, and
- (b) he is still detained at the Vacoas Police Station.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 16 May 2012 the personnel of the Passport and Immigration Office arrested one Mr T. M., a Bangladeshi national, at the Sir Seewoosagur International Airport while he was leaving Mauritius. He was arrested in relation to a case of swindling reported on the same day at Vacoas Police Station by one Mr K. H., an expatriate Bangladeshi worker. The latter had alleged having remitted to Mr T. M. an amount of Rs400,000 to facilitate recruitment of 12 Bangladeshis to work in Mauritius. Mr K. H. stated that Mr T. M. had swindled the money, and was trying to leave Mauritius definitely.

Mr T. M. was handed over to the personnel of Vacoas Police Station for enquiry. A search was carried out on him and on his luggage. Amongst other things, a stamp pad, nine envelopes and six rubber stamps with different inscriptions were found in his possession.

Three of the rubber stamps had the inscriptions with misspelling of the appellation of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, two Phoenix Beverages Limited, and one Managing Director. The envelopes contained amongst other things photocopies of passports of several Indian nationals and medical certificates in their names, other documents bearing logos and headings of recruiting agencies in Bangladesh, and logo and heading of one Mauritian company. These exhibits have been secured and are under the custody of Vacoas Police Station.

Mr T. M was detained at Vacoas Police Station, and a provisional charge of swindling was lodged against him before the District Court of Curepipe on 17 May 2012. He was remanded to police cell on 25 May 2012. On 25 May 2012, he appeared before the District Court of Curepipe, and was remanded to police cell up to 31 May 2012. On 31 May 2012, he appeared again before the District Court, and he has been remanded to jail at Beau Bassin prison up to 19 June 2012.

During the course of the enquiry, one Mr S. K., an Indian national, was arrested on 17 May 2012. A provisional charge of swindling was lodged against him. He appeared before the District Court of Curepipe again on 22 May 2012, and was released on bail upon furnishing a surety of Rs7,000 and a recognizance of Rs30,000. He will reappear before Court on 04 September 2012.

On 22 May 2012, one Mr S. K., a Mauritian national, was arrested following denunciation by Mr T. M. A provisional charge of swindling was lodged against him before the District Court of Curepipe. He was released on bail on the same day upon furnishing a surety of Rs7, 000 and a recognizance of Rs30,000. He will appear anew before the Court on 04 September 2012.

Police enquiry in the case is ongoing.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. acting Prime Minister just said there are lots of things confiscated at the police station. May I know whether all these exhibits that are presently at Vacoas Police Station can be sent to Port Louis, so as to be in the custody of the Commissioner of Police?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed they are secured, and that there is no risk of anything disappearing. This is what I have been told. I was given this reassurance.

Dr. Sorefan: Secondly, may we know the role of Mr Anand Beekoo, the ex-Mayor of Vacoas-Phoenix, in this issue of roaming around the Vacoas-Phoenix Police Station, to facilitate in a way these people to be liberated?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not see the relevance of all this on this issue.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the acting Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order I said!

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the acting Prime Minister whether the Mauritian contacts of this Bangladeshi have been established by the police?

The Ag. Prime Minister: One contact certainly has, and has been arrested. I have just mentioned it.

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. acting Prime Minister aware of the number of cases similar to that one, which are linked to the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers, where forgery has been committed?

Mr Speaker: Is the hon. Member asking on this question?

Mr Ganoo: No, I am asking whether they are similar cases which are known to the acting Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker: No, you can't. Please come with a substantive question.

Dr. Sorefan: Regarding Mr Sabeer Kadel, a Mauritian, is he the Mauritian contact here?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Yes!

MIDLANDS POLICE STATION – WOMAN POLICE CONSTABLE - ARREST

(No. B/304) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to Mrs N. R., Woman Police Constable posted to the Midlands Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if she has been arrested and, if so, the reasons therefor, indicating -

- (a) if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof, and
- (b) the charges, if any, lodged against her.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, following a letter dated 30 May 2012 from the Commissioner of Prisons, in relation to an alleged case of impersonation of identity, a team of officers from the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit proceeded to the Beau Bassin Central Prison to enquire into the case on the following day.

The Police enquiry revealed that, on 30 May 2012, Mrs N. R., woman Police Constable at Midlands Police Station, accompanied one Mr S. S. to Beau Bassin Central Prison to interview a detainee. Mr S. S. presented himself as Police Constable N. at all check points at the Prison, with the help of Mrs N. R. In fact, the person accompanying Mrs N. R. was not a police officer. They were allowed access in the prison on the strength of the warrant card produced by Mrs N. R. and the memo addressed to the Commissioner of Prisons by the Inspector of Police at Midlands Police Station. They met the detainee concerned, and left the prison.

On that same day of 31 May 2012, at 1800 hours, Mrs N. R. was arrested and brought before the District Court of Rose Hill on 01 June. Provisional charges have been lodged against her as follows -

- (i) "Aiding and Abetting" in the commission of a misdemeanour to wit: Usurping Public Function in breach of section 182 coupled with section 38(3) of the Criminal Code Act; and
- (ii) "Forgery by Public Officer" in breach of section 106(c) of the Criminal Code Act.

Mr S. S. was arrested on 01 June 2012, and he appeared before the District Court of Rose Hill on the same day. Provisional charge for "Usurping Public Function" in breach of section 182 of the Criminal Code Act has been lodged against him.

Both of them were remanded to police cell up to 08 June 2012. However, on the instructions of the Senior Magistrate of the Bail and Remand Court, they were released on parole on 02 June 2012, as police had no objection to their release.

On 04 June 2012, Mrs N. R. and Mr S. S. appeared before the District Court of Rose Hill, and they were both released on bail upon furnishing a surety of Rs3,000 cash

and a recognizance of Rs50,000. They would appear again before court on 23 August 2012.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that disciplinary proceedings are being instituted for neglect of duty against two prison officers who had allowed access to Mr S. S. in the prison despite the fact that he did not produce proof of his identity as a police officer.

Enquiry into the case is underway.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know whether Police objected to bail?

The Ag. Prime Minister: No, they did not because they considered that the enquiry had already been completed. So, there was no need.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Can I know whether it is a fact that the person whom they illegally went to meet at the Beau Bassin Central prison is somebody who had been sentenced, who was under trial for drug trafficking?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Apparently, he has a previous...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking about Mrs N. R. Is it the same Mrs N. R. who, on 12 March 2012, was awarded the President meritorious service medal by this Government and if, found guilty, will this medal be taken away from her?

The Ag. Prime Minister: We will react according to what follows. Yes, certainly.

Mr Baloomoody: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very serious issue. Access to prison is limited even with regard to Counsel. When we go to prison, we have to show our identity cards and we have to fill in a form. May I know whether, in this particular case, the Police officer filled that form where she had to say for what purpose she is coming to meet that prisoner and whether she is part of the inquiring team in that case?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that she did produce a warrant and filled in

a form.

Mr Baloomoody: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, in what capacity was Mr S.S. allowed in because he is not a Police officer, he does not have a warrant card? In what capacity was he allowed to meet a prisoner?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is why two Prison officers are being questioned on the issue.

Mr Baloomoody: In that case, Mr Speaker, Sir, the inquiry has not been completed, because now we have two Prison officers upon which the inquiry is being conducted. May I know why the Police did not object in this particular case when, in fact, the inquiry is not completed?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Police had no objection as the Police inquiry on the matter was completed at their end.

Mr Baloomoody: At their end?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Yes.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. acting Prime Minister tell the House whether the person who accompanied this Police Woman Constable has been released on bail although he was already on bail?

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

Mr Speaker: I have to inform the House that Parliamentary Question No. B/307 has been withdrawn.

STATE AND PARASTATAL BODIES - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/305) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the State and parastatal bodies, he will state if Government will consider amending the relevant legislation to make provision for recruitment exercises to be carried out following public advertisement for the filling of the post of the head thereof.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL ADOPTION COUNCIL - FACILITIES

(No. B/306) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Mauritian children, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Adoption Council, information as to the measures taken by the Council to facilitate the adoption thereof by families wishing to do so, indicating the mechanism put in place therefor.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Adoption Council, established under the National Adoption Council Act, deals only with demands for adoption of Mauritian children by non-citizens and is not involved in demands for adoption by Mauritian citizens.

According to the established procedures, any prospective foreign adopter has to submit an application on the prescribed form together with the supporting documents to the National Adoption Council, including an *agrément* from an official agency accredited to the Government or Government Department of their country authorizing them to adopt a child from abroad.

In accordance with the Act, the National Adoption Council has to pronounce itself on an application within a period of 60 days. Where the National Adoption Council is satisfied, having regard to all the circumstances surrounding a demand, that possibilities for placement of a child within Mauritius have been given due consideration and that the demand will be in the interest of the child, it authorizes an application for adoption to be made to the Judge in Chambers. On the other hand, if the National Adoption Council considers that the adoption is not in the best interest of the child, it notifies the non-citizen that his demand has not been favourably entertained. The latter can appeal to the Judge against the notice of rejection within 21 days of receipt of the notice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has acceded to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and co-operation in respect of inter-country Adoption; since 2006, the National Adoption Council has been designated as the Central Authority for adoption matters.

The objects of the Convention are, among others, to establish safeguards to ensure that inter-country adoptions take place in the best interest of the child; and to ensure that these safeguards are respected and thereby prevent the abduction, the sale of or traffic of children. It is also a requirement under the Convention for ensuring that inter-country

adoptions have not been induced by payment or compensation of any kind and that the persons have given their consent freely to the adoption.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following in-depth consultations with all stakeholders concerned, an “Adoption of Minors” Bill is under preparation at the level of the Attorney General’s Office to give effect to the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-country Adoption. The adoption procedures under the new legal framework will be in strict conformity with the Hague Convention.

The National Adoption Council will then operate with additional powers and as a full-fledged Central Authority under the Convention and cooperate with other Central Authorities to achieve the objects of the Convention. Consequently, Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Adoption Council will be required to maintain a database of adoptable children and prospective adoptive parents; and facilitate proceedings to finalise adoption cases. The National Adoption Council will be responsible for the three types of adoption, namely -

- Adoption of Mauritian children by citizens of Mauritius
- Adoption of Mauritian children by foreign nationals
- Adoption of foreign children by Mauritian citizens

The National Adoption Council will also be in a position to recruit the necessary personnel with the required expertise, such as probation officers and psychologists for the preparation of social enquiry reports; counselling of the different parties concerned and effecting follow-up visits.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad to note that there is an intention of extending the roles of the National Adoption Council so that Mauritian citizens can also adopt Mauritian children. May I ask the hon. acting Prime Minister, meanwhile, awaiting the new legislation, whether we could put up a structure to facilitate the adoption of Mauritian children by Mauritian families?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a valid suggestion. I’ll certainly have a look into it. At the moment, they have to go to a judge. I’ll look into that.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the problem that arises is that there is no database and parents willing to adopt children do not know which doors to knock. Can the database be set up in the meantime, awaiting the elaboration of the new

legislation? Can we now have a system to facilitate the adoption of children by Mauritian couples?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am given to understand that a database is being set up which will facilitate even from now.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that there is a demand for Mauritian children to be adopted by local families, would Government not consider freezing altogether the action of the National Adoption Council until the backlog is taken care of, as we only have one or two cases being adopted per year by foreigners?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have given full details of what the National Adoption Council does. At the moment, it does not deal with Mauritians adopting Mauritian children but we will speed it up.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the acting Prime Minister say, in cases where foreign nationals have adopted Mauritian children, what is the mechanism that is put in place by the National Adoption Council to ensure that these children are really well catered for?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the follow-up is done by the National Adoption Council. How the follow-up is done, I can produce some information later on.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, the Ag. Prime Minister referred to adoptable children. Would he tell us what he understands by adoptable children? Is reference being made to children who are presently in orphanages and, if so, how many such children are there right now in Mauritius?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a list of the institutions where these children are, but I do not have a list of how many are adoptable. As the movement gathers momentum, I am sure it will be addressed humanely.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the final authority is the Supreme Court, would it not be easier to eliminate the *dos d'âne* which slows down the process of adoption which is a fairly long one right now by locals?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I think the best would be to speed up with the National Adoption Council and all its associated new responsibilities.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the acting Prime Minister, the names of the members of the National Adoption Council and the date they were nominated.

The Ag. Prime Minister: I have the list here which I will circulate, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are 11 names.

PIRATES – TRIAL

(No. B/307) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the trial of pirates in Mauritius, he will state when the first trial will take place, indicating –

- (a) who will bear the cost thereof, and
- (b) in case of conviction, where will the sentence be served.

(Withdrawn)

RODRIGUES – EXHIBITS - DISAPPEARANCE

(No. B/308) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the recent case of possession of obscene materials in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the circumstances in which the exhibits disappeared, indicating if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and if so, the outcome thereof.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that all the exhibits secured in connection with the case involving one Mr J. S. L. for charges of, *inter alia*, dealing with obscene matters, are in the custody of the Rodrigues Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit.

However, on 08 June 2012, during Court proceedings before Rodrigues Court, the State Counsel informed that all exhibits in the case were not brought for production. The case has been postponed to 24 July 2012.

Mr Baloomoody: Is it not a fact that the Learned Magistrate had initiated inquiry because there were some exhibits missing?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am informed quite categorically there are no exhibits missing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

RIVIERE NOIRE - GAMBLING HOUSE - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/312) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed opening of a gambling house opposite the Yves Cantin Hospital, he will state if he has received representations from the inhabitants of Rivière Noire in relation thereto and, if so, what measures will be taken, if any.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that an application for Building and Land Use Permit has been received on 01 March 2012 from Automatic Systems Ltd represented by Guillaume Hardy for the conversion of an existing building into 'Totalisator/Operator outside race court' and 'Bookmaker conducting fixed odd betting on football matches outside Mauritius' at Snack des Anis, Royal Road, Black River. Clearance from the Gambling Regulatory Authority has not been received yet.

Complaints from the inhabitants have been registered at the Black River District Council and the Council will hold hearing once clearance from the GRA is submitted by applicant.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there are criteria which say that any gambling house or place for gambling cannot be found right in the centre of a residential area? Can this be taken into consideration in this particular case?

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are many criteria set up - I mean strict criteria - before ensuring any gambling authorisation in any area of Mauritius, and particularly in this case.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I then understand from the hon. Minister that these particular criteria will be taken into consideration in that case where that company has requested to transform a snack into a gambling house?

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can reassure the hon. Member that, on 14 June 2012, I got a letter from the Commissioner of Police saying this –

“I have been informed that the building has been inspected and found not suitable for the purpose applied. However several complaints have been received from the immediate neighbours on ground that it will disrupt the peaceful environment”

It says the area is not correct for that hospital.

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Minister say whether the decision, that was taken by the High-Powered Committee to freeze all such applications, has now been reviewed in the light of this?

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of that, but I have something in the file. Government’s decision had, on 10 July 2009, set up a High-Powered Committee under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister to examine the proliferation of gambling houses. Government further agreed that no new licence for the opening of gambling house would be issued until further notice.

Mr Jugnauth: Why is it that, in this case, an exception is being made and a new licence is being considered. What should have been done is just simply to say that the application is not going to be entertained.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no exception there. Nothing happened there because it is still in process.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I think that what the Minister should do is to write to the GRA and to whatever authorities concerned informing them of the position of Government. That’s all!

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, you are right for what you say. Mr Speaker, Sir, you cannot prevent people from making an application for a gambling house.

Mr Speaker: Yes, you cannot prevent people, but the authorities must be informed of the decision of Government.

**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT –
EMPLOYEES – TRANSFER**

(No. B/313) Mrs P. Bholah (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to his Ministry, he will state the number of employees thereof who have been transferred, since January 2012 to date, indicating the reasons therefor, in each case.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker Sir, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development is involved in embellishment works and other environmental projects throughout Mauritius. At present, works are being carried out in 44 sites across the island. These sites keep on changing. Very often, a large number of workers have to be mobilised from different sites, for instance, in the context of Maha Shivratri, Cavadee, Ram Bhujun, Ganesh Chaturthi, Père Laval and Eid pilgrimages.

As such, at a given point in time, some 200 to 300 workers have to change sites and this is an ongoing process. From January to date, 260 workers have been transferred from one site to another.

Mrs Bholah: Doesn't the hon. Minister think that the transfer of employees too far from the residence to the workplace decreases the efficiency and, as a consequence, to the Ministry since there has to be a real need and legitimate reason to switch around people?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member can refer to her note, but she cannot read a supplementary.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned, it all depends on the sites that we are opening. For example, actually works are being undertaken throughout the country for Ganesh Chaturthi and Père Laval festivals. So, the workers have to be brought from one end of the country to another. In the Ministry of Environment, this has always been the process. When I was the Minister or before me, even hon. Bhagwan, we have been transferring officers from one site to another. This is normal.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Minister to correct what he has just said? This is not the Père Laval festival; it is a Père Laval pilgrimage.

Mr Bachoo: I am sorry. As far as all the religious celebrations are concerned, we keep on changing workers.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jugnauth, last question!

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Minister say how many employees have been transferred since 11 April 2012, those who reside in Constituency No. 7?

Mr Speaker: In relation to the Ministry you mean?

Mr Jugnauth: Yes.

Mr Speaker: The Ministry of Environment.

Mr Jugnauth: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Ministry of Environment.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information that I have with me, is that, from 01 May up till now, there has not been any transfer.

(Interruptions)

I do not have the information from April, but from 01 May, there has been no transfer. Actually, there are 27 workers who reside in Constituency No. 7 and out of these 27 workers, 11 are working in No. 7, 13 are working at Bois Marchand which is very close to Constituency No. 7 and three in other constituencies. That's all!

LONDON OLYMPIC GAMES 2012 – ATHLETES – TRAINING FACILITIES

(No. B/314) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the forthcoming London Olympic Games 2012, he will give the list of the athletes who have been qualified to participate therein, indicating the facilities put at their disposal for their training in Mauritius and abroad.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that 12 athletes will represent Mauritius at the Olympic Games. Out of these 12, 8 have been qualified and 4 are on invitation by wild cards. I am circulating the list of the athletes concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is working in close collaboration with the Mauritius Olympic Committee, Club Maurice and the respective sports federations with a view to pooling all our efforts to provide unflinching support to the athletes participating in the Olympic Games.

My Ministry is providing financial assistance to the respective federations over and above their annual budget to enable them to meet their requirements regarding training and competition abroad in favour of the athletes involved. The monthly allowance payable to high level athletes qualified for the London Olympics has also been increased to Rs10,000 for the months of May, June and July.

The costs of specific sports equipment, official dress and other items required by the qualified athletes will be met jointly by my Ministry, the Mauritius Olympic Committee and Club Maurice. Club Maurice is also providing financial assistance to athletes for their preparation abroad.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire dans le cas du cyclisme si l'entraîneur national, José Achille, a été évincé de la délégation ? Si oui, il a été remplacé par qui ?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we, at the level of the Ministry, do not decide about who is going to accompany the athletes. It is the federation that decides.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, since Government will be spending quite a substantial amount of money, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether he has received any representation - I received a copy of what the hon. Minister has received from the *Club des Nageurs* of the Swimming Federation - where there has been gross injustice towards one particular athlete, and what action has he taken? Is he looking into that seriously?

Mr Ritoo: I received complaints from the swimming clubs but, at the end, it is the federation that decides who is going to represent the country, depending upon the result they have had during the year.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, est-ce que le ministre peut-il indiquer le nombre et les noms des officiels qui composeront le Club Maurice pour les JO ?

Mr Ritoo: I can submit the list later.

Mr Quirin: Le ministre peut-il nous dire quel est le budget que son ministère va allouer au Club Maurice dans le cas des JO et de préciser le montant par discipline.

Mr Ritoo: I can submit a list of the budget for each discipline.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether those qualified for the Olympic games as far as beach volley is concerned, are also receiving a monthly allowance?

Mr Ritoo: Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister say whether his Ministry oversees the decisions that are taken by the federation, in this case particularly, and if so, if he finds that there is any *prima facie* injustice that is being done? Does he, at least, conduct any inquiry to find out whether it is justified or not?

Mr Ritoo: Is the hon. Member talking about a swimming federation?

(Interruptions)

All the federations! Of course, we try to see that the federations are in conformity with the Sports Act and we will take action where necessary.

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL

– EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE & REGIONAL COUNCILS

(No. B/315) 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, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council –

- (a) information as to the composition of the Executive Committee thereof and
- (b) a list of the regional councils affiliated thereto, indicating in each case, the
 -
 - (i) budget allocated for 2012, and
 - (ii) clubs which are officially affiliated to each regional council.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am circulating the information regarding the composition of the Executive Committee of the National Youth Council together with the list of regional Councils affiliated thereto as well as the budget allocated for 2012 and the number of clubs affiliated to each regional Council.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre peut-il nous dire quand furent organisées les dernières élections au sein des différents *Regional Youth Councils* et de bien vouloir préciser qui avait la responsabilité de convoquer les clubs à ces élections?

Mr Ritoo: The youth section of my Ministry conducted the election and they are in charge of organising all the elections.

Mr Quirin: Le ministre peut-il nous expliquer pourquoi dans le cas de la région de Flacq, les officiers de son ministère essaient par tous les moyens d'annuler les résultats de ces élections et insistent pour la tenue de nouvelles élections?

Mr Ritoo: This is very unfounded and all the regulations are being followed up.

Mr Roopun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there have been representations made as regards the Flacq Regional Youth Council and whether he is ready to table a copy of the representation made to him in this connection?

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

Mr Quirin: La réponse du ministre concernant justement l'annulation de ces élections ne tient pas debout. C'est carrément de l'ingérence. Cela me fait penser à ce qui s'est passé avec la fédération de natation juste après l'élection de leur exécutif. Quand les petits copains ne sont pas élus, on veut refaire les élections. N'est-il pas temps, M. le président, de revoir toute la structure organisationnelle du *National Youth Council*? Quand je considère injuste le fait que tout le district de Plaine Wilhems ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: L'opinion du membre ne nous concerne pas. Il peut poser la question.

Mr Quirin: N'est-il pas temps, M. le président, de revoir toute la structure organisationnelle du *National Youth Council* car la région de Plaine Wilhems est regroupée sous un seul *Regional Youth Council*? Les régions ne devraient-elles pas être similaires au sport?

Mr Ritoo: M. le président, je ne sais pas pourquoi l'honorable membre s'excite. En tout cas, toutes les formalités ont été suivies et les élections sont organisées d'après les normes.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: La question posée est si le ministre va revoir la structure.

Mr Ritoo: We can review the structure.

Mr Roopun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister what measures he intends to take regarding the election at Flacq Regional Youth Council? There was an

election held there, nine persons were elected and now those persons are being harassed and pressure is being put on them so that new elections are held. In fact, the person who lost...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has been Deputy Speaker, he cannot make a statement. He has put the question as to whether ...

(Interruptions)

Please sit down! The question should be: “are they being harassed and new elections are being proposed?”

Mr Ritoo : There is no harassment, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Roopun: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether new elections are being held?

Mr Ritoo: I have been informed by the Youth Section of my Ministry that the elections were not done in conformity with the regulations and new elections are being held.

Mr Roopun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether his officers were present to ensure that everything be done in order and whether they were the ones who organised it?

Mr Ritoo: Of course, the officers of my Ministry organised the election, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Roopun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister what are the aspects which were not followed by the officers and whether he is going to bring them to order and take measures against them?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have the details of the aspects that are not in order. I can submit a list of the details.

Mr Speaker: We will continue with further supplementary questions, if any, after lunch.

At 12.58 p.m, the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 14.30 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/320, B/332, B/333, B/343 and B/344 have been withdrawn. Is there any further supplementary question?

Mr Roopun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that, for the elections in the region of Flacq, there was initially a closed list of nine members who stood as candidates. It was upon objection from the various clubs that they had to allow other members to stand as candidates. In fact, out of the nine members who initially stood as candidates, only one was elected and eight of those who were not given the opportunity to stand as candidates finally got elected. One of these nine persons, who managed to be elected, stated publicly in the Assembly that he has got contacts and he is going to have all the elections cancelled by his political connection. If there is any problem, I allow my hon. friend to take any point of order, if he wants to.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Roopun, just go ahead with your question and please be as short as possible!

Mr Roopun: Please I do not want to be disturbed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

I do not want to be disturbed, I am...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please! A question is not a pretext for a short speech, so as far as possible, hon. Members should go straight away to their questions. Hon. Member, your question!

Mr Roopun: Yes....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister Bundhoo, it is okay now.

Mr Roopun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not want to be disturbed if, under your protection...

The Deputy Speaker: Do not make a speech!

Mr Roopun: I want the hon. Minister to enlighten the House on why is it that this situation has occurred.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me clarify the situation on how the Flacq Regional Youth Council election was held. In fact, the General Assembly election of the

Flacq Youth Council was scheduled for Saturday 26 May 2012. On that day, the Assembly was informed that only 6 candidates were registered for the election. Some club representatives and office bearers of the outgoing Council alleged that they had not been informed of the holding of the General Assembly and the elections. Consequently, the Assembly accepted the candidature of an additional eight club representatives present and moved for elections. The General Assembly, which has *force de loi*, resolved that interested representatives of clubs present stand as candidates. Therefore, eight members signified their intention to do so. The Assembly agreed that election of the nine candidates be held between the fourteen members who were present. Among the nine elected members, only one came from the six candidates registered initially. Thereafter, a letter was received at the Ministry from one, Mr Jokun, protesting against the proceedings of the Assembly. The Ministry delegated the Principal Youth Officer, the Chairman of the National Youth Council and the Secretary to reconcile both groups so as to have a committee of nine members. All attempts have been fruitless.

So, I am informed that, at its meeting held on 02 June 2012, the National Youth Council decided that fresh elections be held on 30 June.

Mr Roopun: I understand that a letter dated 04 June was sent by the National Youth Council talking about a deadlock which had been reached. Could the hon. Minister explain how is it that, after an election had been held and a team elected, there can be a deadlock?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of any deadlock that might have occurred there, but, from what I have been informed, I understand that they said they did not receive convocation letters to stand as candidates.

Mr Roopun: I take it that the same procedure was being followed in all the District regions. How is it that only Flacq is now being discriminated and it is only in that region that fresh election is being held? If there is a problem about procedure, elections all throughout the island should be reconducted.

Mr Ritoo: As I stated, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the officers of my Ministry and the Chairman of the National Youth Council could not reconcile the members present to come up with a committee of nine members, so they decided to hold fresh elections.

Mr Roopun: The hon. Minister stated that there was a list of clubs which are officially affiliated and this list was circulated. Can I know for the District of Flacq how many clubs were officially registered for this election?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not have the list with me, but I can circulate it later on.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, les élections ont eu lieu le 26 mai sous la supervision des officiers du ministère de la jeunesse et des sports, sous la supervision d'un représentant de l'*Electoral Commission*. Malgré le fait que certains des candidats n'avaient pas reçu de convocation, ils sont tombés d'accord ce jour-là pour que les élections aient lieu. Une équipe a été élue et tout le monde était d'accord. Ma question est: pourquoi, par la suite, les officiers du ministère de la jeunesse et des sports ont voulu et veulent toujours annuler les résultats de ces élections et programmer de nouvelles élections? Je ne comprends pas! Quelle est la raison?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister has answered the question!

Mr Ritoo: I stated it in my reply.

MICROSOFT SOFTWARES - ACQUISITION

(No. B/316) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the acquisition by Government of Microsoft Softwares in 2008, he will state the -

- (a) procedures followed therefor;
- (b) involvement of his Ministry;
- (c) date of the acquisition thereof, and
- (d) total cost thereof.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to follow up my reply to PQ No. 1B/409 on 03 August 2010 from the hon. Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, I wish to re-emphasize in regard to part (a) of the question, that the procedure followed was direct procurement method pursuant to section 25(2)(b) of the Public Procurement Act 2006. As I have also clarified in my reply, this procedure did present itself as the preferred option with due weightage to the fact that almost all our software technologies are based on Microsoft technology.

I am informed that –

- i. the Central Procurement Board raised no objections to Microsoft Ireland Operation Ltd being entrusted with the supply of Microsoft Licences to cover usage of up to 7,000 personal computers during a period of five years. In fact, the CPB granted its official approval under section 25(2) (b) of the Public Procurement Act;
- ii. the State Law Office cleared the signature of the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement advising that the contract is legally in order, and
- iii. the Financial Secretary was duly authorised to sign this agreement inasmuch as it was not the intention of Government not to use Microsoft products at that point in time.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that my Ministry, at that time, as a technical Ministry, was indeed consulted on the technical aspects only. Although my Ministry initially questioned and opposed the number of licences to be acquired, that is 7000, assessing that such a number might not be needed, it was quick to realise that the number might not, after all, be on the high side as subsequent statistics prove. In fact, as at 31 May 2012, the balance remaining out of the 7,000 licences was 318. Therefore, as at 23 May 2010, we used 4,371 leaving 2,629 unused and from May 2010 to May 2012, we are left with only 318 licences.

In regard to part (c) of the question, I confirm that the acquisition date was 27 June 2008, date of signature of the contract.

In regard to part (d) of the question, the cost of the acquisition of the software was USD8,049,426.68, which is approximately Rs233m.

Mr Jugnauth: Is it correct to say that the purpose of this agreement was to regularise Government situation with regard to the operation of those Microsoft licences?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one thing that we have to bear in mind, Government is committed to the development of ICT in Mauritius, and also, aims at making of ICT a main pillar of our economy. In fact, it was more than necessary that we accept those 7,000 licences. Today, we can see by ourselves if those licences were purchased as at date, it could have cost us more than twice the amount paid. So, I can confirm to the House that, as at date, because of its importance; because we

want to make ICT a stronger pillar, we have to adopt new technologies, which can match the required standard.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has not answered my question. Was the object of this agreement to regularise Government situation with regard to those licences? It is a simple question; it is either yes or no.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: I have already answered the question.

Mr Ameer Meea: The Director of Audit has severely criticised the purchase of the 7,000 licences in his report. The hon. Minister stated that almost all the licences have been used only 318 are left, and also, if we had to purchase them today, it would have cost more. Will the hon. Minister agree with me that 7,000 licences have been bought in 2008, that is, four years back and up to now not all of them have been used. There had been no proper planning. We should have bought it as and when the need arises and not bought them in advance and paid them in advance.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have said, it was not a waste of time for having purchased those licences.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. Minister answer!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, those licences have been used. At that point in time, I was not there, it was in 2008 ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: At that time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry was under the impression that, by 2013, it will not be possible - maybe they have wrongly assessed the situation - to use those 7,000 licences. As I have already pointed out, we are left now with only 318 licences. This has given a certain boost up to our industry.

(Interruptions)

If we want to bring new changes, we have to adapt ourselves to new technologies.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Jugnauth!

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Minister agree that the price that we have paid is Rs25,000 per licence whereas, at that time, on the open market, one could get the licence for less than Rs10,000? Will the hon. Minister agree to that?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, I can't understand the position of the hon. Member. Let me refresh his memory. In May 2010, when I took office as Minister of IT, he was then the Minister of Finance. At that time, when the question was put to me by hon. Uteem, I went to see him and I told him that being given that our Ministry was only consulted for the technical issue, I thought it would be in the best interest that he answered the question personally because it is the Minister of Finance who signed the agreement through the Financial Secretary.

Now, do you know what he told me then? He said: everything is in order; you don't have to worry about it because this has taken place in 2008 and he was not responsible.

(Interruptions)

It is not, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a mere fact that this Member...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order please!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: The hon. Member, on this side of the House, has one language and when he is on the other side he chooses another language. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me clear out one thing. The hon. Member left this side of the House...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Allow the hon. Minister to answer his question!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: ... he crossed the floor, he went to six metres only there ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order please! I am on my feet. As far as possible, I have requested the hon. Minister to answer the question in a straight and forward manner. Hon. Anquetil!

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether there are...

(Interruptions)

any benefits from this agreement?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government, as I have said before, is committed to the development of ICT in Mauritius and aims at making ICT a main pillar of our economy.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has asked a question, let the hon. Minister reply. You must listen to the reply that the hon. Minister is giving. Hon. Minister, please go ahead. Have you finished with your answer?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: I have not finished.

The Deputy Speaker: Please go ahead.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: The Microsoft Enterprise Agreement has enabled Government to have a homogeneous package of software of its IT installed base. Microsoft Enterprise creates values by supporting Government in the following fundamentals where, *inter alia*, standardisation of the platform, improvement of the workplace productivity and facilitation of licence software, and version usage tracking during the agreement term thus, reducing the overhead normally associated with ongoing licence administration. Further, the adoption of common IT infrastructure and architecture standards and guidelines by ensuring interoperability and security of existing system with this provision of technology will allow for the following -

- (i) technical standard implementation;
- (ii) publicly infrastructure and secured environment for desktops;
- (iii) centralised management of Government directories;
- (iv) the installed base and optimal maintenance at no cost 24x7 problem resolution support, and
- (v) access to a technical knowledge based through an online website called back up server for disastrous infrastructure.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Labelle, please!

Mr Jugnauth: First of all, I have never said those rubbish that the hon. Minister is saying....

(Interruptions)

Let me ask the hon. Minister a question. Will he table the advice from the SLO where the direct procurement is in order?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member has not understood what I have said, it is just too bad for him. Let me repeat what I have said. I have been informed that the State Law Office cleared the signature of the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement (MEA) advising that the contract is legally in order. I don't have it with me right now, but I am prepared to table it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: I think the hon. Minister has not answered part (d) of the question. Can I ask him the total cost...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please!

Mr Ameer Meea: I think the hon. Minister did not give the answer to part (d) of the question. Can I ask him about the total cost of the project, and also can he tell us how the purchase of 7,000 licences of Microsoft has boosted up the ICT sector?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Il n'y a pas plus aveugle que celui qui ne veut pas voir clair, M. le président. Au juste, quand je suis arrivé à ce ministère ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody! Last question hon. Jugnauth. I allow you two questions; one by one.

Mr Jugnauth: First question. All times his Ministry was consulted, there have been a number of meetings. I am not going into all these meetings. There was a report that was made up by Mr S. Ramgoolam, Project Manager of his Ministry on 18 June 2008, and this report is adamant against signing this contract. Is the hon. Minister aware of the contents of this report whereby there have been a number of arguments and reasons that have been put forward by his Ministry not to go ahead with this contract?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aimée!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, as I have said, we were consulted on the technical aspect of the case, and we gave our views at that point in time. As I already mentioned, the Ministry was under the impression that we did not

need that amount of licences at that time. Here, I am going to reiterate what I have said. If the hon. Member has that report, why, when I called to see him at that time when he was the Minister, he did not point it out to me? Why? It's now that he is seeing it! Shame!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: *Taper couma ban zako, taper! Zot pu koner après! Nek taper meme twa!*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun!

Mr Jugnauth: Is it correct to say that the hon. Prime Minister intervened personally in this matter, and instructed the parties to sign the contract in spite of the fact ...

The Deputy Speaker: Can he afford to answer on behalf of the Prime Minister?

Mr Jugnauth: This is my question! Can I be allowed to put the question?

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: In spite of the fact ...

Dr. Bunwaree: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think the hon. Member is imputing motives. The hon. Prime Minister is not here and I don't think it's fair, I would ask him to rephrase his question!

Mr Jugnauth: I am not imputing motives, and I am going to prove what I am saying!

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to prove ...

The Deputy Speaker: Put your question, please!

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Prime Minister instructed the parties to sign the contract, in spite of the fact that there was no study that had been carried out, there is neither a file at the Ministry of Information and Technology nor even at the Ministry of Finance, and in spite of the fact of the advice tendered which was against the signing of this contract.

The Deputy Speaker: What is your question hon. Jugnauth?

Mr Jugnauth: My question is: did the hon. Prime Minister intervene personally to ask the parties...

The Deputy Speaker: I don't think the hon. Minister can answer for the hon. Prime Minister. Next question, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: Since the hon. Minister has said that I am imputing...

(Interruptions)

...motives, may I table a copy of instructions...

(Interruptions)

... that have been given, and I read.

(Interruptions)

“The hon. Prime Minister has authorised you to sign the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement”.

I table this copy signed by the Secretary to Cabinet.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Hanoomanjee, next question!

(Interruptions)

BASSIN, QUATRE BORNES - POST OFFICE

(No. B/317) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether he will state if he has received a petition from the inhabitants of Bassin, Quatre Bornes, for the setting up of a post office thereat, and if so, if consideration will be given thereto and if not, why not.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Avoid using provocative terms.

(Interruptions)

No, the attitude is not good.

(Interruptions)

I am talking to everyone here. I must remind hon. Members that they must refrain from using provocative terms. This is unparliamentary.

(Interruptions)

It refers to everyone, be it on either side. Unparliamentary words are not correct, and the attitudes also must be positive. Thank you very much. Yes, go ahead please.

(Interruptions)

I am looking everywhere, don't worry about that. If there is any problem, the hon. Member can raise the issue.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, PQ No. B/317.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Post Ltd that a petition was received from the inhabitants of Bassin, Quatre Bornes, for the setting up of a post office in that region.

The request was, however, not entertained by the Mauritius Post Ltd because the criteria for the setting up of a post office were not met, normally -

- (i) distance from the requesting location to the nearest post office, which should not be within the radius of 3 to 5 kms;
- (ii) population density of the locality, and
- (iii) business potentiality and cost-benefits.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Post Ltd has already a full-fledged post office at Quatre Bornes situated next to the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, hence nearer to the numerous agglomerations around including Bassin Road, which offers a wide range of services, from postal to non-postal, including pension and utility bills payments.

Moreover, there is also a postal agency at La Louise still operational, which offers basic postal services.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware whether the distance between Bassin Road, Jawaharlall Nehru Road, right at the end till the Quatre Bornes Post Office, and has this been considered?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I cannot answer directly to what the hon. Member has said. As far as I have been given to understand, the radius must be around 3 to 5 kilometres. I don't know whether from there it makes more

than 3 kilometres or less, but still, as I have said, we have another postal agency at La Louise, which is still operational, offering basic postal services. Anyway, I am going to look into it, and see any other reason why we cannot have one at Bassin.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister say whether he is aware that Bassin is a densely populated village? There is around 8,000 people living in Bassin, and they don't have any transport from Bassin to Quatre Bornes. People have to walk to Quatre Bornes Post Office to get their pension, pay their CEB and CWA bills. Is the hon. Minister aware of this, and can he kindly reconsider ...

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister said that he is going to look into the matter.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: I am going to look into the matter and advise accordingly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhugroo.

**MINISTER OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY -
ADVISERS & PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICERS – CONTRACTUAL BASIS**

(No. B/318) **Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the Advisers and the Public Relations Officers appointed/employed by his Ministry on a contractual basis since May 2010 to date, he will state the names thereof, indicating in each case -

- (a) their qualifications;
- (b) their salaries and terms and conditions of appointment/employment and;
- (c) if they have been granted the use of laptops, and if so, indicate the
 - (i) date of purchase, and
 - (ii) cost thereof.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is presently employing on a contract basis one Senior Adviser on Information and Communication Technology matters, one Adviser on Information matters, and one Public Relations Officer.

Their name, date of employment, qualifications held, salary, and terms and conditions of employment are as follows -

Name	Date of employment	Qualifications held	Salary and terms & conditions of employment
Mr Vasenden DORASAMI Senior Advisor on Information and Communication Technology matters	21 March 2011 Renewed for a further period of one year with effect from 21 March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BSc Computing and Information systems - MBA (Specialisation in Marketing) - Humphrey Research Fellowship – Digital Economy, Michigan State University, USA 	<p><u>Salary</u> : Rs70,000 plus salary compensation</p> <p><u>Travelling</u> : Rs8,480 or Rs5 per km for mileage in excess of 800 km + Rs2880 for official travelling</p> <p><u>Pre-paid Cards</u> : Cellplus pre-paid card to the ceiling of Rs700 monthly</p> <p><u>Other conditions</u> : as per the provisions in the PRB Report 2008</p>
Mrs Priscilla CHINAPIEL- TIRVENGADUM, Adviser on Information Matters	26 November 2010 Renewed for a further period of one year with effect from 26 November 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School Certificate - Higher School Certificate - BA (Hons) French - Diploma Community Welfare, Melbourne, Australia - Undergoing MA in Mass Communication with Specialisation in Journalism 	<p><u>Salary</u> : Rs42,500 monthly</p> <p><u>Travelling</u>: Rs8,480 per month <u>or</u> mileage at the rate of Rs5.00 per km and a fixed car allowance of Rs2,880 monthly</p> <p><u>Pre-paid Cards</u> : Cellplus pre-paid card</p>

Let me table the whole document. This is insofar as the first part of the question is concerned.

Regarding part (c) of the question, Mr Dorasami and Mrs Chinapiel-Tirvengadam have been provided with a laptop each for official purpose. The laptops were purchased on 23 August 2011 at the unit price of Rs28,163.50.

The details of the Advisers and Public Relation Officer in post as well as those who were employed since May 2010 and who are no longer in post were also tabled.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether, on or around 12 August 2011, he had requested his former PS, Mr Pather, to make immediate arrangements for the purchase of two laptops for his Advisers, and one for Mr Mahadoo who is proposed to be recruited as PRO?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have said, Mr Dorasami was appointed on 21 March 2011. He was allocated a Dell notebook on 23 August 2011. It is quite natural for a Ministry, which is involved in Information and Communication Technology, to give its employees the necessary equipment for them to do their work and this has been done on 23 August 2011.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, those computers were underused by the AS at that time, Mrs Kisson-Luckputtya and Mrs Shewraj. He took them from those officers and gave it to my Advisers. This is a second-hand laptop. As you can see for yourself, when those officers came to see me complaining that they don't have the equipment which were given to them by my predecessor. I called the PS to enquire about same. So, I requested that the laptops which were given to the senior officers be returned to them and automatically he has to purchase new laptops for those who have taken office. You cannot ask somebody to come to work at your place and to bring his PC with him.

The Deputy Speaker: The answer is clear, I think!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House why he forcefully suggested to his PS that used laptops and second-hand laptops cannot be given to his Advisers, contrary to the explanations given by his former PS that, as long as the equipment is still serviceable, we should not buy new ones and all these have been recorded?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister has just answered this question.

(Interruptions)

Next question! The hon. Minister has just answered this question!

(Interruptions)

Do you have another question?

Mr Jhugroo: How does he explain ...

The Deputy Speaker: The answer has already been given! There is no need to repeat the question! You go on with the next question, now!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Yes, but why are you getting excited?

The Deputy Speaker: No! You go ahead with your question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: I am doing my job! Let me do my job!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am allowing the hon. Member his supplementary question! He should go straight to the question! Don't waste the time of the House!

Mr Jhugroo: I am doing my job!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: You have got to abide by the rules of the House while you are doing your job!

Mr Jhugroo: I always abide!

The Deputy Speaker: Don't argue with me!

Mr Jhugroo: How do you explain, hon. Minister, that you instructed the purchase of a new laptop for the PRO who was not yet recruited and who was abroad? How do you explain this to the House?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: I don't know where the hon. Member got that information. Either you understand or you don't understand anything! I have given the House the information concerning the recruitment of these officers, and I have already informed the House when they took office and when those laptops were entrusted to them. It's after more than three months that those laptops were entrusted so where do you get these information and try to lose the precious time of the House?

The Deputy Speaker: Next question! Hon. Soodhun!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

I am sorry! You are persistently breaching the order of the House so I am warning you!

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT OFFICE - COMPANIES – TRACK RECORD

(No. B/319) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Public Procurement Office, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Office, information as to if consideration will be given for a review of the list of the companies applying for bids in respect of big projects, taking into consideration their track record in the implementation of projects in other countries.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Public Procurement Act does provide for a mechanism that allows the Procurement Policy Office (PPO) to disqualify or debar any potential bidder or supplier who has defaulted in obtaining or executing any contract in Mauritius or has been convicted for an offence related to dishonesty or fraud in his professional activity. The PPO maintains a list of the currently debarred companies on its website for consultation by Public Bodies, the Central Procurement Board and the public at large.

I also wish to inform the House that the Standard Bidding Documents for Works issued by the PPO contain a clause on eligibility criteria stating that a foreign company that has been debarred by the World Bank, the African Development Bank or any similar financing institution may not be allowed to participate in the bidding process.

In addition, the bidding documents provide for every bidder to disclose its litigation history and whether it has ever been declared ineligible by the Government of Mauritius under the Mauritian laws or official regulations.

Furthermore, to facilitate the CPB and Public Bodies in properly determining eligibility of overseas bidders, the PPO, in addition to the information currently available on its website, is also working on a Directive that will provide further guidance on how to exercise due diligence in this respect. The PPO is also, as part of its usual exercise, upgrading the content of its website to include the links on sources of reference on debarred bidders such as financing agencies and other international organisations.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know that the substantive Minister is not here. Anyway, I thank the hon. Minister.

In fact, is it not the duty of Ministers, who have preferential information, concerning the big company, to inform the PPO about the information? In this august Assembly, Ministers do give information about the contractor who is bidding for the big company. I think it is the duty for the Minister concerned to inform the PPO about any information that they have concerning the reputation of the sand contractor.

Dr. Bunwaree: I will give this information to my colleague and, of course, the technicians are there to look into these matters.

SMALL BUSINESSES - CLOSING DOWN

(No. B/320) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the small businesses, he will state the number thereof which have closed down since 2010 to date, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) sector of activities concerned;
- (b) number of jobs lost, and
- (c) measures taken to help them remain in business.

(Withdrawn)

WASTE WATER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY - SEWERAGE PROJECTS – VARIATION WORKS

(No. B/321) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the sewerage projects, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Waste Water Management Authority, information as to-

- (a) if there are projects where the variation works have exceeded the contract amount;
- (b) if the prior approval of the Central Procurement Board was sought and obtained before approval thereof and payment therefor;

- (c) if any inquiry was set up by his Ministry to look into cases of overpayment and, if not, why not, and
- (d) the cases in which disciplinary actions have been initiated.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are no sewerage projects where variation works have exceeded the contract amount.

Accordingly parts (b) to (d) of the question do not arise.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to contract WW73F, that is, sewerage projects in the region of Plaines Wilhems where, as pointed out by the report of the Director of Audit, overpayments were of the order of 50.3%, that is, an amount of Rs446 m. Can the hon. acting Prime Minister inform the House why, in the case of Baie du Tombeau Sewerage Project where, again, there were overpayments, the Board of the WMA instituted a Fact-Finding Committee to look into cases of overpayment and why in the case of the Plaine Wilhems Sewerage Project no Fact-Finding Committee was instituted?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to point out that the question, as set, applies to more than 100% increase. This is not a 100% increase, but having said that, I would like to draw the attention of hon. Members of the House that the Public Procurement Office considered additional costs to quantities and to additional work.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. Ag Prime Minister to clarify what he has just stated. My question is related to variation works which have exceeded the contract amount.

The Ag. Prime Minister: If the contract amount is X, the variation should be X+1.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. acting Prime Minister to inform the House whether there are cases where the value of the contract has exceeded 20% or 30% of the contract amount?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is quite a different question; I am quite prepared to answer it when it is asked.

(No. B/322) **Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the blackout which occurred on 13 December 2011, he will

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- (a) table copy of the report submitted to his Ministry by the Central Electricity Board, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to -
 - (i) the estimated financial losses incurred by the country as a result thereof;
 - (ii) the remedial measures taken, if any, by the Board to restore electricity supply within the least possible delay in future, and
 - (iii) if the persons responsible for the delay in restoring the electricity supply have been identified and, if so, the actions, if any, taken against them.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a copy of the report.

With regard to part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed by the CEB that the economic loss to the country is estimated at around 0.02% of the Gross Domestic Product. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a very notional figure based on international guidelines.

Concerning part (b) (ii) of my reply to PQ B/19, I informed the House that most of the recommendations made in the report are being implemented. I am also tabling a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations which are essentially aimed at avoiding to the extent possible, breakdowns and reducing delays in the future.

With regard to part (b) (iii), the report does not attribute the responsibility for the delay in restoring electricity supply to any specific person or group of persons.

Mr Bérenger: May I just ask the acting Prime Minister that what is being laid is, of course, a copy *non-censuré*?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Yes, as given to this Ministry.

Mr Lesjongard: I have not seen the report. May I ask the hon. acting Prime Minister why is it not possible to attribute responsibilities to any person or any group of persons for that blackout that occurred on that particular day?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am quoting the report as it has been given, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member has already asked supplementary questions. Does he want to ask a question?

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. acting Prime Minister, at least inform the House whether he has been made aware that, these days, there are frequent long breakdowns occurring to black outs in many regions of the country which are taking long delays of reinstatement of electricity which is due directly to a lack of maintenance? So, taking from what has happened in that particular case and I drew the attention of the hon. acting Prime Minister last time that there is a real problem of maintenance on the lines and transformers where we have frequent breakdowns during the past few weeks.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now that I am informed of this issue, I will look into it, but certainly I have not been given reports of frequent breakdowns taking a long time to repair.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the hon. acting Prime Minister whether he is aware that whenever we have blackout, that is, island wide, there is one officer who is responsible of the control centre whereby all operations are taking place and he is the person who is responsible for restoring supply all throughout the island? Is he not the person responsible in that case?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while he may be managing the problem of blackout, he is certainly not responsible for everything that happens. It takes the time it takes.

SALT CONSUMPTION – STUDY

(No. B/323) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)

asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to salt, he will state if a study has been carried out by his Ministry to ascertain the amount thereof consumed by the local population and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) terms of reference thereof, and
- (b) if the findings thereof indicate a high level of consumption thereof and if so, indicate the measures Government proposes to take in relation thereto.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to inform the House that there is scientific evidence that the amount of salt consumed is an important determinant of blood pressure and hypertension risk. Hypertension, itself, is a leading risk factor of cardiovascular diseases and stroke. In Mauritius, the surveys on non-communicable diseases, which are being conducted almost every five years since 1987, have shown a high prevalence of hypertension in the adult population. The last survey carried out in 2009 revealed a prevalence rate of 38% of hypertension amongst the adults aged 20 to 74 years. Moreover, circulatory diseases, which include heart diseases, strokes and hypertensive diseases, account for 31.1% of all deaths occurred in Mauritius in 2011.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Diabetes Surveillance Project, which is a follow-up of the respondents of the NCD surveys of 1987, 1992 and 1998, revealed that hypertension was responsible for 49.7% of all deaths amongst the surveyed population of almost 10,000 people.

The World Health Organisation recommends salt consumption of less than 5 gramme per person per day. However, from available data it is known that salt consumption in many countries is much more than the recommended amount.

There is also a significant variance both in levels of salt consumption and patterns of consumption between countries. For example, I am informed that, in European and North American countries, the main sources of dietary salts are processed foods, restaurant services and catering whereas in African countries, including Mauritius, the main sources are the salt used in cooking and sauces.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the light of these observations and recommendations, the Ministry decided that a study on salt intake in the Mauritian population be undertaken

at the level of the Ministry with foreign expertise. The study, which was initiated as from mid-May 2012, will provide for the first time baseline data on salt intake in the population. Furthermore, a nutrition survey is also being carried out and this will provide additional qualitative information with regard to salt consumption in Mauritius. I wish to remind the House here that both surveys are being carried out simultaneously. This will enable my Ministry to develop an evidence-based strategy about national salt consumption.

As regards part (a) of the question, I wish to point out that the protocol for the salt-intake study was prepared by my Ministry in consultation with the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute of Australia, the National Public Health Institute of Finland and the Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism of Newcastle, England. Working sessions were also held with the University of Mauritius.

Based on the expert advice of these international institutions, the study is being carried out using a single 24-hour urine collection method, being given that the 24-hour sodium excretion is considered the 'gold standard' method to estimate sodium intake. The study is being conducted on a sample size of 200 respondents aged 30 to 59 years in 10 clusters, representing well-demarcated geographical regions defined by the Central Statistics Office of Mauritius.

Concerning part (b) of the question, a preliminary report of the findings of the study will be available by the end of August 2012. The findings of the report will then be disseminated widely, in particular, amongst all stakeholders concerned. It will also be posted on the website of the Ministry.

As regards measures which my Ministry will take in relation to the findings, allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to highlight that reducing salt consumption in the population is considered as the 'best-buy' to improve health conditions of the community at large with hardly any investment. In this respect, the WHO recommends policies to reduce dietary salt intake to be implemented under three main areas, namely –

- (i) food production, that is, the development of manufacturing of products with the lowest possible content of salt;
- (ii) changes in an environment to ensure that consumers are able to choose the healthiest food through appropriate labelling, and

- (iii) health promotion and consumer education amongst the different target groups of society.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry had approached the World Health Organisation for support in the elaboration of a national programme on salt consumption. This includes the setting up of a realistic goal for reducing population salt intake, the formulation of a public awareness campaign on the recommended 5 grammes per day message about salt consumption and the development of a multisectoral and multi-stakeholder strategy to achieve population salt consumption reduction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am also pleased to inform the House that the World Health Organisation will organise a workshop in Mauritius on salt reduction strategies from 25 to 27 June 2012 for 10 Anglophone countries in the World Health African region. This workshop will enable my Ministry to elaborate a National Framework for effective population-based prevention strategies for salt reduction.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened to the terms of reference of the study. May I know from the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has considered existing regulations controlling the use of salt, setting standards for the use of salt in processed foods, in particular, the snacks consumed by our children and young people with reference to EU standards?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is precisely because we are aware of the problem that we have, *comme on dit en français, commanditer un rapport* and secondly, we are holding the Anglophone countries meeting under the aegis of the World Health Organisation in order to assist the Government of Mauritius, in particular, the Ministry of Health, to formulate a strategy with regard to the consumption or the input of salt in processed foodstuff that is being consumed by schoolchildren, adults and the population at large.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the Minister for providing us useful information on salt consumption, and I understand that he is waiting the findings of that report to act on salt consumption in Mauritius. Is the hon. Minister aware that when he talks in terms of 5 grammes per day, that may mean something to part of the population, but the grass roots level population does not understand what 5 grammes of salt mean. Can he take cognizance of this and try to remedy the situation when he

addresses the grass roots level population, to state in spoonfuls rather so that the message gets across to the grass roots level population? Can he consider this pending the findings of the report?

Mr Bundhoo: I shall.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether low-salt is being used instead of natural salt for the preparation of foods for our patients in hospitals?

Mr Bundhoo: I am not in a position to say exactly what is the quality of salt that is being used in hospitals but I will surely convey to the study team to look into this issue also.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, beyond the reports coming from experts from all over the world, can the hon. Minister illuminate my *méninges* and tell me how much salt is actually consumed per family in the shopping basket? Something simple!

Mr Bundhoo: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have got the reply with me. I am being very honest to the House. I had it with me. I am not so convinced about it, because there is no scientific evidence to actually say how much is being consumed in a family, therefore, I don't think it is proper for me to say it at this stage. This is precisely why we have requested, under the supervision of World Health Organisation, to do a study so as to determine in a more scientific manner the number of grammes being consumed in Mauritius per person.

The Deputy Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has got a question?

Mr Bérenger: I wanted to ask the hon. Minister - *il y a sel et sel*. Has any study been carried out on the impact of imported salt on health as compared to locally produced salt?

Mr Bundhoo: I am sure the study will also look into this issue. If I am not mistaken, this was raised by hon. Jhugroo too.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I asked for the terms of reference and we were told that there will be a survey of the sodium intake measured by urine samples within 24 hours. Now, the point raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not within the terms of reference. My earlier suggestion that we should have a comparatively study of regulations pertaining to use of salt in food preparation, processed foods, snacks, compared to what the European Union does, I am suggesting to the hon. Minister that

these points being raised by the Opposition should be taken on board whether within that one single study or to commission further studies.

Mr Bundhoo: Can I, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the benefit of the House, repeat just a few lines of the last sentences I said before.

I am also pleased to inform the House that the World Health Organisation will organise a workshop in Mauritius on salt reduction strategies next week from 25 to 27 of June 2012 for ten Anglophone countries in the WHO Africa region. This workshop will enable my Ministry to elaborate a national framework for effective population-based prevention strategies of salt reductions for the islands of Rodrigues, Mauritius and the outer islands.

Mrs Bholah: Does not the hon. Minister think that, each time, a general survey is carried out with people with no background of any disease, the outcome is poor and such result is lost in the drawer. What measures are taken towards a high risk of cardiac and hypertensive patients? What is being done?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the situation we are living in the country at the moment precisely because of the problem of hypertension, cardiovascular disease. We agreed that we are consuming a high level of salt; we are conducting an inquiry. Now, the hon. Member is telling me: are we going to put it in the drawer? I have just answered to the question raised by hon. Obeegadoo. Next week, the World Health Organisation will conduct a workshop for 10 Anglophone countries. She, herself, being a dietician, I will be more than pleased to submit for her own attention a copy of the recommendations of the World Health Organisation workshop for Anglophone countries. In Mauritius, she can publicise it with her picture in the Sunday newspaper.

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said he is not convinced about the figure that he got about the consumption per capita of salt in the country. Can the hon. Minister enlighten the House as to whether that figure could come, as a rough ball path figure for the consumption per capita of salt in Mauritius, from the Ministry of Commerce to see how much salt is sold in Mauritius and just divide by the number of adult population, as a rough idea of what the consumption per capita is?

Mr Bundhoo: In fact, this is exactly the methodology that has been used. The Leader of the Opposition got it right. It was to do with local consumption, importation and local manufacturing and they divided it by 1.3 million, but this is precisely what I did not want to divulge to the House until such time the study is carried out.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question hon. Labelle!

AUTISTIC CHILDREN - EDUCATION

(No. B/324) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the autistic children, he will state if –

- (a) a survey has been carried out to assess the number thereof who attend an educational or a specialized institution, and
- (b) his Ministry has initiated or is contemplating to initiate any measure for the education thereof.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, despite the limited resources presently available to identify children with autism, preliminary surveys have been conducted in all pre-primary schools by the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCA) in January/February 2012 and by my Ministry in all primary, secondary and Special Education Needs schools in April and May 2012 to assess the number of children with autism attending educational institutions.

The results obtained indicate that some 172 children with autism are currently in schools as follows –

<u>Number</u>	<u>Type of Schools</u>
15	pre-primary schools
15	integrated units in primary schools
6	mainstream, primary schools
136	SEN schools run by NGOs.

Figures for secondary schools are still being compiled.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is now proposed to undertake a comprehensive survey with the collaboration of stakeholder ministries and NGOs to have a full profiling of

children with autism. Such information will serve to guide policy formulation and affirmative action in the best interests of these children.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the education of children with autism is high on the agenda of my Ministry and the following actions have been initiated to cater for the specific individual and educational needs of these children and also to support work being done by Autisme Maurice and other NGOs and stakeholders engaged in this area –

(i) **Setting up of Integrated Units for Autism**

An Integrated unit for autistic children has been set up since 30 April 2012 at Henry Buswell Government School in collaboration with Autisme Maurice. My Ministry has provided space, furniture and the services of one Educator to facilitate the running of the school. Some five children are presently attending the school.

With a view to increasing and improving access, Integrated Units will be opened in other parts of the country depending on needs identified by the survey. By the end of this month, another Integrated Unit will be operational at Gopeechand Chuttur Government School, Ecroignard and will be admitting some six children in that region.

(ii) **Special Education Needs Development Resource Centre (SENDRC)**

My Ministry will be setting up three Resource Centres - one at Ferney, one at Colonel Maingard, Beau Bassin and one at Plaine des Papayes. These centres will be staffed by a multi-disciplinary team including professionals such as Speech Therapist/Audiologist, Occupational Therapist, Educational Psychologist and Educational Social Workers and will provide a range of services including assessment works, sessions with children and families, therapeutic services, capacity building, parenting and counselling programmes.

(iii) **Special Admission Exercise**

Since 2010, my Ministry has conducted and is conducting a special admission exercise to register children with special needs. During this year's exercise, some 59 children including two with autism have been

registered and these two children with autism have been directed to a private pre-primary school.

(iv) **Monitoring Team**

A special monitoring team has been set up at the Ministry to work together with NGOs in identifying children with Special Education Needs and facilitating their admission to schools that can best respond to their specific needs.

(v) **Appropriate Curriculum and Pedagogy**

Since July 2011, the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) is running a Teacher Training Programme whereby teachers, working in specialised schools, learn to adjust and adapt the curriculum according to the cognitive developmental level of children with autism. Teachers are also trained to develop an individual Education Plan for each child and to make use of appropriate assistive devices to respond to the unique needs of learners with autism, as well as children with other Special Education Needs. This first batch of 18 teachers will be graduating from the MIE in December this year.

(vi) **Parental Support**

With a view to engaging the full participation of parents as partners and enabling them to play an effective role in the education process of the child with autism, parenting programmes including meetings and working sessions are being organised by my ministry and the ECCEA.

Furthermore, the SEN unit of my Ministry and the ECCEA are maintaining regular contacts with individual parents and providing dedicated support and guidance as appropriate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, given the specificity of the SEN sector, my Ministry is working with development partners and friendly countries, on a bilateral cooperation basis, to tap expertise in the field and to enhance the local capacity in implementing Special Education Needs programmes. In this connection, collaboration is already under way with the UNDP and the European Union to professionalise the SEN sector with

focus on the development of appropriate curriculum and pedagogy, capacity building, setting up of a regulatory framework and also provision of technical support and services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the limited resources at our disposal presently and in collaboration with various stakeholders, whom I would like to thank wholeheartedly here, my Ministry has started making some headway in meeting the education needs of children with autism and will sustain its efforts in that direction.

Mrs Labelle: The hon. Minister has mentioned that a comprehensive survey will be carried out, I think, in the near future. There will be a Diagnosis and Evaluation Centre which will be open by Autism Maurice very soon. Will they be carried by this organisation through the centre or will it be a separate survey that his Ministry is contemplating to have?

Dr. Bunwaree: It would be a separate survey, but Autism Maurice also will be on board. Whatever they are doing will be taken on board and we are working with, as I said, international experts because I must say that we lack some capacity in this field.

Ms Deerpalsing: In his reply, the hon. Minister has mentioned the recruitment of speech therapists and audiologists. Is the hon. Minister aware that before, as per the PRB, they used to recruit people with the two together whereas now worldwide these are two separate disciplines and people do no more speech therapy and audiology in the same field. Can the hon. Minister see to it that the job description is changed so that we can have specific disciplines instead of having a job description that calls for audiologists and speech therapists together?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, of course, we have taken that on board.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to Government Programme, there is supposed to be a Child Health Passport and the hon. Minister has mentioned that children are identified and sent to the Special Needs Education Institution. Can the hon. Minister inform the House at what age they are identified presently and whether, with what has been announced in the Government Programme, there will be a change in the process of identification in the light of the Child Health Passport?

Dr. Bunwaree: The question of identification starts as soon as they come to school, that is, at the age of 3, but *il y en a qui passent*, because you may have a *forme fruste, comme on dit*, which we have not discovered. The comprehensive study will take

care of all this. The obligatory school age is 5, but will soon be 3. Since last year or the year before we invited parents, with children having handicaps, to come forward - not to believe on what they feel that the child cannot go to school - to us and register the child at the level of the school draining the area. This has been done and it is in this way that we have discovered about 59 cases, including two of autism this year.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister must be aware that we spent billions going to Mars or inventing nuclear weapons, but autism is still internationally an unknown territory unfortunately. Can I know what international expertise we have benefitted from to date and which international expertise we expect to benefit from in the near future?

Dr. Bunwaree: In fact, there are some countries which are doing very well and we are working with them. The UNDP, itself, has got a very good organisation and we are going to tap the services of these organisations. Of course, we have also some experts in the matter. Maybe the system did not exist in Mauritius this is why I appeal to all to help us to continue in this direction because, with the limited means we have, we have started a breakthrough in this question of autism.

Mr Bérenger: Does the hon. Minister have any idea or otherwise of the percentage of children population that can be placed in that category of autistic children?

Dr. Bunwaree: I have given the figure of 172. This is on the whole population of preprimary and primary students. The percentage is very little, but still, these children must be taken care of because they can do marvels if they are well educated.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned the scarcity of resources, which is rightly so. Actually, there are, at least, 72 teachers who have been trained by Autisme Maurice. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will consider using these teachers and what support will he be giving to Autisme Maurice, for example, for the next coming of the centre in 2012? Is the hon. Minister contemplating giving support to this organisation that, he has himself said, is doing a good job in the meantime?

Dr. Bunwaree: *Le travail a été très, très pris. Je dois assurer l'honorable membre, avec Autisme Maurice, doing a marvelous job, I must say. In fact, as I mentioned in my reply, le 30 avril dernier, we started the first integrated unit of autistic children in primary schools and it is with the help of Autisme Maurice. We have given*

the infrastructure, we have given the services of one educator to help them, but they are doing the work, in fact. In other centres that we are going to open, it will be with them, and of course, other NGOs which could prove themselves in the field.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Obeegadoo!

Mr Obeegadoo: Can I ask two in one, Sir? The initiatives announced by the Minister are most welcome. My question is: who at the Ministry coordinates? In the past, there used to be a Special Education Needs Unit headed by Cyril Dalais, Gilbert Chung. I would like to know whether such units still exist, who leads, who staffs that unit? Secondly, the point of early screening raised by hon. Ms Deerpalsing is of fundamental importance. In the past, we used to produce Special Educational Needs Coordinators at the MIE, is this still the case?

Dr. Bunwaree: I think I have already replied to the question in different ways. This Special Education Needs Unit is there and has been reinforced. In fact, I won't say I am heading it myself, but I can assure the hon. Member that I give all the possibilities of my actions to this special unit because I am so much attached to the progress that has to be accomplished in that sense. New people have worked and are working in very close collaboration with experts from NGOs existing in Mauritius and also with experts from abroad.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, right now the education of autistic children rests with NGOs. The hon. Minister has said that it is high on the agenda of his Ministry, but right now the Ministry is collaborating, is helping the NGOs to cater for the education of autistic children. My question is: will the hon. Minister consider reverting the situation, that is, that the Ministry takes care of the education of autistic children helped by NGOs and not vice-versa?

Dr. Bunwaree: *J'espère que l'honorable membre ne décourage pas parce que c'est exactement cela que j'ai dit.* I have given a list of things that we are doing. In fact, we have started for the first time, *il y a deux ou trois semaines, deux mois* with the Integrated Units in primary schools concerning these children. I do not want to reply about the setting up of integrated units, the special education needs...

The Deputy Speaker: The answer has been replied already.

Dr. Bunwaree:...resource centre, the special admission exercise...

The Deputy Speaker: It is okay. Hon. Minister, I think there is no need to repeat the answers. Next question! Hon. Ramano!

QUATRE BORNES – MARKET – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/325) **Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a new market in Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to where matters stand, indicating –

- (a) the budget earmarked therefor, and
- (b) if any feasibility study has been carried out in relation thereto, and if so, the outcome thereof.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that an amount of Rs16.7 m. is available in the budget of the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes for the construction of the new market.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that, as at date, no feasibility study has been carried out in respect of the project.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, puis-je savoir du ministre quel est le site qui a été identifié pour la construction d'un nouveau marché ?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the very beginning, it was question to have the Candos stadium site. In the meantime, I mean a few months ago, Government decided to set up a committee chaired by the Minister of Infrastructure, hon. Bachoo; hon. Ms Deerpalsing and the Minister of Finance to look for a proper site with all infrastructure for the market place.

Mr Ramano: Je voudrais savoir quel site a été identifié.

Mr Aimée: Not yet chosen, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, dans la question parlementaire A/58, le ministre nous informe –

"The council will soon launch an expression of interest for a feasibility study for the project."

Peut-on savoir du ministre si le *feasibility study* a été lancé ?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said before, the proper site for the market of Quatre Bornes has not yet been chosen so there is no feasibility study at that point.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding the committee that the hon. Minister has set up to look into the site issue, will he not be better informed after the committee had done its feasibility study and chosen a site?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to have a proper feasibility study, first of all, you must have the site and see whether it would be a proper place for the infrastructure, particularly, on the RDA side and the other stakeholders. They are dealing actually with officers of different Ministries among which the Ministry of Housing and Lands also. We have to find a site, know its price whether it would be a compulsory acquisition or Government land, then we can decide about the feasibility study.

Mr Bérenger: We are told that no site has been identified, we are told that there has been no feasibility study and I did not hear anything about plans for a feasibility study, but we are also told that some Rs16m. or Rs17 m. are available. Of course, it's peanuts for setting up a modern market. Can I know for how many years that sum has been lying there?

Mr Aimée: Since the last Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Ramano!

Mr Ramano: A une réponse parlementaire B/287, le ministre a aussi fait mention qu'une somme de R 30 m. a été *earmarked* du *Public Infrastructure Fund*, est-ce que je pourrais savoir du ministre si le fonds est toujours disponible pour le marché de Quatre Bornes ?

Mr Aimée: Funds were earmarked in the Public Infrastructure Fund, but, in the meantime, I have been ordered to use the funds for another purpose of developing. Still, we have got Rs16 m. for this project earmarked in the Budget of 2011.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF QUATRE BORNES – FILM PREPARATION - TENDERS

(No. B/326) **Mr K. Ramano** (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to

the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to if tenders have been launched for the preparation of a film in relation to Quatre Bornes and, if so, indicate the -

- (a) name of the successful bidder;
- (b) cost thereof, and
- (c) proposed content thereof.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes that a direct procurement method was used for the production of a corporate film on the Municipal Council.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that a proposal was received from the Mauritius Film Development Corporation in this respect at the tune of Rs150,000, and same was accepted by the Council.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, I am informed that the cost comprises of the production cost of Rs150,000, and payment for the hiring of an helicopter from Air Mauritius for one hour aerial shooting at the cost of Rs50,674.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed that the proposed film which will be entitled in English and French will -

- (i) serve as a better communication tool to disseminate information not only to inhabitants of the town, but will be used as an instrument in international forums, twinning activities;
- (ii) create better awareness of the town and its evolution since its creation, as well as the different phases of its development;
- (iii) help in providing an insight to international visitors on the multifaceted aspects of the town;
- (iv) portray the essential services provided by the Council for maintaining a sound and healthy living environment within the areas under its jurisdiction, and
- (v) highlight the main activities/projects undertaken since 2005.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, est-ce que l'honorable ministre peut nous dire si, sous prétexte de la production du film, un hélicoptère a été loué par les conseillers pour

une tournée survolant la ville alors que cela n'est pas en conformité avec la production du film?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I regret, I can't answer that question.

(Interruptions)

I was not in the helicopter!

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from information I have received from the Town Council, they have hired a helicopter. I don't know who was in the helicopter at that time. Still, what I can say to the hon. Member is that the decision for the film and the decision to hire a helicopter rested upon the Council - local authorities.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister table later on the names of the Municipal Councillors who went for a *balade dans les hauts* in the hired helicopter of Air Mauritius?

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it would be good if the hon. Minister could let the House and the population know how much the Municipal Council has been paid for hiring that trip.

Mr Aimée: Rs50,724.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Minister find it normal that the production of the film is Rs150,000, and now the cost of the helicopter is Rs50,000? How does he reconcile the fact that, for such a small amount, there was need to hire a helicopter and *aller en balade en jet privé comme le Maire de Vacoas/Phoenix*?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not prepared to answer this question.

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Minister say whether the Mayor and the Councillors will be using this film as an instrument to promote the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes on the international fora, as I have just heard?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: This is what the hon. Minister said.

Mr Jugnauth: Yes. I want to know whether the Councillors and the Mayor will be doing that to promote...

The Deputy Speaker: This has been commissioned by the Council itself.

Mr Aimée: This is what I said before, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It will rather be in an international forum or when people will come to Mauritius for twinning activities where they will have the opportunity to see the film.

**FOOD SECURITY FUND & AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION
UNIT - MR N. A. - FUNDS**

(No. B/327) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to Mr N. A., Mayor of the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Food Security Fund and from the Agricultural Research and Extension Unit respectively, information as to if it has advanced funds thereto and, if so, indicate -

- (a) when;
- (b) the quantum thereof;
- (c) the purpose therefor, and
- (d) the conditions attached thereto.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I am informed that, on 12 November 2010, the Food Security Fund, upon technical recommendation of AREU, approved a project submitted by Mr N. A. Subsequently, in August 2011, the DBM disbursed a loan of Rs500,000 and a grant of Rs500,000, after carrying out a financial appraisal on the viability of the project.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the project consists of the purchase of goats of improved breed under a specific scheme set up to boost up the livestock sector within the Food Security Programme.

With regard to part (d) of the question, I am tabling the requested information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the said person, Mr N. A, Mayor of Vacoas/Phoenix, has also benefited, through another company of which he is a shareholder, the same facility for the purchase of goats?

Mr Faugoo: Not to my knowledge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, from information I have received, he had applied for several projects: one was for the purchase

of goats; second one was for the renovation of his farm, and third for the purchase of equipment. Though the Food Security Fund had approved the other two projects, and both projects were again approved by DBM for the loan to be taken by him, he has not taken the loan so far. With regard to the question of benefiting under another company, this is to his knowledge; I am not aware of this. Officially, as I said, there is only one loan which has been taken by him. There are two loans which have been approved by the DBM; they are still pending, he has not taken advantage of them.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister enquire and let us have details? Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there has been a follow-up on that project by the AREU or the Food Security Fund at the level of his Ministry? Recently, we were told that there was fire in his go-down, and all the goats had been lost. What will happen to the money given to him?

Mr Faugoo: He has not made any declaration officially for any alleged fire which has taken place there. I am aware that the project is being followed up by AREU, and he has complied with all the conditions stipulated in the contract.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given of such a project where he is taking a loan from the DBM, is the hon. Minister aware whether he owes the CEB a sum to the tune of Rs70,000?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister cannot answer this question. Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just stated that he has not been made aware of this question of fire which was largely advertised in the press and the guy, himself, was weeping. Can the hon. Minister inform the House how come that public money is being given for somebody with a political backing to purchase goats and ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Faugoo: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member is casting aspersion on a person who has legally contracted a loan, which has been approved by Government. It is not any political favour done to anybody, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

This is what he said!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, go ahead with your question, please!

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, it is true that he is a member of your party. So, there is nothing to hide. Everyone knows...

(Interruptions)

What will happen...

(Interruptions)

Ki tapaz to pe fer, to mem tonn donn mwa sa question la pou poser!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden! Hon. Assirvaden!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Hein, pas menace mwa twa hein...*

(Interruptions)

Baisse to la main, baisse to la main!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, I am on my feet, please sit down!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Patrick Assirvaden!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Assirvaden! Please be careful! Go ahead, hon. Member!

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, I am asking the hon. Minister - it is public money - whether he will see with the Police and order an inquiry on that particular case?

Mr Faugoo: Sir, we look into a case when it has been reported. I understand...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Allow the Minister to answer the question, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Faugoo: The farm of this particular guy is a model farm which can be used as a showcase for small breeders. My friend, hon. Soodhun, can confirm; it is in his Constituency, he attended one of the functions. He spoke on that day and he was so appreciative for the project.

(Interruptions)

He can tell the hon. Member...

(Interruptions)

The guy - *quand ti amenn bouc ek cabris, nou pas ti ensam?*

(Interruptions)

He was present and he was very happy. I am satisfied, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am saying that I have got reports from AREU where there is no breach of any condition. The hon. Member is talking of fire, what I have heard is that he has reported a case of theft, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for which an enquiry is being carried out by the Police because it is a criminal offence.

CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY - LEGAL ADVISERS

(No. B/328) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Water Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the names of the legal advisers whose services have been retained thereat, since 2005 to date, indicating in each case –

- (a) when their services were retained, and
- (b) the total amount of money paid out as fees on a yearly basis.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the information sought by the hon. Member.

GOVERNMENT FIRE SERVICES - SHOES & UNIFORMS

(No. B/329) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Government Fire Services, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain, therefrom, information as to if the officers thereof have made representations to the effect that they

have not been regularly issued with shoes and uniforms in the recent past, thus causing hardships thereto and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor and, if same will be remedied.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Fire Services Department that there have been representations to the fact that, in a recent past, officers have not been issued with some items of uniforms.

The reason for which uniforms were not issued was due to lack of responsive bids which was beyond the control of the Fire Services Department. Consequently, from 2009-2011, some items of uniforms were not issued to the officers.

Remedial measures have already been taken by the Fire Services Department. New procurement exercises were conducted and I am informed that most of the items are now being issued such as gabardine trousers white short-sleeve shirts, polo shirts, leather belts, cardigans, raincoats, black nylon ties, light leather shoes for officers, light leather shoes for fire-fighters, black leather boots, fire-fighters boots and caps. As regards the supply of blue serge uniforms, the contract has been awarded and the supplier is presently taking measurements.

Mr Seeruttun: Surely, the hon. Minister will agree with me that for the fire-fighters to be more efficient in their work, they need to be properly and physically fit. Is he aware that, for the last three years, no training shoes were supplied to them? They have not been trained properly to conduct their job in an efficient manner.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I very often visit the fire fighter barracks and I have never seen somebody without shoes or with broken shoes, even the training shoes. I am not aware that there is a problem of shoes although they have not been able to have the procurement exercise carried out in time. Still, I must say, I have been visiting – even looking at the *dortoirs* or lockers - and I have seen that they have got uniforms, shoes, training shoes and all the items.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister, since the bid has not been responsive; from 2009 up to now 2012 how many bids there have been?

Mr Aimée: Exactly, I do not know. I know that recently, about 5 to 6 months, they have carried out a tender exercise and they got all the items that I just mentioned in my reply.

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président, l'honorable ministre doit savoir qu'il y a toujours à Maurice des maisons et des bâtiments qui sont construits avec de l'amiante et bien souvent les pompiers sont appelés à intervenir, en cas d'incendie, dans les maisons ou bâtiments où il y a de l'amiante. Est-ce que les pompiers ont des équipements protecteurs pour les protéger en cas d'exposition à l'amiante ?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would suggest the hon. Member to come with a substantive question then I will answer.

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président, il y a eu un cas récemment à Vieux Grand Port, où une maison a été incendiée dont il y avait la présence de l'amiante. J'aurais aimé savoir si l'honorable ministre est au courant de ce cas.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question put here is not about fire breaking in any place. It is a question of shoes, dresses and any other item, but not of fire breaking. The hon. Member should come with a substantive question and I am going to reply to him.

Mr Jugnauth: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether new tenders have been launched or are going to be launched?

Mr Aimée: I have already answered that new tenders were launched on 25 October 2011.

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU – OFFICERS

(No. B/330) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Citizens Advice Bureau, he will state who are the officers posted on a permanent basis thereat, indicating –

- (a) their role and duties, and
- (b) to whom are they accountable.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, officers of the following grades are posted on a permanent basis at the Citizens Advice Bureaux –

(i) Regional Development Officer

Their role and duties are, *inter alia*, to prepare development plans for specific areas according to approved specifications and to coordinate activities of Government and Non-Government agencies for an integrated national development programme.

(ii) Assistant Regional Development Officer

Their role and duties are, *inter alia*, to assist in the preparation of development plans for improvement according to approved specifications.

(iii) Citizens Advice Bureaux Organiser

Their role and duties are, *inter alia* –

1. to provide necessary information, advice and guidance to enquirers, and
2. to register complaints/suggestions from members of the public and to liaise with relevant authorities

(iv) Word Processing Officer

Their role and duties are, *inter alia*, to perform word processing and simple computer/data processing works and to provide assistance to officers posted at the CAB.

As regards part (b) of the question, all these officers are accountable to the Permanent Secretary through their hierarchical superiors.

Mr Seeruttun: Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House whether it is a current practice for nominees of Ministers to be based at that office?

Mr Bachoo: Normally, only these officers are entitled and authorised to work in those CAB offices.

Mr Seeruttun: Are they authorised to work on a full-time basis in these offices?

Mr Bachoo: These are officers who are working on a full-time basis. I am not aware of anybody, of any nominee...

(Interruptions)

Well, as far as nominees of politicians are concerned, this is not allowed.

Mr Seeruttun: Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House whether he is aware that there is one PRO of a Minister in Constituency No.11 who is based there on a full-time basis every day of the week?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware, but I will see to it that this is not done.

MOTORCYCLE RACING – TRACK – SETTING UP

(No. B/331) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to motorcycle racing, he will state if consideration will be given for the setting up of a dedicated track therefor and if so, when and if not, why not.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that there is presently no dedicated track for motorcycle racing in Mauritius. However, upon several requests made from my colleague, the hon. Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations who was accompanied with certain clubs and pending the construction of the National Institute of Sports, the facilities of the parking space at Anjalay Stadium at Belle Vue are being made available to motorcycle racers.

Motorcycle Racing Organisations do make their own elementary arrangements to improve safety during races and carting on the parking space.

I am informed that the Driver Education and Training Centre, which will be set up by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, will also provide facilities for motor racing events over a surface area of 25 acres.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister should be aware that, in Mauritius, there are many illegal racings taking place on our roads to the reason that they don't have a professional track to do that sport. Very often, the motor racing has been a fatal one. Many motorcyclists have lost their life because there is no dedicated track for this sport. May I make an appeal to the hon. Minister to take this into consideration and to provide the people who are doing this sport with a proper track as soon as possible? I know that it is not a simple thing, but it should be budgeted in the next Budget.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am totally aware of the situation of the motorcycling discipline that is why I stated in my answer that, pending proper facilities, the parking space at the Anjalay Stadium is made available.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, deux anciens présidents de la fédération des motocyclistes, Valery Murat et Gervais Antoine, avaient soumis un projet en 2007 au ministère de la jeunesse et des sports, probablement au prédécesseur de l'honorable Ritoo, pour l'aménagement d'un vrai circuit sur le parking du stade Anjalay. Peut-on savoir pourquoi ce projet n'a jamais été pris en considération?

Mr Ritoo: The federation said 'does exist', Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It only exists on paper and they have never come up with any programme or any competition that's why, I think, the project has remained with the Ministry. Anyway, as I stated in my answer, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping is coming up with a Driver Education and Training Centre somewhere in Highlands where there will be a surface area of 25 acres provided for the motor racing events.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Peut-on savoir, M. le président, quelles sont les conditions qui sont attachées à l'allocation du parking du stade Anjalay aux organisateurs de la dernière compétition de motocyclisme?

Mr Ritoo: It has been given free, but the organisers have to take their own responsibility regarding safety arrangements of the parking space during races and carting of the space.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ Nos B/345 and B/346 have been withdrawn.

CARRÉ D'AS, LA PRENEUSE - HOUSE PLAN

(No. B/332) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether he will state if he has received any representation from the inhabitants of Carré d'As, La Preneuse, proposing the setting up of a house plan for the relocation thereof and, if so, indicate the measures taken, if any, in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

BAMBOUS & BEL OMBRE - YOUTH CENTRES

(No. B/333) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of Youth Centres for the regions of Bambous and Bel Ombre, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

CITY AND GUILDS EXAMINATIONS – PRIVATE STUDENTS

(No. B/334) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the City and Guilds Examinations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to if, as from 2013, private students will be required to enrol in a training centre or institution to be authorised to sit therefor and, if so, indicate the reasons.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ No. B/919 made on 06 December 2011, I highlighted the problem related to the City and Guilds Examinations whereby the Theory component taken by private candidates, on its own, without practical components, was not being recognised by the UK Regulatory Authority known as the Office of Qualifications (Ofqual). I also added that the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA), which is the regulatory authority for technical, vocational and educational training, decided in 2009, that qualifications not recognised in the country of origin of an international awarding body would also not be recognised in Mauritius.

In 2011, the City and Guilds informed that they would no longer conduct the Theory Route Qualifications taken alone as from December 2011 examinations.

In order not to penalise the candidates already enrolled on the City and Guilds Theory Routes Qualifications, a moratorium period up to December 2011 was granted which was further extended to June 2012 and recently to December 2012. In the meantime, the MES was requested to ensure that all new candidates for the City and

Guilds course be enrolled for Applied Route for the qualifications to be recognised and accredited by Ofqual and the MQA.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, discussions are underway for students to take the Theory examination with MES and the Practical Assessment Component with the MITD. As from December 2012, the MITD is expected to offer the Theory and Practical Assessment components.

I wish to inform the House that, as from January 2013, to ensure quality of learning, all potential candidates willing to obtain a recognised qualification from the City and Guilds of London Institute will be required to enrol in an approved registered training institution to follow the full qualification and sit for examination conducted by the MES.

My Ministry, the MQA, the MITD and the MES will facilitate the process.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to consider the cases of people who are already working in an enterprise, but who wish to upgrade their qualifications and, in so doing, gain an increment in their salaries. Can these people be taken into consideration and allowed to proceed in the normal track, that is, sit for the examination be it at the MES or at the MITD? Can they do so without having to be enrolled in certain institutions because it is costly to them?

Dr. Bunwaree: Of course, as I said, the MITD is going to run the courses and they can enrol with the MITD, at least.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question that I was trying to put to the hon. Minister is that some people are already working and, therefore, it is difficult for them to get enrolled in an institution and then sit for the exams. So, for these people who are already in service, can they sit for the exams without having to be enrolled in any institution?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, but they will have to undergo the practical session and pass in part of the examination as well. Well, we are going to see in what way we can arrange for them.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy 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 Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

MICROSOFT ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT

The Minister of Information and Communication Technology (Mr T. Pillay Chedumbrum): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to make a statement following what hon. Jugnauth just mentioned.

I have perused the document tabled by hon. Jugnauth in connection with Parliamentary Question No. B/316 in support of his question as to whether the hon. Prime Minister intervened personally in the signature of the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement.

In fact, the document tabled is an authorisation given under section 33(2) of the Interpretation and General Clauses Act as clearly spelt out in the document for the signature of any document on behalf of Government, which is the procedure provided for this Act.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

PUBLIC BILL

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill (No. XIV of 2012) was read a first time.

The Deputy Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour for tea.

At 4.19 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.52 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

MOTION

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME 2012-2015

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following motion of the hon. Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue (Mrs B. Juggoo) -

“This Assembly resolves that the Government Programme 2012-2015 presented to this Assembly on Monday 16 April 2012, copy of which has been circularized amongst Honourable Members, be and is hereby approved.”

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr L. Bundhoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, allow me to thank the Ag. President of the Republic for her Address at the opening of the Second Session of the Fifth National Assembly. I also, Mr Speaker, Sir, wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister for his guidance and unflinching support given to articulate the three-year Government Programme under the theme ‘*Moving the Nation Forward*’.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think it would be more appropriate if we can put address into its context and the best way to do that, in my view, is to refer to paragraph 15, and with your permission, I quote –

“Government believes that the ultimate objective of exercising political power is Moving the Nation Forward, whatever the set of challenges it has to face. Government is animated by the belief, the passion and the determination to create and nurture a society where everyone thrives and all have opportunities for prosperity and better quality of life”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our belief rests on the trust people have placed on us. We are deeply committed to fulfil the aspirations of the Mauritian people and we are determined to uplift the economic and social status of each and every citizen of this country. In any case, we are voted on this agenda. The Government Programme bares testimony to the commitment of a responsible Government to honour our pledges made to the population, as I said, during the electoral campaign of 2010.

The programme not only restores the trust of the population, but it also presents a clear and precise mission of Government under the leadership of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam to make Mauritius a better place to live. Mr Speaker, Sir, this programme clearly sets out the path to restructuring our economy, accelerating economic growth, counteracting the challenges of the euro crisis, building a prosperous nation, paving the way for a brighter future for the present and future generation, and, Mr Speaker, Sir, sustaining welfare and social policies, including the provision of free health services to the population.

Health is a matter of concern for everyone: the State, the Government, the people and I also believe the empty seats occupied by the Opposition – my apology to you Sir, except the hon. Member who is here. Mr Speaker, Sir, not only health and quality of life, but the whole programme for the coming years in these turbulent times should have been a matter of concern for everyone. However, we have witnessed and the media have reported a complete and unilateral abstention of the Opposition during all the interventions of the Government Programme. This is once more the case today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not use the word ‘abstention’ with regard to the absence of the Opposition, rather I would use the word desertion, *la désertion, l’abandon de la responsabilité de l’opposition*. I find no better word to describe this Opposition which cannot just face the majority. This is a *désertion* by the Opposition *face à les responsabilités des élus et représentants du peuple. C’est une opposition qui est en train de devenir la honte nationale, M. le président*. A shame for democracy and a disgusting regard for the population, for those who have elected them to represent their interest and aspiration in the National Assembly. More so, the excuses they are giving to the population at large for not being here in this House. It is as if the world is static. It is as if nothing is happening around us, not even aware of what is happening to the Euro crisis, to Europe, to all the international treaties that Mauritius are being subjected to. This is the very reason why Government have, at regular pace, to review its objective, its strategy in order to adopt and adapt with changing circumstances of the world. They can change their Alliance, they can be in Government and in Opposition and negotiate to be a non-starter Opposition, but when it comes to reengineering the Government Programme, the Government intentions for the population for the next three years, they tell us and the

population that we are not being serious. In fact, they are not being serious, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Irresponsible Opposition!

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to tell you something. This Opposition, none other than this Government led by the progressive and long term vision of our Prime Minister could have come up in such difficult circumstances nationally, regionally and internationally with a programme with a theme of 'Moving the Nation Forward'. The Opposition would not have been able to do anything at all, stuck as they are in the shambles of the past - *l'alliance du passé*.

The Opposition is not in a position nor does it have the courage to make any proposal - even worse; they don't even have the courage to come and listen to the good words, the good actions and the good intentions of this Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the desertion of the Opposition with regard to the intervention of the Government Programme for the period 2012-2015 is not an affront to this Government rather it shows their disdain for the population and aspiration to move forward.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the health sector reform of this Government. In our manifesto, we pledge to reinforce and reform the health sector by the modernisation of infrastructure, the improvement of health services and by the introduction of measures for efficiency gains including capacity building and research.

As a responsible Government, health has been placed at the core of the socio-economic development agenda. We are, Mr Speaker, Sir, committed to continue providing universal, accessible and efficient health services free of any user cost with due emphasis on customer care, because we believe customer is at the heart of the health service.

In line with our quest for '*Maurice Ile Durable*', a healthy population is a *sine qua non* condition to move Mauritius to the next level of socio-economic development. Investment in health contributes not only to the well-being of the individual, family and community but is also instrumental in furthering economic development through the enhanced productivity of a healthy population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a visionary leadership of the Father of the Nation who entrusted a health service free of user cost and equitable access to one and all. Today our main health indicators like life expectancy, infant mortality and maternal mortality are the best in the region and are comparable to those of upper middle income countries.

We have achieved this; it is not my doing, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the doing of all previous Governments and all previous Ministers of Health and, I must say with pride when I look at you sitting in the Chair as Speaker, you have also served as Minister of Health in this country, and you have laid one and many of the foundation stone in this Ministry. Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are reaping the benefits of what you have done during your period of stay as Minister of Health of this country.

Our major challenges are now to prevent and control effectively non-communicable diseases and to address the socio-economic impact of our demographic transition. It is also, Mr Speaker, Sir, essential for us to continue an enhanced surveillance of communicable diseases and to remain vigilant to the continuing risk of the re-emergence of known vector borne diseases and the emergence of new communicable diseases.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the programme provides for a host of innovative measures in the health sector and other related sectors which will improve and enhance the quality of life of our citizens and enable the country to leap forward to the next level of socio-economic development. Taking into account all the aspects of the health sector, I am pleased to inform that the Ministry will publish, by the end of this month, a new comprehensive Health Sector Strategy for the years 2012 to 2016.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the first time in the history of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life that a strategic document is being prepared and will be made public before the end of this month.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me, at this stage, to highlight some of the major recent achievements. Here, I would like to place on record my appreciation to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Bachoo, for his unflinching support with all the works that his Ministry is undertaking in order to make sure that, as regards infrastructure, we do not suffer for the supply of health services to our people.

First, with regard to

Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National (SSRN) Hospital

A new Accident and Emergency Unit has been set up. We are now waiting for its opening with a few things pending.

The ICU is being renovated and a provision is also being made for additional beds. Recently, the Vice-Prime Minister, the technicians of both Ministries and I had been there. We have already made the assessments and very soon we are going not only to refurbish the whole thing, but from 8 beds it is going to be increased to 12 beds for the ICU at SSRN Hospital.

Secondly, a new Chemotherapy Unit, which was only available at the Victoria Hospital, has been set up to facilitate treatment of cancer patients of that region and will receive its first patients within a month. Here, I would like to place on record my thanks to hon. Choonee and a team from Goodlands, the Solaris Group, who have contributed almost Rs1 m. for the setting up of the two units, whereby we are going to provide chemotherapy treatment for both male and female patients of, at least, eight per ward, that is, sixteen at a time for SSRN Hospital. I wish here to remind the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, apart from Victoria Hospital, this is the second place in the island where we will start the cancer treatment by chemotherapy and God willing, other units will be set up in other regional hospitals.

Poudre D'Or Hospital

The refurbishment of the old building at Poudre D'Or Hospital is underway to improve the quality of service whilst, at the same time, preserving the historical value of the building.

The new Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital

Mr Speaker, Sir, you will recall that the construction of the new Jeetoo Hospital has been the subject of discussions for several decades. A modern state-of-the-art Dr. A.G. Jeetoo Hospital is now a reality and is functioning. This hospital, Mr Speaker, Sir, is one of the most modern in the Indian Ocean with state-of-the-art magnetic resonance imaging

facilities. The bed capacity of this new hospital has been increased by 100, that is, from 450 to 550 beds. So far, Government has invested a staggering amount of Rs2.2 billion and a further amount of Rs132 m. will be injected until final completion.

What is amazing about this, Mr Speaker, Sir? I am not going to drag you into politics, Mr Speaker, Sir, because you are now occupying an impartial chair. It is important for the population to recall: how come it is only when a Labour Government is in power that the SSRN Hospital was constructed? Why is it only when a Labour Government is in power and God willing, another Ramgoolam is in power, we manage to find Rs2.2 billion to construct one of the most modern hospitals in the capital city of Mauritius? This is to show that the Labour Party has always put health at the centre of development and this is proof to it again, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital

With the Subramania Bharati Eye Hospital, three new Phaco Vitrectomy equipments are now available for the treatment of patients suffering from retinal diseases.

A Pascal Laser equipment, which is unique on the island, has now been made available for more efficient and effective treatment of patients with diabetic retinopathy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say something here with regard to the Victoria Hospital. I will come to that a little bit later on.

Victoria Hospital

Neonatal ICU

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Victoria Hospital has been relocated in a ward which has been completely renovated.

new Cardiac Unit

A new building to accommodate the Cardiac Unit at the Victoria Hospital has already been constructed. Renovation works to the existing building will be completed by the end of this month. The total cost of the project is Rs34.3 m.

Flacq Hospital

In the Constituency of Flacq/Bon Accueil, serving the eastern part of the region of the island, a new three-storey block, that is, Block C has been

constructed at the Flacq Hospital to the tune of Rs125m. to provide more space for the accommodation of services such as Neonatology, Cardiology Unit, male Medical Ward and male Orthopaedic ward.

Jawaharhall Nehru Hospital

In line with the policy of this Government to decentralise HIV/AIDS services, a Day Care Centre for the treatment and care to HIV patients is now operational at the Jawaharlall Nehru Hospital and this has become operational only for the last six weeks.

Souillac Hospital

New dialysis services are now being offered at the Souillac Hospital to cater for patients from Le Morne to Camp Diable, that is, the down south of the island. This will relieve the pressure on dialysis services at Jawarlall Nehru Hospital and also, ease the travelling of patients.

May I, here, Mr Speaker, Sir, remind the House that, at a point in time, there was once a Prime Minister of this country who refused to provide dialysis to patients and allowed the poor Hemanini Paupiah to pass away whereas this Government, not only do we introduce it, but we have now decentralised it all round the island, making it possible for everybody to have dialysis, Mr Speaker, Sir. If this is not the doing of Dr. the hon. Ramgoolam - father and son - tell me who else can do it, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mediclinics and Health Care Centres

Mr Speaker, Sir, a new Medi-clinic has been constructed at Plaine Verte and will be officially opened shortly. New Health Care Centres have been constructed at Route du Club at Vacoas in the Constituency of the Chief Whip and the President of the Party, hon. Patrick Assirvaden. At Trou aux Biches, Cité La Cure and Tyack, a number of health services have been renovated. The Long Mountain Hospital under construction and refurbishment is almost completed to the tune of several million rupees. In fact, hon. Bachoo, hon. Members of the Constituency and me will shortly visit the Long Mountain Hospital and we will then decide on the date of the opening and on the reorganisation of the services there.

With regard to Human Resources, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the first time in the public health sector that so many staff have been recruited in such a short period of time.

For the first time in the history of Mauritius; this year only, we have recruited 390 doctors for pre-registration and on 02 July, there will be another 102.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the first time in the history of Mauritius, 230 duly registered Medical and Health Officers have been recruited through the Public Service Commission.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to place on record my thanks to the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Xavier-Duval and hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, who have agreed for the recruitment of 400 nurses to serve in the five regional hospitals. If people have any doubts about the intentions of the Labour Government and of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, the hon. Prime Minister about the health services, the figure speaks for themselves. I guess, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the reason why the Opposition is absent. They cannot face the truth. How come a Government, despite the fact that the economic situation internationally, regionally and nationally is in straight jacket, is able to recruit 390 doctors for pre-registration, 230 fully qualified medical and health officers and, God willing, within the next month, another 105 fully-fledged qualified doctors and 400 student nurses.

Furthermore, with a view to enhancing customer service, some 4,800 health employees have been trained in customer care and communication. There is another important milestone since I have assumed office as Minister of Health and Quality of Life. I have noticed that for the last 44 years, nurse students were only awarded a Certificate in Nursing. This was not in line with what was happening in the Ministry of Education where teachers were having Diplomas and Degrees. My good friend, hon. Dr. Jeetah, who is now the Minister of Tertiary Education, is making all the efforts to ensure that we have, at least, one graduate per family. It was not proper and acceptable that, for 44 years, our nurses, however best qualified they are, get out with only 2½ year of study with a certificate in nursing. This Government, under the able leadership of our Prime Minister, is proud to say that the first batch of 400 nurses will be upgraded with a Diploma in Nursing and within the next five years all nurses in this country will be upgraded from Certificate to Diploma in Nursing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

With regard to equipment, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is pursuing its investment in high-tech equipment. Over the last two years, additional equipment such

as Magnetic Resonance Imaging and CT Scanners, X-Ray apparatus and Anaesthetic machines have been acquired to the tune of Rs400 m. to support delivery services.

In spite of our difficult economic situation, our overseas treatment schemes have been reviewed. We are now proposing up to half a million rupees for patient requiring treatment overseas instead of a previous ceiling of Rs200,000. I think it is good also that hon. Jugnauth is not here. He has been Minister of Finance with us. He didn't do it. As soon as he leaves, hon. Duval and the hon. Prime Minister, in the last Budget, deemed it fit and appropriate to increase the allowance from Rs200,000 by 300% to Rs500,000, that is, half a million rupees for those whose child or kid or father and family, who is inoperable in Mauritius, can be treated overseas. We send them abroad, save their life and bring them back to our country.

A Master Plan on Primary Health Care has been developed with the support of an international Consultant. The implementation thereof will strengthen the primary health care services. Health promotion activities in schools, at work places and in the community including screening and education/counselling are ongoing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from 2010 to date, more than 200,000 persons have been reached with regard to health promotion activities. A vast aggressive campaign, aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination against HIV/AIDS patients, has been undertaken with relevant stakeholders including NGOs with a view to scaling up the methadone distribution therapy programme, Drop-in Centres, offering a wide range of services, including psychological support, have been made operational at Dr. Bouloux Area Health Centre, Cassis and at Ste Croix.

The Needle Exchange Programme has been extended to cover high risk regions in Mauritius. Furthermore, the Clinical Trial Act has been enacted in April 2011 and is being implemented since September 2011.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government will continue to invest heavily in health infrastructural projects and will increase the efficiency of health care delivery. Major infrastructural works will be undertaken in all hospitals and new Mediclinics and Health Centres will be constructed. It is planned that the overall bed capacity will be increased by some 25% over the next three to four years. I shall now enumerate, with your permission, briefly some of the projects.

Victoria Hospital

Mr Speaker, Sir, a four-storey building of a total floor area of 8,600 square metres, comprising of six operation theatres, two recovery rooms, one autoclave room, one Intensive Care Unit, a post operative emergency room, and wards to accommodate some 136 beds will be constructed shortly. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, a construction contract to the tune of Rs587.7m. has already been signed between my Ministry and China Nanjing Dadi Construction (Group) Company Ltd, that is, a Chinese contractor.

Work, Mr Speaker, Sir, will start as from August 2012, and is expected to be completed by July 2014. What could you observe, Mr Speaker, Sir? We tackled the Jeetoo hospital; we tackled Flacq hospital; we are doing major works at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam hospital, and now we are trying to address the Victoria hospital, which is located in a building - if I guess correctly - for more than 150 years, and which has one of the biggest catchment areas.

This is why again, Mr Speaker, Sir, you need a Labour Government to be in power to invest almost Rs700m. at the Victoria Hospital. It is not a coincidence that the Lord, the Almighty up there always chooses to have a Labour Government in power to ensure that the health of the nation is taken care of, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Two new wards, one male and one female, will be set up in the first and second floors of the neurosurgery and spinal block to provide for some 120 additional beds to meet the expanding needs of the people in this region.

The hospital will equally be equipped with modern equipment, such as mammography machine for screening and treatment of breast cancer, a new linear accelerator for cancer patients, new angiography machine for cardiac services, ecography machines, and a 64-slice CT scan will be introduced. The existing cancer facilities will also be decentralised.

Poudre d'Or Hospital

Work is ongoing for installing a lift to the tune of Rs6.27 m., and it is expected to be completed by October 2012. Provision is also being made for the construction of a 20-bed isolation ward for female patients. In fact, this would have already started, had it not been on the request of hon. Choonee. He has insisted that we should keep the

traditional ancient building of the Poudre d'Or hospital as it is in order to respect the heritage of this place, and we are going to do as requested by his Ministry.

The Mauritius health system does not, at present, have a centre of excellence to provide clinical care to children, infant children and adolescents suffering from complicated conditions. There is no specialised paediatric surgical unit to treat the newborns with gross congenital malformation.

The setting up, Mr Speaker, Sir, of a children's hospital in Mauritius will cater for cases such as leukaemia, aplastic anaemia and thalassaemia, and will provide high-tech medical care and treatment of the highest quality to infants, children as well as young adolescents.

With regard to the Institute of Women's Health, Mauritius currently lacks a number of essential services in relation to specific women diseases. For instance, there are no in-vitro fertility services in the public sector. As such, women, who cannot conceive, have to go abroad or have to resort to the private sector. This gives rise to problems of accessibility, equity and affordability. Besides, there are certain investigations that are not carried out in the hospital due to lack of equipment and specific laboratories. Despite the increasing incidence of breast cancer, the public health sector does not have a mammography screening service so the need for one for the early detection of breast cancer among young female adults and women in the public sector is much felt. This service will be incorporated in the Institute for Women's Health.

The setting up of the Institute in Mauritius will provide high-tech medical care and treatment of the highest quality to women for selected conditions. We are, Mr Speaker, Sir, currently working with the University College of London to finalise the terms of reference for a feasibility study of the project. Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like here to inform the House that the land for this project has already been earmarked next to the SSR hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to say a few words with regard to our warehouse. A modern warehouse will be constructed for the storage of essential drugs and medical consumables according to international norms of warehousing. With regard to mediclinics and health care, I am pleased to inform the House that design is presently being worked out at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure specifically for Floreal. I have

already answered, at least, three times to PQs put by hon. Ms Anquetil in this House, and hon. Mrs Bappoo makes it a must, each time she sees me, to remind me of the Floreal mediclinic. I am pleased to inform the House that we have already earmarked and obtained the land. Again here, I have to thank Minister Bachoo who has agreed to release two plots of land at Floreal, one adjacent to each other, for the construction of the mediclinic and my thanks to Ms Anquetil also. The one at Triolet is presently under construction, and in the next six months it will be over. Good news - hon. Gungah is not here, but we have managed to secure 1.5 acres of land at Goodlands; tender is being worked out at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and, God willing, in the North, in Constituency No. 6, we are going to have the first mediclinic in Goodlands. God willing, within the next three months, we shall lay the foundation stone.

Mr Speaker, Sir, improvement in infrastructure will go hand in hand with major measures to improve delivery of health services. Let me Mr Speaker, Sir, enumerate some of the important measures that we will take.

First, a Primary Care Physician Scheme will be developed in a phased manner with a view to improving primary health care services at community level in line with the World Health Organisation recommendations, it will help to address the growing burden of chronic diseases.

The accident and emergency department will be re-organised with the setting up of resuscitation units. These departments will be headed by doctors trained in emergency medicine.

A new Registrar Scheme for doctors will be implemented in a phased manner in obstetrics, paediatrics, anaesthesia, internal medicine, cardiology, orthopaedics and general surgery. This new scheme will contribute significantly to the improvement of health care, as specialists will be available on site, outside normal working hours, to attend to emergency. This, Mr Speaker, Sir, is in line with international best practices.

Specialised services for elderly population will be developed. Currently, two separate child health cards are being used, as previously mentioned by hon. Dr Bunwaree during question time. One health card is for children aged between 0 and 5 years, and another one is for schoolchildren between 5 and 18 years of age. My Ministry proposes to introduce a child health passport which will integrate the two existing child health

cards. All health information from childhood to adulthood would thus be easily available to health personnel for more effective follow-up.

As far as Family Planning is concerned, my Ministry will implement a National Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and Action Plan. With a view to responding to the challenging demographic profile and new health challenges, the family planning and sexual and reproductive health services will be reviewed to focus on the youth and the vulnerable groups in deprived areas with the collaboration of the Ministry of Economic Empowerment. The services will include promotion of family welfare, good health and social integration; promotion of adolescents sexual and reproductive services and promotion of healthy styles in the population for community-based interventions.

My Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, will conduct an in-depth review of the objectives and the functions of the Family Planning Welfare Association as stated in this House last week.

As far as Dental Services are concerned, a National Action Plan for the prevention and control of oral diseases is being elaborated. The establishment of a proper mechanism for the handling of complaints from patients at central and regional levels is also being worked out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has approved months ago the implementation of the e-health strategic plan at the Public Health Outlets with a view to ICT being used to enhance delivery of services. Here, I would like to place on record my thanks to hon. Minister Pillay Chedumbrum for the assistance and support he has given to the Ministry of Health. He has, himself - Minister Pillay Chedumbrum- - chaired a meeting with my technicians. Thanks to him and the technicians, this project is now seeing the light. A Patient Master Index with a unique identifier will also be created. Through the implementation of this plan, it is expected that there will be a better control on the issue of drugs to patients, reduction in waiting time, easy retrieval of record and timely access to clinical test results, amongst others. The total project cost is estimated at around Rs510 m. A pilot phase will be implemented at the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital for which an amount of Rs37 m. has already been earmarked. Upon successful implementation of this pilot phase, the project will be rolled out in all regional hospitals and other public health institutions.

- Legislation: to keep pace with modern trends in the field of health, we are currently reviewing a number of legislation.
- The Medical Council Act will be reviewed to meet new requirements, to better regulate the medical profession and to safeguard the interests of patients.
- The Dental Council Act will be amended to meet the requirement of the modern dental practice.
- We will shortly introduce in the House a Pharmacy Council Bill to regulate the pharmacy profession so as to ensure the maintenance of professional standards and discipline. If I am not mistaken, within a month, this Bill will be debated in the House.
- The Pharmacy Act will be reviewed to be in line with international best practices. Provision will be made for the establishment of a Pharmacovigilance Unit for drug surveillance in both public and private sectors.
- The Human Tissue and Organ Transplant Act is presently being reviewed to enable the transplantation of organs to be carried out within the appropriate legal framework in line with international best practices.
- The Food Regulations, as said before, while answering to a question on salt intake, will be amended to strengthen food safety in the country.
- The Public Health Regulation will be introduced with a view to monitor the activities of private health institutions.

Capacity building.

An overall capacity building programme will be given priority, particularly in a specialised field, with a view to upgrading the quality of care to patients. Emphasis will be laid on enhanced capacity building for health personnel. In this context, Mr Speaker, Sir –

- A five-year Human Resource Master Plan will be developed and implemented.

- Following the recommendations of the Symposium on Research for Health held with the collaboration of the World Health Organisation, my Ministry will foster and develop a research culture in the Health Sector. A National Centre for clinical excellence will be set up. It will be responsible, among others, for the development of clinical guidelines and care pathways for the better management of patients.
- Five doctors have been selected to undergo training for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma in diabetes care. A batch of nurses - for the first time again - is being trained to achieve a Diploma in Diabetes Specialist Nursing Care and a further batch is being trained to have a Diploma in Diabetes Foot Care.

Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to put on record the personal contribution of the Rt. Hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, who, through his personal contact, managed to bring those experts to Mauritius to work with us in order to prepare the content of the Diploma in Diabetes Specialist Nursing Care and of the Diploma in Diabetes Foot Care. This, if I am not mistaken, is only happening because Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, the Prime Minister, who is a doctor by profession, pays personal attention with regard to the impact of diabetes on the people of Mauritius.

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

Mr Speaker, Sir, Non-Communicable Diseases constitute a major challenge worldwide and in Mauritius. It is becoming so important that, at the last year's Heads of Government Meeting in United Nations, one of the themes addressed by all Heads of States at the United Nations was the impact of non-communicable diseases in all States in the world.

With a view to addressing problems relating to non-communicable diseases and their risk factors, an aggressive community-based life intervention programme will be carried out throughout Mauritius in order to achieve primary prevention of NCDs. In this context, Mr Speaker, Sir –

- Health literacy is a fairly new concept. At the World Health Assembly Meeting in May, I took the opportunity to seek the support of Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General of World Health Organisation to help and assist for a health literacy framework to be established in Mauritius.
- I am pleased to inform the House that Mrs Chan has already identified an expert who will shortly come to Mauritius to help and assist us in order to prepare the framework for health literacy. If I am not mistaken, we are probably one of the rare countries in the world which will develop in this part of the world a health literacy framework.
- A mass sensitisation and awareness campaign on non-communicable diseases will be carried out at national level and for which, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the first time, a dedicated budget of Rs50 m. has been allocated in the 2012 Estimates.
- Trained personnel (*Agents de Santé Communautaire*) will visit each household to provide counselling and also distribute healthy lifestyle management materials in order to empower and improve the population to achieve healthy lifestyles and thus prevent NCDs.
- A high level Inter-sectoral Taskforce will be set up to address the social determinants of health in the control of NCDs.
- My Ministry is currently working on an Action Plan on the harmful use of alcohol.
- A Mauritius Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Project is currently being implemented and will continue to be implemented over a period of three years on some 5,000 participants in order to provide evidence-based

information on the optimum population-based lifestyle intervention to achieve maximum benefits.

- My Ministry has just completed fieldwork in relation to a national assessment on salt intake by the population. Based on the findings of the assessment, a national strategy will be worked out with all stakeholders in order to achieve the control of salt intake by the population for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases.

Cancer

Among the NCDs, cancer, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a major public health concern, with breast and cervical cancer in Mauritius being most common amongst women. My Ministry will –

- (i) develop a landmark cervical cancer eradication programme. This programme will achieve the eradication of cervical cancer from the medium to long term;
- (ii) implement a National Systematic Cervical Screening programme;
- (iii) set up a National Digital Mammography Screening Service for early detection treatment of breast cancer thereby reducing mortality from this disease, and
- (iv) consider also the setting up of a National Cancer Centre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to highlight or to recall, that the first HIV case was detected in 1987. From that date until 1999, few HIV positive cases were registered. Consequently, from 2002 the number of new HIV/AIDS cases registered doubled each year to reach a peak of 921 in 2005. With appropriate measures implemented by my Ministry and also under the guidance and chairmanship of the Prime Minister's Office, every year, from 2006 to 2010, 540 new HIV cases, that is, a monthly average of 45 cases were detected. Mr Speaker, Sir, it proves that the Prime Minister - HIV/AIDS Committee is under his chairmanship - has had the courage to introduce the methadone therapy and it is thanks to him, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in 2011, for the first time, the number of new HIV cases further decreased to 401, showing a decrease of 29% in the detection rate of HIV cases compared to 2010. Here, I am sure these figures are encouraging. It shows that the

methadone therapy is working and we should and must continue. At the same time, we have to look at the security aspect of it, we have to ensure that it is being done in the best practice.

My Ministry is more than ever committed to contain and further reverse the HIV prevalence in the population in accordance with the Millennium Development Goal.

In this respect, Government will, in collaboration with NGOs and the private sector, conduct an aggressive campaign to address stigmatisation and discrimination regarding HIV. The population will be encouraged to undertake HIV test routinely along with other tests after appropriate counselling.

To provide a better service to patients living with HIV/AIDS, health personnel trained in Sidenologie and Addictology are being recruited to implement HIV and Harm Reduction Programmes.

The Surveillance System for HIV/AIDS will be reinforced through Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Surveys on high risk groups.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to say a few words on drug control and substance abuse. As far as drug and substance abuse is concerned, the role and responsibility of NATReSA regarding prevention of substance abuse and treatment of substance abusers will be revisited. The collaboration of NGOs for prevention and control of substance abuse will be reinforced.

Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, till now has been able to control communicable diseases of major public health importance. Moreover, with the ever growing threats posed by emerging and re-emerging communicable diseases, my Ministry will establish a reinforced National Communicable Disease Control Programme with emphasis on epidemiological aspects which include disease surveillance and response in line with the requirements of the International Health Regulations.

Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to place on record the thanks of the Government of Mauritius *à la Commission de l'Océan Indien* because we work in collaboration with the Indian Island States in order to have a common strategy with regard to vector control in the sub-tropical part of the Indian Ocean.

With a view to strengthening food safety in the country, my Ministry is implementing a National Food Safety Action Plan with particular focus on enhanced food inspection activities, capacity building, review of legislative framework, public awareness campaigns and quality control.

Mr Speaker, Sir, much is being said about the change in environment and climate and the impact of this change on the health. In the field of environmental health, more emphasis will be laid on environmental health hazards such as dangerous chemicals, odour and noise nuisances. Furthermore, my Ministry will consolidate the health sector response to climate change within the framework of sustainable development. In this respect, with the support of the World Health Organisation, an Action Plan will be prepared to drive health sector adaptation to the effects of climate change. Mr Speaker, Sir, this has to be a multilateral approach. The Ministry of Health and Sustainable Development, my Ministry, will have to work hand in hand with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Tertiary Education - I am sure - to formulate a plan of adaptation with regard to health and the change in climate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know how to put that. People just think of the Ministry of Health as being the Ministry of Health. Very often, whether it is hon. Dr. Jeetah, hon. Faugoo or for this matter, even hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee or my predecessor, hon. Jugnauth, when you go abroad and tell them that we are Minister of Health and Quality of life, most of the time, Heads of States or other Ministers find it quite strange or rather amazing how we manage to include with health the quality of life. In fact, it is the best thing that we could have done. I mean, whoever, the Prime Minister to have put and introduced quality of life with health, I guess it is the best thing could have been done. Without focusing on primary health care, on prevention and quality of life, we will be spending and spending money on health - secondary and tertiary - without achieving much, Mr Speaker, Sir. That's why we have decided once and for all that we need to refocus our attention with regard to non-communicable diseases, primary health care and specifically with regard to quality of life as stipulated by the very title of the ministerial portfolio which I presently occupy.

This Government is presently conscious of the centrality of health in socio-economic development as was spelt out by the former Director-General of the World

Health Organisation, Mrs Brundtland. This concept emphasises the interrelationship between health and other vital sectors which contribute to the development of the economy such as employment, education, environment, housing and community services.

Health data will be analysed to see if there are any variations or disparities in health status related to geographical location or socio-economic status. Based on these findings, policies will accordingly be reviewed. A 'Health in all Policies' approach will be adopted through coordinated action with all Ministries, but, in particular, with the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment and other relevant stakeholders.

With a view to encouraging people to practise physical exercise, every year, five health tracks will be set up throughout the island. In addition, fully equipped health clubs will be set up in social welfare centres, community centres, women centres and other social halls. I am pleased here, Mr Speaker, Sir, to inform all my colleagues that my Ministry has already initiated action to provide nationwide, at least, hundred sets of health equipment to be equipped in several community centres and village halls of the choice of the PPSs and Members of Parliament of these constituencies.

My Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, has innovated this year by organising in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports a National Swimming Programme. Such collaborative initiatives will be enhanced to improve the quality of life of the population. Only yesterday, I was informed that, in Blue Bay and at Mon Choisy, if I am not mistaken, there were, at least, some 600 people in both locations - I mean 300 and 300 - which are now being initiated in swimming. You will be surprised, Mr Speaker, Sir, to realise that almost 40% of the population of the Island State of Mauritius does not know how to swim. It is quite amazing. Swimming, probably, is one of the most well versed physical activities that we can have and it is free of charge. We are in a tropical island, the sea is free. The Minister is a very active Minister, if we work together, we shall be able to achieve the full-fledged swimming capabilities of our population as a national sport and I look forward that they come back with some gold medals in swimming. A Health Club will be made operational for public officers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to say a few words, before I conclude, on efficiency gains. We are fully conscious of the difficult financial environment currently prevailing

and, with that in mind, a dedicated Central Efficiency Management Committee has been set up to oversee the implementation of efficiency gains to improve efficiency in the delivery of health care services.

With regard to Rodrigues and Outer Islands, all health programmes currently in force in Mauritius are ongoing according to the specificity of Rodrigues and Agalega. Emphasis will be put on health related actions in the island of Rodrigues in order to reduce morbidity, disability as well as increase life expectancy through disease prevention.

In the field of primary health care and public health, a Vaccination Centre for international travellers will be set up in Rodrigues. To counteract the challenges of non-communicable diseases, the delivery of these services will be reviewed in Rodrigues and furthermore health tracks will also be constructed.

As far as hospital services are concerned, a Master Plan for infrastructural projects will be developed a telemedicine facility will be set up as well as a SAMU service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, allow me to say that health is the fundamental right of every individual. We believe that investment in sectors like health is essential for economic growth. For this reason, health has always been high on the agenda of this Government. The Government Programme 2012-2015 spells out concrete measures and projects to further strengthen and improve the delivery of both clinical and non-clinical services in the public sector and further enhance the quality of life of the people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as it is commonly said, health is wealth and wealth is health.

For the next three years, Government will invest a staggering Rs30 billion on health. Health related actions and projects of the Government Programme 2012-2015 are geared towards negating persistent health challenges such as the burden of non-communicable diseases through reinforced preventive measures and also the enhancement of the delivery of care.

I only hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, for the next three years, we are able to achieve our objective, especially, in sensitising the population with regard to the impact of diabetes and prevention. There is no other way than prevention. We can spend all the amount of money we wish in secondary and tertiary care, but if we fail in prevention and

in the control of non-communicable diseases we are in for a major trouble. Therefore, my request, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to seek the support of the Ministry of Health in all policies in order to ensure that Mauritians enjoy the best of health for the years to come, especially by the year 2030, we will start to have an ageing population.

With these few words, Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for your attention.

(5.55 p.m.)

The Minister of Information and Communication Technology (Mr T. Pillay Chedumbrum): M. le président, permettez-moi d'abord de féliciter et de remercier notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam pour sa clairvoyance, son initiative et son courage de, tout d'abord, proroger le Parlement et proposer à la population un nouveau programme gouvernemental afin de mieux répondre aux aspirations légitimes de la population dans un contexte économique global des plus compliqués.

Au lieu de se resserrer les rangs, le MSM a choisi la fuite en avant préférant quitter le gouvernement pour défendre son clan familial. La population saura juger tous ceux qui ont choisi la voie de la démagogie dans les moments les plus difficiles où le contexte économique international exigeait plus de solidarité et de patriotisme.

L'absence remarquée de l'opposition le jour de la lecture du discours programme par la Présidente de la République par intérim est avant tout une insulte à la femme car c'était la première fois dans l'histoire de notre pays que nous avons l'insigne honneur d'avoir une femme pour prononcer le discours programme du gouvernement. J'ai envie de dire : cessez vos hypocrisies à gargariser les slogans, les discours creux en faveur de l'émancipation de la femme particulièrement lors de la journée internationale de la femme. L'absence de l'opposition lors du discours programme est aussi révélateur d'une opposition essoufflée, à court d'idées qui n'a pas d'alternatives crédibles à offrir à la population.

Il est important de se rappeler que l'argument dont ils se sont servis pour être absents lors de la présentation du discours programme en 2010 c'est parce que c'était Sir Anerood Jugnauth qui lisait le discours programme, ils avaient choisi de ne pas venir assister ce programme. Cette fois-ci, encore une fois. ils ont choisi de boycotter le

discours-programme et c'est parce que Sir Anerood Jugnauth n'a pas lu le discours-programme. Donc, pour vous dire, M. le président, je me pose la question: *which is which!*

Les membres de l'opposition sont grassement payés, , pour jouer pleinement leur rôle de chiens de garde et non pour leur obsession à déstabiliser ce gouvernement qui, de surcroît, a obtenu un mandat clair et net de la population pour diriger sous le *leadership* du Premier ministre, l'honorable docteur Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

De grâce, ne soyez pas les oiseaux de mauvais augure. Comme l'a si bien dit le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances, l'autre jour, ils peuvent critiquer le gouvernement comme bon leur semble, mais ils doivent de par leurs actes démagogiques cesser de faire du tort à notre économie et à faire peur à nos investisseurs.

Nous sommes très loin, chers membres de l'opposition, d'un début de campagne électorale. Vous faites pâle figure, même le parti malin se comporte d'une façon plus raisonnable ces derniers temps. *Agree to disagree* comme nous a démontré, d'une si belle manière, la France pendant la campagne électorale menant à l'élection de François Hollande comme Président de la République.

M. le président, au sein de mon ministère, nous avons accueilli avec beaucoup d'enthousiasme et de plaisir le nouveau programme gouvernemental 2012-2015 et il y a cette ferveur et cette volonté inébranlable de faire du secteur de TIC un des piliers forts de notre économie. D'ailleurs, pendant la dernière campagne électorale, on avait promis qu'on allait faire du secteur de TIC le cinquième pilier de notre économie. Aujourd'hui, force est de constater que, grâce au dur labeur et la détermination de ce gouvernement, sous le *leadership* de notre Premier ministre, le secteur de TIC a été propulsé et ceci en moins de deux ans de notre arrivée au pouvoir en 2010, comme le troisième pilier de notre économie et représente aujourd'hui une contribution au PIB de 6.7% en employant plus de 15,000 personnes et avec plus de 500 entreprises opérant dans le TIC/BPO.

Au fait, M. le président, cela devrait être une fierté pour nous tous, un sens du devoir accompli et un travail bien fait quand nous constatons que 75% du programme gouvernemental 2010-2015, comme le dit si bien le Premier ministre, a déjà été réalisé. Ce nouveau programme gouvernemental nous donne cette fois-ci des moyens pour

repousser nos limites et faire du secteur de TIC le pilier principal de notre économie avec une contribution à double chiffres au PIB avant la fin de notre mandat en 2015.

M. le président, nous avons pu, en si peu de temps, positionner l'île Maurice sur la carte mondiale comme a *preferred ICT destination* au-delà de notre label d'un pays touristique. D'ailleurs le dernier rapport du *World Economic Forum* de 2012 nous place en 53ème position dans l'indice du *Network Readiness Index* au niveau mondial devançant même des pays comme l'Inde et l'Afrique du Sud. Nous sommes en tête de liste parmi les pays de la région subsaharienne pour ce qui est du classement à l'indice du *Network Readiness Index*. En ligne avec la philosophie du gouvernement de '*Put People First*', nous avons introduit le concept *work from home* qui donne une opportunité immense de travail aux femmes au foyer, aux personnes autrement capables et à tous ceux qui ne peuvent ou ne veulent pas travailler dans un bureau aux horaires inflexibles. Nous prévoyons de développer ce concept davantage et nous espérons que, dans un avenir pas trop lointain, il y aurait de vastes opportunités où les gens auront l'embarras de choix et au lieu de dire '*Solange amene mo dairy*', ils vont plutôt dire '*Solange amene mo ipad, mo Android, mo tablette, mo smart phone.*'

M. le président, tout ce que nous avons réalisé en si peu de temps dans le secteur des TIC est le fruit d'une stratégie cohérente, bien calculée et exécutée avec dextérité et discipline. Dès que j'ai pris les rênes de ce ministère en mai 2010, j'ai immédiatement entrepris l'élaboration du *National ICT Strategic Plan 2011 à 2014* et du *National Broadband Policy 2012 à 2020* qui ont été d'ailleurs rendus public en 2011 et 2012 respectivement. Le NICTSP 2011 à 2014 a pour but de faire du secteur TIC un pilier phare de notre économie nationale et de positionner notre pays comme une plateforme régionale pour les TIC avant 2015. Par ailleurs, le *National Broadband Policy* a pour ambition de faire de notre pays un des mieux connectés au monde et de faire de l'internet un droit de tous les citoyens : *internet as a basic citizen's right*.

M. le président, avec l'implémentation rapide de ces deux plans directeur, l'île Maurice a connu comme jamais auparavant une pénétration de la téléphonie et de l'internet très forte qui nous placent parmi les pays les plus avancés au monde en matière des TIC. M. le président, je voulais ici saisir cette opportunité pour dénoncer cette campagne malsaine aidée par une section de la presse autour de la toute première

conférence internationale ICT/BPO organisée par mon ministère en octobre 2010 qui a d'ailleurs eu un succès retentissant. Sur ce plateau on a pu réunir, sous un même toit, les géants de l'industrie informatique comme Infosys, les firmes de consultants comme Gartner, A. T. Kearney, INSEAD et le *World Economic Forum*. Ce dernier a même inclus dans son dernier rapport : le *Global IT Report 2012* un *case-study* : '*The Building of a Digital Nation towards i-Mauritius*' qui décrit la réussite de l'île Maurice dans le domaine des TIC. Il est bon de noter que cette conférence a coûté la somme de R6.7 millions pour une industrie qui génère un chiffre d'affaires de R30 milliards annuellement. Par contre lors de la tenue de la conférence de SIDs en 2005, le gouvernement d'alors MMM/MSM n'avait acquis que 258 berlines hors taxe résultant un manque à gagner de l'ordre de R642 millions au gouvernement.

M. le président, au niveau des coûts de communication, il y a eu en juillet 2011 une baisse de 33% pour les appels se terminant sur un réseau mobile et les tarifs de l'ADSL pour les entreprises incluant les PME ont enregistré une baisse variant entre 39% à 51%, tandis qu'il y a eu une réduction de 8% à 12% pour les offres résidentielles. Avec l'entrée en vigueur de l'*Open Access Policy* en octobre 2010, l'accès aux câbles sous-marins à l'île Maurice a été étendu à d'autres opérateurs de télécom pour soutenir la croissance des marchés de télécommunication et accroître la compétitivité du pays. Ainsi, avec l'application du *Cross-Connect Model* en avril 2012, les opérateurs agréés autres que Mauritius Telecom sont désormais en mesure de se connecter aux *gateways* existants, à des stations atterrissages - *landing stations as we call them*, à des câbles sous-marins. De nouvelles baisses de coûts des connectivités internationales sont prévues dans un avenir proche avec ce modèle de *cross-connection*.

En décembre 2011, le cadre légal a été revu afin de donner plus de pouvoirs aux régulateurs qui, à chaque fois que le besoin de fait sentir, peuvent de leur propre chef demander une baisse de tarifs au lieu d'attendre que la demande se fasse par les opérateurs eux-mêmes.

M. le président, l'aspect de sécurité des internautes et des utilisateurs d'outils informatiques et de la télécommunication reste une priorité pour le gouvernement. Des projets tels que le *Child Sexual Abuse Filtering System* en février 2011 ont été mis en place afin d'interdire l'accès à des sites à caractère pédophile; la *prévention of mobile*

theft project en avril 2012 afin de freiner les nombreux vols de portables, l'affiliation de *Computer Emergency Response Team* (CERT MU) au *Forum of Incident and Response Security Team* qui est un réseau global en matière de sécurité informatique à partir du 03 mai 2012. Avec cette affiliation, M. le président, nous serons dotés de principes de *good governance* afin de mieux gérer les types d'informations.

Des campagnes de sensibilisation régulière sont menées par la CERT-MU dans le public en général et avec les différents *stakeholders* du secteur sur les différents aspects de la cyber sécurité. M. le président, en ligne avec sa mission de réduire la fracture numérique et transformer Maurice en une économie fondée sur le savoir, mon ministère, par l'intermédiaire du *National Computer Board*, a mis en place différents projets qui permettent la création et le partage d'information et de connaissances. La mise en place de quelque 175 clubs informatiques équipés d'un accès haut débit gratuit dans les centres de jeunesse, les centres de femmes, les centres communautaires, les *Social Welfare Centres* et les *Day Care Centres* à travers l'île a permis à la communauté de bénéficier des facilités du *broadband internet* et 100 clubs informatiques supplémentaires seront mis en place dans les ONGs, les Day Care centres durant la période 2012 à 2013. Afin de promouvoir et encourager le *ICT literacy* dans le pays, un troisième cyber caravane a été mis en opération depuis mai 2011. A ce jour, plus de 150,000 personnes ont été formées à travers l'île. Nous avons aussi mis en place des antennes WIFI gratuit dans les municipalités et les conseils de district afin de démocratiser davantage l'accès à l'Internet.

M. le président, malgré la crise financière, le TIC est aujourd'hui un secteur prometteur avec un potentiel énorme pour la création d'emploi et la richesse. Un grand nombre d'emplois à forte rémunération ont été créés par l'industrie des TIC avec l'arrivée des grosses pointures telles que Bharat Télécom, Bouygues Télécom, Blue Link entre autres ainsi qu'avec l'augmentation conséquente de nos services à l'export. C'est dans cette perspective et afin de promouvoir davantage les exportations TIC qu'un portail dédié à l'export fut développé et lancé en mars de cette année. Ce portail offre une plateforme centralisée pour les entreprises locales afin d'accéder au *market intelligence* des marchés émergents et prometteurs.

M. le président, mon ministère a, depuis l'année dernière, pris deux nouvelles initiatives ayant pour but d'abord de créer des espaces pour les opérateurs locaux TIC afin de mieux identifier et cibler les clients, et promouvoir les nouvelles technologies dans les régions rurales. Ainsi, le Pro IT est le premier salon *Business-to-Business* ouvert aux professionnels et aux décideurs locaux et régionaux.

M. le président, sous le chapitre du *e-Government*, les projets suivants ont été réalisés et d'autres sont en cours de réalisation.

Le gouvernement a mis en place un système de suivi des crimes, *The Crime Occurrence Tracking System (COTS)*, donc l'objectif est de faire le suivi des cas de criminalité dans le pays en utilisant les nouvelles technologies. Les administrations rurales - incluant les cinq municipalités, les quatre conseils de district - ont été équipées en 2010 d'une solution clé en main pour gérer entre autres les demandes et l'octroi des permis de construction. Cette solution aide à gérer également les finances, les ressources humaines et la bibliothèque. Depuis janvier 2011, il est désormais possible d'effectuer des paiements pour les services offerts par le *Registrar General Department*, le *Registrar of Companies* et la *National Transport Authority* avec la carte de crédit ou débit. Plusieurs ministères et départements sont déjà connectés à un intranet sécurisé, utilisant la technologie à fibres optiques, afin de répondre à la demande croissante de la bande passante, pour accéder aux services gouvernementaux. Cette technologie sera étendue afin de connecter d'autres bâtiments abritant d'autres ministères.

La refonte du portail du gouvernement est actuellement en cours afin de placer les citoyens au centre des services gouvernementaux. Les services interactifs, qui seront offerts tels l'application pour les services gouvernementaux, ouvriront la voie vers des services transactionnels comme le paiement des services en ligne. Un cahier des charges pour l'informatisation de l'administration pénitentiaire a été élaboré en juin 2010. Mon ministère et le département de l'administration pénitentiaire travaillent actuellement de concert pour la mise en œuvre de ces recommandations. Mon ministère collabore étroitement avec le ministère de l'éducation et le ministère de la santé pour la mise en œuvre des solutions informatiques dans les domaines respectifs.

Concernant la connectivité à fibres optiques à Rodrigues comme énoncée dans le programme gouvernemental 2012/2015, mon ministère a déjà enclenché les procédures

d'appels d'offres pour le recrutement d'un consultant qui aura pour tâche d'étudier et de faire des recommandations appropriées.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the ICT sector has emerged as a third pillar of the Mauritian economy within a very short lapse of time, contributing 6.7% of GDP. The vision now is to achieve a double-digit contribution to GDP, propelling the ICT sector to become the main pillar of our economy as advocated in the National ICT Strategic Plan 2011-2014. Mauritius, which has successfully attracted leading ICT/BPO companies of international repute, is now reckoned as a credible and competitive investment location for ICT/BPO activities. Leveraging on this strength and capitalising on the high economic growth being registered on the African continent, Government's ambition is now to consolidate our position as a preferred ICT hub to attract high ICT and BPO activities.

Government will further intensify its promotional campaign across new markets like USA and Asia, to attract more foreign direct investment in ICT and an aggressive branding exercise will be undertaken to position our country as a preferred, secured and reliable ICT destination, in order to generate more wealth and create more job opportunities for our citizens. Government will endeavour to make broadband internet even more accessible and affordable so that no citizen is left behind in the eye Mauritius landscape. In this context, Government is committed to create a high eco-system to connect each and every household with, at least, one megabyte per second by the year 2015 at latest. With a view to achieving universal intranet access and bringing wireless broadband internet closer to the community, Government will accelerate the WIFI Mauritius Programme for the provision of free internet access across Mauritius and Rodrigues in zones already specified.

Government will encourage paperless, secure and trusted transaction by promoting e-business, e-commerce and M-commerce through the wide adoption of digital signature based on the public infrastructure technology. To better respond to the growing demand for qualified and skilled human resources for the ICT sector, the ICT academy will be fully operational to train and supply 20,000 global talents in the very streams of the ICT industry lead courses by 2015.

Additionally, the ICT academy will be positioned as a Centre of Excellence based on the ITO academy model of accreditation for international recognition. In this

Government's endeavour to place the citizen at the centre of public service delivery, the e-Government platform is being modernised so that public information and Government services are accessible anytime and anywhere. With a view to protecting our ICT infrastructure and citizens against the ever-growing scourge of cyber threats, cyber crimes and attacks, Government will strengthen the cyber security environment of the highest international standard through the implementation of a National Cyber Security Strategy.

Government will, through a central population database, introduce a digital identity management system using the smart card technology. The new national multi-purpose identity card integrating biometric features will be a highly secured identification and authentication document that will facilitate transactions by the citizens. Government will further harness the use of the ICT tools for the socially disadvantaged, the disabled and the elderly to ensure their inclusion in the mainstream of society. Ahead of ICT use, deadline to complete the digital migration of Terrestrial Broadband by July 2015, Government will ensure that this exercise is achieved well before the end of 2013, although ITO has already set the limit to July 2015. More radio spectrum resources will thus be released to enable the deployment of ultra high speed internet connectivity through long term evolution.

I would like to inform the House that one of the mobile operators has successfully, in the course of the last two weeks, launched the first pilot for LT in Mauritius. Mr Speaker, Sir, this clearly demonstrates the level of confidence which operators have in the policy framework set out by our Government.

In line with the MID initiatives, Government will promote the use of clean and sustainable energy in ICT as well as the use of such innovative technologies like cloud computing to reduce the carbon footprint. In line with Government policy to further develop the ICT sector and create more employment, new technology parks will be set up in Rose Belle and Solitude. The buildings will be eco-friendly and will comprise green features which will host high ICT/BPO activities such as a disaster recovery centre and software development. Government will constantly review its institutional and legal frameworks in line with international best practices for the ICT sector so as to respond to emerging needs and challenges.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to conclude by once again commending our Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, for his wisdom, vision and leadership which will undoubtedly propel our country to the next stage of our socio-economic development.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Hossen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move for the adjournment of the debate.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

(6.19 p.m.)

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE LICENSING OF RECRUITING AGENTS FOR OVERSEAS EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. XII of 2012)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Licensing of Recruiting Agents for Overseas Educational and Training Institutions (Amendment) Bill (No. XII of 2012) be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as already provided in the Explanatory Memorandum, the object of the Bill is to make better provision for the regulation of recruiting agents by –

- (i) extending the range of activities for which an agent has to be licensed, and
- (ii) providing that a person based outside Mauritius and duly authorised by an institution to recruit on its behalf may authorise an agent to recruit on its behalf.

Sir, the Licensing of Recruiting Agents for Overseas Educational and Training Institutions Act was enacted in August 2006 and proclaimed on 01 December 2006. At that time, it was considered necessary to have a regulatory framework to govern the

recruitment of students for higher studies abroad by agents with a view to safeguarding the interest of that category of students. As hon. Members of the House are aware, some students opt to have recourse to the services of a recruiting agent to facilitate their admission to an overseas educational training institution instead of applying directly to the institution.

In fact, in view of the mushrooming of dubious institutions and qualifications, policy makers consider it their duty to give the necessary support to students through legal means. Accordingly, the law, which was voted in 2006, provides for all persons engaged in the business of recruiting students for studies abroad to be duly licensed. A committee known as the Licensing Committee, chaired by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry and comprising of representatives of the Ministry, of the Tertiary Education Commission, and sometimes of the Mauritius Qualifications Authority, meets on a regular basis to consider applications for new and renewable licences, to examine cases of non compliance amongst others.

Presently, there are 18 agents with a valid licence operating in the sector. With a view to safeguarding the interests of students, a press communiqué is regularly published in the newspapers and on the website of the Ministry so as to inform students of the updated list of duly registered recruiting agents. They are also advised to deal only with licensed agents. Sir, the legislation provides for contraveners to be prosecuted. Section 9 of the legislation provides that -

“Persons found in breach of the law are liable to a fine not exceeding Rs500,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years”.

Accordingly, my Ministry refers cases of agents operating without a licence to the police for prosecution. However, the Commissioner of Police has drawn our attention that, in view of the restrictive nature of the definition of the word ‘recruit’ in the 2006 legislation, the Police Department faces difficulties to sustain certain cases in a Court of Law unless evidence is detained that students are actually being recruited. It has not been possible to establish any criminal offence against seven cases reported between 2006 and 2008 because there was no provision in the law.

Sir, the first amendment in the Bill accordingly provides for enlarging the definition of the word ‘recruit’ by adding, and I quote -

‘Includes advertise, market, canvass and carry out any other activity relating to recruitment’

over and above the initial definition, which was limited to, and I quote -

‘Recruit for admission to an institution’.

The new definition has been based on the provision in the Recruitment of Workers Act which deals with the recruitment of workers. It is, therefore, expected that the Police will be in a better position to establish criminal offences against defaulters in a Court of Law, and to thereby protect students against unscrupulous persons who act as recruiting agents without licence.

The second major amendment concerns the supporting document to be furnished by an applicant to operate as a recruiting agent. Under the existing legislation, it is provided, at section 4 (3) (a), that -

‘Every application made to my Ministry for a licence shall be accompanied by a written authority duly issued and authenticated by the institution, that is, the post-secondary educational institution to which the student is to be admitted, certifying that the applicant is acting on its behalf.’

It is the trend worldwide for universities and post-secondary institutions to have recourse to the services of a third party in their respective countries to recruit students on their behalf. Some examples are Navitas Ltd, IDP Australia, and so on and so forth.

During its proceedings, the Licensing Committee has come across cases whereby prospective and existing recruiting agents have agreements with a third party rather than the institution itself. Based on legal advice of the Solicitor-General, section 4(3)(a) of the Act is being amended to make provision -

‘That a person based outside Mauritius and duly authorised by an institution to recruit on its behalf be authorised by an agent to recruit on its behalf’.

The amendment is being envisaged with retrospective effect as from 01 December 2006, that is, the date of proclamation of the Act, to ensure that all such cases are regularised.

In accordance with section 4(7) (a) of the legislation, any licence issued is valid for a period of two years, however, the legislation does not make provision for any deadline for the renewal of the licence.

It has been observed by my Ministry that some agents wait till the last minute or some even after the expiry of their licence to apply for renewal. The proposed amendment to the effect that an application for renewal should be made, at least, three months before the date of expiry of the licence will place the onus on agents to ensure that they apply in a timely manner for the renewal of their licence.

Finally, being given that the licensing of recruiting agents now falls within the ambit of my Ministry, the word 'education' is being replaced by 'Tertiary Education', wherever it applies, and the word 'Officer in Charge' by 'Supervising Officer'.

Sir, the amendments to the 2006 legislation will further reinforce the legal framework regulating the operation of recruiting agents and safeguard students against agents operating without a licence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now commend the Bill to the House.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo) rose and seconded.

(6.27 p.m.)

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill purports to amend the Licensing of Recruiting Agents for Overseas Educational and Training Institutions Act of 2006.

It is an important piece of legislation because, according to the latest statistics made public of the 44,000 students engaged in tertiary education, roughly a quarter, about 11,000 students, study overseas. So, it is an important piece of legislation. It is important because the situation has changed. It is no longer as it used to be before when students going overseas were very few and the institutions to which they purported to apply to were very few in number; they would apply through one single mechanism for the UK and one single mechanism for France.

Today, there are many more countries to which our students go to. There are many more institutions within those countries, and there are many more courses which are applied for. It is an important legislation because, time and time again, we hear of stories that are not only exceptional but very sad of agents or agencies using, confusing and abusing our young people. That is why when the Act was introduced in 2006, it was welcomed.

In fact, when I was Minister of Education, back in 2003, there was a very sad incident, when a young man by the name of Atish Ramgoolam lost his life, was killed in St Petersburg in Russia, after which it dawned upon us that we had to do something about it. There was a whole process of consultation which culminated in this Act being introduced by the then Minister Gokhool in 2006, and it was welcomed by both sides of the House.

The present Bill, I take it, is an attempt to revisit the Act in the light of the experience of the last five or is it six years. There are three major issues. I won't talk about the three months' notice for renewal of licence; that is purely procedural. There are three main issues. The first is the definition of "recruit" which is being broadened so that the ambit, in fact, of the application of the Act is being broadened and the Ministry can now look into all the activities pertaining to canvassing, marketing, and publicising that were not quoted by the Act.

For instance, this coming weekend, there is an educational fair. A Canadian institution of higher learning has come to Mauritius and there will be a fair to which students will be attending. Under the legislation as it is, I presume that the Ministry has no say. It cannot ask for credentials, it cannot check the courses being offered; it has no say at all. Whereas when the amendments to this legislation will be proclaimed, this Bill, the new Act will be proclaimed, amending the old Act - unfortunately it won't be before next weekend, but certainly, in the near future, the Ministry will be able to look into all these activities. So, to the extent that the Ministry will now have *un droit de regard* as regards educational fairs, we see it as positive.

Unfortunately, the two other amendments are less straightforward. As you are aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, section 4(3) of the existing Act is being amended so that henceforth, those entitled to be licensed will not only be agents in Mauritius acting under

the direct authority, i.e., contracted by the institution of higher learning, but also individuals or organisations in Mauritius acting on behalf of another agency abroad which has been contracted by the institution. For instance, University 'X' in UK, in the United States, instead of having an individual agent here, in Mauritius, will - already does - contract an agency that can be in the States and the individual here, in Mauritius, will be acting on behalf of that agency, although - the Minister says in the proposed amendment - with the covering approval of that institution. What that means, we know not!

What is the situation right now? I went onto the website of the Ministry and discovered that there are 18 licensed agencies right now in Mauritius. There are some that are very well known, I won't quote names, but which represent, I don't know, 30 or 40 institutions of higher learning and there are those that represent a mere handful of two to three institutions, but they are licensed. However, there are more than 30 which are presently unlicensed. The hon. Minister not having commented on that fact, I can only presume that these 30 odd, I think it is 32, actually operate as agents, are known to be operating as agents by the Ministry, but fall outside the purview of the law because they have no contract with the institution of higher learning, and therefore, they are recognised by the Ministry as being in operation. Otherwise, why would they be called unlicensed? The exact appellation on the website is 'List of Unlicensed Recruiting Agents'. So, they are acknowledged by the Ministry as being recruiting agents, but they are unlicensed. In other words, they are operating outside the law. So, my interpretation is that this Bill attempts to regularise, to legalise their situation.

It would look as something going in the right direction but, Mr Speaker, Sir, we believe that this is very risky. Let me just give a few examples.

Firstly, what about the credentials of the parent agency whether in the United States, in China, in Malaysia, or whatever? Who is going to check those credentials, and how? It will be well impossible for the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology - whatever be the good intention of the hon. Minister - to go and check on these agencies across the world. So, there are very serious risks pertaining to this initiative.

Secondly, what happens if there is a change in the relationship between the University and its agency, the parent agency abroad for whatever reasons? They have a

disagreement, the contract between the University and the main agency in Kuala Lumpur is amended or is rescinded, whatever, and we have our agent, here, who has a two-year licence. It is not a licence for a few months, it is for two years. What happens, then? It is risky. In fact, the whole relationship between the agent, in Mauritius, and that University, which now becomes the third party, becomes very tenuous indeed. Yet, the local agent is supposed to provide the prospective student here with information concerning accommodation, courses and so on, and so forth; detailed information, whereas the relationship will be one with the third party and, therefore, a very tenuous relationship.

Now, the application of the law raises many issues, but, more fundamentally, the protection which we aim to afford all our students is called into question. That is why, as regards that second amendment, having discussed with my colleagues - hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun will, I know, come back to these issues in detail at a later stage - we feel that there is danger. There are high risks as regards the second amendment. However much we can understand the possible motivation, we believe that it is very risky. The third major change is very puzzling and you will understand, as a lawyer yourself, Mr Speaker, Sir, my qualms. As regards Commencement, it says -

“Section 4(b) shall be deemed to have come into operation on 01 December 2006.”

We are voting a law this year which will have retrospective effect in 2006. Those who fell outside the law will be regularised. Now, what does that mean? I see many difficulties before a Court of Law there, and the only assumption - because unfortunately, the hon. Minister has not explained the rationale for this in his address - it can only mean is that there were 40 odd operators operating outside the law. We could have regularised their situation today with this Bill. Why, now, have it as a sort of a covering approval with retrospective effect back to 2006? I am very concerned about that.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill was also the opportunity to address some very live issues concerning the operation of the main Act and, with your permission, I shall just touch upon a few of these points. One, my colleague, Ajay Gunness, in 2006, was the Opposition's spokesperson for education, and he raised the point that there was no proper database. We still do not have a proper database as regards who among our students go

abroad; where do they go to, and under what conditions? I think this Bill could have been the occasion to address the issue by placing an obligation on students to register or whatever. Second point, we had then proposed that the licensing agent be not the Ministry, as it is now proposed and confirmed, but the Tertiary Education Commission.

In 2006, the then hon. Minister said: “that’s not possible because it is not compatible with the role of the Tertiary Education Commission.” That is not correct! It is perfectly possible under the TEC Act that the Tertiary Education Commission does the job. Unfortunately, this could have been changed; it has not been changed. The role of the Ministry should be policy-making but not detailed implementation of regulations. It does not have the expertise to do that. The technical staff which is at the Tertiary Education Commission deals, Mr Speaker, Sir - you may be aware - with accreditation issues and this is precisely about accreditation.

Now, this Bill maintains the provisions of the main Act which casts the hon. Minister as the appellate authority. Again, there was an opportunity to change that. Do you mean to intervene, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker: Yes, this is a Bill which is amending the main Act. The hon. Member must speak on the amendment. I have given him a lot of latitude to speak outside the Bill. Next time, on occasion arising when he will address the House, he can address the points that he is making now.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in 10 seconds, I will finish what I have to say. Minister as appellate authority; this would have been the opportunity to change it. Fees being charged from students, and this is in the Bill. Right now, some agencies do not charge students. They will get a commission as per each student being recruited. Some agencies charge both. They get the commission but they also charge students locally. Now, this Bill could have addressed the issue. This brings me to my last point which are the regulations.

There are regulations which were made under the main Act. The regulations were made after 2006. In 2008, there was a Parliamentary Question, asked, in this House and then hon. Minister Bunwaree, who was in charge for Tertiary Education, undertook to look into the necessity of bringing amendments to the Bill. I can only express the

hope that, with this new amendment, the opportunity will be taken to revisit the regulations.

I shall end, Mr Speaker, Sir, by saying that while we welcome the endeavour to revisit the main Act in the light of experience, we have some very serious doubts about the risks attended to some of the amendments and I can only hope that the hon. Minister, in his summing up, will address those issues.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.42 p.m.)

The Minister of Information and Communication Technology (Mr T. Pillay Chedumbrum): Mr Speaker, Sir, every year many Mauritian students go abroad for their studies. They usually apply to Overseas Educational and Training Institutions directly or usually go through their agents.

Before the year 2006, the activities of such agents were not regulated. Act XVII of 2006 changed that. Its name explains it all, the Licensing of Recruiting Agents for Overseas Educational and Training Institutions Act. The stated purpose of the Act was to provide for the regulations of persons or Bodies recruiting students for admission to Overseas Education and Training Institutions. The aim behind such licensing of recruiting agents was to protect students and their responsible parties against abuses and ensure that they got a value for money service. The purpose of the new Bill is aimed at –

- (a) “extending the range of activities for which an agent has to be licensed;
- (b) providing that a person, based outside Mauritius and duly authorised by an institution to recruit on its behalf, may authorise an agent to recruit on its behalf, and for related matters.”

The rule, Mr Speaker, Sir, remains that a student can, even today, apply directly to an Overseas Educational and Training Institution. However, for those who go through an agent representing such an Institution, Act XVII of 2006 requires the latter to be licensed, section 3 of the Act.

The new Bill, section 2, simplifies the definition of an agent. It is now a person who recruits students. It, previously, was any person engaged in the recruitment of students on behalf of an Institution.

The new Bill, section 2, also widens the term 'recruit'. Previously, it meant in relation to students, recruit for admission to an institution on behalf of that institution. It now means –

- (a) “recruit for admission to an institution; and
- (b) includes advertise, market, canvass and carry out any other activity relating to recruitment.”

This is in line with the stated purpose of the Act to extend the activities of agents.

Under the 2006 Act, an application of an agent to be licensed had to be made to the officer in charge of the Ministry of Education. Now, officer in charge is defined as the Official Head of the Ministry. The new Bill replaces the term 'officer in charge' wherever it appears and replaces it by the term 'supervising officer' of the Ministry of Tertiary Education. In effect, Mr Speaker, Sir, the application will henceforth not be made directly to the Minister but to one of his officers. The 2006 Act further lays down the manner in which an application should be made, the content of such an application and the accompanying document to be attached.

The new Bill, section 4 (3) brings a change to the type of authorisation needed by the agent from the institution he claims to represent. It must be written. It should emanate from the institution or another person based outside Mauritius with covering approval for an institution. Under the 2006 Act, a licence duly obtained will be valid for a period of 2 years. It can however be renewed.

The new Bill, section 4 (c) provides that the application for renewal should be made 3 months prior to the expiry of the licence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the provisions *inter alia* relating to the duties of licensees, the contract between the licensee and the student or his responsible party, the security to be furnished by the agent and the powers of the officer in charge will, henceforth - be the supervising officer of the relevant Ministry - remain the same. In bringing the changes to the 2006 Act, Government aims at improving an important enactment which touches those students who go through an agent to study abroad. It is in line with the Government's philosophy to prevent abuses and protect the rights of a segment of the younger generation of our country.

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

(6.48 p.m.)

Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) : Mr Speaker, Sir, all hon. Members of this House ,who have at heart the interests of Mauritian students aspiring to study abroad or already studying abroad, have no other alternative than to support this Bill as the Explanatory Note of the Bill states that it is aiming at consolidating the regulations for recruiting agents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if such a laudable step is being taken, I am sure that all of us would only support it. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that I am a bit uneasy with paragraph (b) of the Explanatory Memorandum, I will say why I am a bit uneasy with that, it states –

“Providing that a person based outside Mauritius and duly authorised by an Institution to recruit on its behalf may authorise an agent to recruit on its behalf.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are here, legislators legislating in this august Assembly normally for our people and I am a bit uneasy with the wording of this paragraph. I do understand straightaway that from now on our recruiting agents will be able to recruit students for admission in an overseas institution on behalf of another foreign recruiting agent. I would have been happier if we had addressed this paragraph in this way instead of referring to a person based outside Mauritius, just a matter of feelings, Mr Speaker, Sir. As mentioned by my colleague, hon. Obeegadoo, we are here with our good initiative. Yet, I feel that the term ‘a person based outside Mauritius’ should have been defined, whether it is a foreign recruiting agent, an education specialist, a counsellor or an education consultant attached to some universities or simply a recruiting agent working for a number of universities; this should have been clearly defined in the Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned by other orators before me, it is important to ensure accountability of the third party. I should call it the third party, because we are here in Mauritius with the recruiting agent, with the institution who is about to take up our Mauritian students, but then we have the third party, the person outside Mauritius, who is being authorised to recruit agents on its behalf in Mauritius.

What do we do in case our local agent has already recruited students, send them out there and then, in the meantime, changes occur at the level of the university, when they no longer consider the third party to be one of their contractors?

Very often, we find that students all over the world move from one place to another and then get stranded in these countries. We have mentioned earlier the sad case of Mr Atish Ramgoolam who passed away in very sad conditions, but we have had lots of other horror stories, as we call them, of students having been sent to some other countries and become stranded there. We have heard of Mauritian students having to spend the nights under a bridge in Australia. We have heard of Mauritian students in England, who have been admitted to an institution, who have studied for two years and then found, all of a sudden, that they could pursue their studies for the third year because the authorities in England would not provide them with a visa because they no longer considered the educational institution as being one which was reliable and valid.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there are many stories and, therefore, we have to ensure that people, who will take care of our students abroad, are reliable ones. Again, in this piece of legislation, we find no conditions attached, nothing to ensure that these people are accountable to our authorities in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is one issue. At the same time, we realise that the recruitment of students for foreign institutions is a very lucrative business. In Canada, which has been very, very shy to adopt the technique of having agents for recruiting foreign students, about 10% of their university recruits come from countries outside Canada. It is interesting to note that, in England, for example, 200,000 students come from India. So, the recruiting business is a very, very lucrative one and it is imperative that the regulations governing the recruiting agents be of a very high standard.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in England, Australia and New Zealand, they have now come up with seven principles. They call it seven signs of integrity, that is, the recruiting agents should be reliable, transparent; they should show the students exactly what they can expect there. They should give proper indication of the cost and of the lodging facilities available there. All this is to ensure that there is no malpractice, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is why I feel that, with this legislation, we have to ensure that such issues are taken care of in the regulations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having mentioned the problems that may arise, especially because of the nature of the business itself, I would like also to move on to the section regarding the commencement of the Bill. The commencement of the Bill being taken as from 01 December 2006, I tend to believe that this has probably been the case because the hon. Minister mentioned in his speech that there are certain cases of illegal recruiters, who are before the court but the Police are unable to sue them simply because they did not come under the categories proposed by the former Bill. I would like to ask the hon. Minister: why the cut-off date of 01 December 2006? Why it is not as from today? I suppose that he must be having some good reasons why he had moved it to 2006. As far as I remember, all legislations that have been passed in this National Assembly have, as far as possible, been put in operation following the voting of the legislation. I would like to know why this decision to put it back to 2006.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we do understand that there are lots of problems faced by students through recruiting agents. We have also to understand that there are many recruiters who are people of great integrity, who work for the benefit of the students, and I would like here to say 'thank you' to these people who have been slogging hard for years and who have ensured that students leaving Mauritius have the proper *encadrement* once they are outside.

At the same time, it is important to note that, throughout the world, we tend to have a wide range of different types of recruiters, those who are full of integrity but also those who tend to be very, very mean in the way they proceed and who don't act in favour of students. For the time being, I would like to say that, with this piece of legislation, I hope that our students going abroad will be better taken care of and that regulations will come along with this new legislation to ensure that our students are properly *encadrés* so that they can in future carry on with their aspirations and study abroad as has been their wish.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.57 p.m.)

Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Speaker, Sir, my interest in this Bill is more maybe of a medical nature. We know for a fact that

repeatedly, over the past few years, we have had recruiting agents enrolling students for those universities mostly in China where you pay a fee at the very beginning and you just go and become a doctor. I have started taking a look at those recruiting agents and it very often turns out that this recruiting agent has no more any licence than anybody else and, at the same time, it is just that somebody, who went there, finds a good way of making some money and starts bringing the others over. At the same time, when you are trying to look at the function of the recruiting agent, they become agents of a recruiting agent. They become the agents, the sub-agents, assistant agents and these people have no guarantee to show to anyone. Those recruiting agents, who are actually *bona fide* and are actually, supposedly, along the numbers which the hon. Minister has given, are not compelled to declare the names of the assistants who will function on their behalf. Again, one of the loopholes, we always mention is: this Bill takes care of the new recruiting agents, of the licences to be paid and the sum of Rs500,000 as mentioned in the regulation is, to my mind, really too little. When we are talking about people who are sent off to Australia by one of the *bona fide* agencies, the agent pays a sum of Rs200,000 direct to the University, whereas the other agents charge less. There had been a couple of laureates actually who, being given the sum of Rs500,000 by Government, try to arrange to fit in with the agents so that they pay Rs250,000 and then there are lots of extra expenses which come in. Now, I fail to understand also, according to what my colleagues have said before, *la date butoir de 2006*. Does this mean that we will be able to clean up the mess that we have seen so far? I am sure, despite not being legal to have a retroactive effect on this law is going to prove the main stumbling block to this Bill?

I also fail to note in the amendments any reference to those agents – I hate to call them agencies. I received a publicity from one of those Canada Education Fairs with part of the advertisement being for a bank: ‘Discuss your loan requirements with bank X at the Fair. I mean these amendments do not take into consideration the credibility which is being given by the bank to some of those agents. Consequently, I would like to end and say that, while agreeing with the spirit of cleaning up the mess of the recruiting agents, I do not think that these amendments go far enough; go a long way to reassure the man out there who will be sending his kids to the University.

We are only at the beginning of a long process. We will have to wait to see out it works in the reality and to see how many complaints we shall be having in the near future.

Thank you.

(7.01 p.m.)

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, first, I would like to thank all the hon. Members for contributing to the enactment of this Bill.

I think all hon. Members showed genuine concern for our students here, especially for those who haven't had the chance to visit the country and know the universities and so on.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to respond to hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun. The main Act actually does cater for information that is required to be offered by the recruiting agents. That is, they have to provide information with regard to quality and cost, reasonable monthly living costs, costs of health facilities and also the level of security at the institution. It is very unfortunate what actually happened to Mr Ramgoolam, but these are already existing provisions in the main Act.

With regard to the three issues raised by hon. Obeegadoo, I think on the first one we are in agreement. We want to redefine the word 'recruit' because a lot of unscrupulous recruiting agents are actually doing things that were not acceptable to our students. That we agree on.

Now, with regard to the second aspect of the third-party agreements, in fact, what actually happened is that when this law was passed, it was not realised that this existed. We have agencies such as IDP Australia, which is a reputable institution. That was missed by the lawmakers at that time and this is what we are trying to correct. In fact, I read from my notes, that there are ten such third-party agreements, such as IDP Australia, Higher Edge FZ-LLC known as Canadian University Application Centre (CUAC) and so on and so forth. So we are correcting something that existed, that was missed out in the main Act.

With regard to the backdating, I need to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is only section 4(a) that is being given retrospectively effect - here because of the situation that was missed out when the main ACt was being written.

With regard to database, I am informed that there is provision in the law that we have to keep database of students and I have just been shown a sheet with all the information. I did not quite get what the hon. Member meant with respect to charging students, but we can discuss it at some stage and I'll try to see whether we need to tighten this.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, when the Act was passed in 2006, it did not take into consideration that many universities did have recourse to a third-party to carry out the recruitment on their behalf. I have given some examples and we are in the process of correcting this. I must add, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we would have a control over a third-party which we did not have any control as yet. The third-party will have to produce a letter from the main institutions authorising it to recruit on its behalf.

Now I can understand the concern of hon. Members on what actually happens when there is this change of relationship. The licence issued to the recruitment agent provides that it should inform the Ministry of any change of circumstance and submit a new agreement in case there is one. But still I take the point of hon. Members it could well be that we are not informed. We will take note of this concern. The credentials are verified by TEC which forms part of the licensing committee.

I would like to refer to a point raised by hon. Obeegadoo whereby he mentioned that there is a list of unlicensed agents. I am given to understand that this list of unlicensed agents is placed on the website to warn students not to deal with these agents. At least, they know that these are the bad guys so they should have nothing to do with them. I have already mentioned that the regulations made under the Act provide for agents to submit a return in relation to students recruited. The information on the number of students recruited is available, as I stated, at my Ministry and the agents are equally required by the regulations to provide information on the commission charged.

There was a point raised by hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun. There is another point on section 4(b)(2). Here what it means is that there is no need to define another person. It

can mean a company, a person or an institution. I hope I have addressed all the points raised by the hon. Members.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the internationalisation of our education, universities want to increase international enrolments and have recourse to independent recruiting agents to represent them overseas and this is current practice. This is happening throughout the world. From memory, I can say that studies show that there would be millions of students travelling around the world. This is a practice that will keep on happening here. This practice has allowed students to obtain assistance from agents who speak the same language and understand the local culture. The agents also provide prospective students with information to help them select the appropriate field of study and institution. However, the system of operation of agents, which is based on a Student Commission, as we have seen, encourages unethical behaviour and cases of abuse. This Act that was introduced in 2006 set the standards and licensing to carry out due diligence in order to protect students from unscrupulous persons. Well we have had some experience.

With these amendments proposed today through this Bill, we are further reinforcing the ability of the Police to effectively prosecute illegal recruiters and ensuring that only professional and credible agents provide recruiting services to students. These amendments are also expected to act as a deterrent to persons operating without a licence. Having listened to hon. Members, I am, Mr Speaker, Sir, going to ask my Permanent Secretary to ensure that proper information is sent to the Ministry of Education so that this information can be distilled throughout colleges and schools, and students, teachers and masters will know about the issues raised here and about our concern so that they take the due precautions required. My Ministry will continue to publish all the information on the licensed recruiting agents for the information of students and the public, and carry out due diligence with the support of the Police to identify those operating illegally.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The Licensing of Recruiting Agents for Overseas Educational and Training Institutions (Amendment) Bill (No. XII of 2012) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Licensing of Recruiting Agents for Overseas Educational and Training Institutions (Amendment) Bill (No. XII of 2012) was read the third time and passed.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

Second Reading

**THE CONSUMER PROTECTION (PRICE AND SUPPLIES CONTROL)
(AMENDMENT) BILL (No. XIII of 2012)**

Order for Second reading read.

The Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr C. Sayed-Hossen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) (Amendment) Bill (No. XIII of 2012) be read a second time.

The main object of the Bill is to amend the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act so that tobacco products shall be displayed in specific locations in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

The amendments proposed have become inevitable as there exists presently a discrepancy between the provisions in the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act 1998 and the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2008 regarding the display of tobacco products.

Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under section 17 of the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act 1998, which is administered by my Ministry, there is an obligation imposed on every trader to display the articles/products which they propose to offer for sale to the public. The purpose of this legal requirement is to better promote and protect the interests and rights of the consumers. In fact, with such mandatory display the

consumer can see, inspect and examine a product as well as read its label before making the choice to purchase. This is also in line with one important mandate of my Ministry which is to promote and protect Consumer Rights. Indeed, with this legal provision two fundamental rights of the consumers are being promoted and protected, namely, the Right to Information and the Right to Choice

However, in accordance with section 5(5) of the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2008 (effective as from 01 March 2009) which is administered by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, it is an offence to display tobacco products for sale in trading and commercial outlets. This is in line with one of the recommendations of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which aims at controlling, if not eliminating, tobacco use. As the House is aware, Mauritius has signed and ratified the WHO FCTC.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as mentioned earlier, there is a clear conflict in the provisions of the two pieces of legislation as regards the display of tobacco products. Thus, for obvious reasons, it has been practically impossible for officers of either the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life or the officers of my Ministry to enforce this particular provision of the law. The amendment which is being proposed to the House is therefore to do away with this glaring contradiction and to bring an effective harmonisation between the two pieces of legislation. This will bring more clarity of role between our two Ministries and enable meaningful enforcement of the law.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the proposed Bill also provides for the definition of tobacco products. We have attempted to extend its definition as wide as possible so that there are no possible loopholes through which such products or their derivatives may pass the net. Thus, in the proposed Bill, tobacco products refer to cigarettes, cigars or products composed in whole or partly of tobacco. It also includes tobacco leaves or any extract and mixture thereof. Pipe tobacco, green tobacco, leaf tobacco as well as manufactured tobacco and cigarette paper, tubes and filters are also included in the definition of tobacco products.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, any product which has been duly prescribed by a medical practitioner as being a nicotine replacement therapy, will not be considered as a tobacco product for the purpose of this amendment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the proposed Bill also provides that the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection may set the parameters within which specimens of tobacco products may be displayed at the duty-free shop of the airports and ports of Mauritius, Rodrigues and others. I will certainly make good use of this provision in consultation with my colleagues, particularly, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life and the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development. The aim again will be to provide a maximum protection against tobacco use by our present and future generations. I am informed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that, at present, tobacco products are displayed at very strategic places at the duty-free shops at the airport of Mauritius so as to attract and retain the attention of smokers and non-smokers as well as young persons. I consider that this state of affairs should not be tolerated and I do propose to review this situation soon in consultation with all the stakeholders.

Having said this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission and without impinging on the mandate of my colleague, the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life, I should say, I think, a few words on the scourges of tobacco and the devastating effects that this product is having worldwide.

(Interruptions)

I do disclose my interest, yes. Considered as a silent killer...

(Interruptions)

Yes, I do. Considered as a silent killer, the WHO has declared the use of tobacco as a pandemic. Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to the World Health Organisation, tobacco use is the single largest cause of preventable death in the world. It kills more than eight million people each year. The Oxford Medical Companion has written that, I quote

—

“Tobacco is the only legally available consumer product which kills people when used entirely as intended.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is sufficient empirical evidence that tobacco use is a real threat to public health, but it has also been established that it has serious economic costs regarding public expenditure in the health care, loss of productivity etc.

The World Health Organisation has indicated now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that tobacco use should not be the concern of only the Ministry of Health. We need to adopt a

concerted approach and involve as many partners (including the private sector and the NGOs) as possible to fight this multi-headed scourge. We need to develop effective implementation mechanisms on the recommendations of the WHO FCTC, and my Ministry will certainly provide all its assistance and support.

Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this proposed Bill has been worked out in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Quality of life. My Ministry is also collaborating on the implementation of the FCTC, and in future we shall continue to work together.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the amendments proposed in the Bill may appear to be minor, but they carry all their weight in the fight against the tobacco epidemic, and I look forward for other concrete and bold measures, be it legislative or otherwise, which we can take as a caring and responsible Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that I shall, at Committee Stage, move for amendments to clause 3(b) of the Bill, to extend the provision of section 17 of the Act to Ports of Mauritius and Rodrigues, and any shop under the Deferred Duty and Tax Scheme prescribed under the Customs Act.

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

Mr Faugoo rose and seconded.

(7.21 p.m.)

Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to react straightaway to this gesture by this caring Government in trying to reduce the tobacco effects on health while speaking about the conflict of interests because every year there is a rise in excise duty on tobacco products so as to increase revenue for the coffers. This is no hypocrisy, but a bit of a conflict of interests in Government trying to play do good, but actually doing quite bad.

First of all, I wish to say that I am totally for this Bill. Anything that will promote health, anything that will save the kids from going to tobacco is welcome because after all whatever campaign we conduct against tobacco is that we are aiming at children, not adults. There are no new adult smokers; there are young kids who start smoking, and who get to a brand and keep to that brand eventually throughout. There are adults who will

usually buy the pack of cigarettes for the young kids. I also wish to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Education that outside many of our secondary schools there are *des débits* who sell cigarettes individually even though the law says against. There has been no mode of control, absolutely none, and it's a free for all at the level of selling, while it is all very good for us to stand here and talk about the mishaps, the effects of tobacco on our lungs, on our heart, and on all our diseases.

We also have to remember that we are here dealing with a legal product. Tobacco, by any standard, is not illegal. It is free for sale, and there are some apprehensions no doubt being shown by the shop owners association who see in it a way of curtailing their range of activities. The priority is the health of the country so be it, but, at the same time, we have to be just. We have to show some forms of equality of treatment towards those shops that will be compelled to hide the tobacco products, and those duty-free shops. I am glad to note that the Minister has said he is not happy with the way tobacco is being presented at the airport, because at the airport, when you come in, there is no tobacco to be bought; when you go out, there is tobacco to be bought, meaning that you intend saving the lives of the Mauritian public, but, at the same time, inflicting the disease upon the tourists or any other Mauritian who wishes to leave the country.

I also have to remember that you do not have one duty-free shop in this country. So, we will have to start defining duty-free shops. I think the powers that are in the Ministry's hands to ensure that these products are not advertised, are not shown to the public, and should be actually dealt with a lot of care.

I remember that, in some countries, one has to produce its ID card before one is allowed to buy tobacco. This guarantees that you are over 18 years old. If we want to go that far and save the health of people, I think we might as well do so. Hiding the tobacco products from advertisement no doubt is a good step because we always see these kinds of brands - we would not advertise any brands - which show the kind of macho look, the rugged look of the male who smokes or the other tobaccos for the slim and elegant ladies. These kinds of advertisements have to be shelved. I think, be it at the duty-free shop or at any other place that the Minister may consider fit to eliminate tobacco, we have to implement what we have been trying to say.

At the same time, I would like to end with one request, and that has not only to do with health reasons. Let us not show selective discrimination in allowing some shops, be it duty-free or not, to advertise, to over promote, to over expose their products, by, at the same time, suppressing the same in the small, little shops. Let us have a kind of equality of action, equality of punishment, equality of pressure being applied across the country. Maybe if statistics have shown that whether you hide the tobacco or not, there has not been a great change in consumption, which is why Government will be happy and will still increase its excise duty and get the money. Statistics have not shown. Anyway, we have to start somewhere. We have to aim for the young. As for the older smokers, I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister will agree with me that we are a bit as if in a total loss stage.

Thank you.

(7.26 p.m.)

Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we talk of tobacco, we talk of health or rather of the ill effects of tobacco on health. I think that I would fail in my duty if, as a former Minister of Health, I do not intervene on this Bill and say at least a few words.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can say that the intention of the Minister is good, but later on I will come to some specific clauses. The Minister has spoken on the scourge of tobacco, but let me as well quote some figures. The tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest health threats the world has ever faced. In the world, as has been mentioned by the Minister, about eight million people die yearly due to tobacco-related diseases. Approximately one person dies every six seconds due to tobacco, and up to half the current users will eventually die of a tobacco-related disease. In Mauritius, out of five men, two are smokers. 40% of the males aged between 25 and 75 are current smokers, and that is equally so for Rodrigues. We register in Mauritius about 40 deaths per month due to tobacco-related diseases such as cardiac, cancer, lung, stomach problems.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, each Government which has been in place has taken initiatives to sensitise the population on the ill-effects of cigarettes. There have been several media campaigns, and I still recall when I was the Minister of Health, we had

launched a media campaign, which came to be known as 'The Sponge Media Campaign'. It was a picture which depicted lungs which had become black due to cigarette smoking *qu'on était en train de percer pour faire sortir comme si du goudron de ces poumons*. People were shocked with that picture. It was same for the pictorial warnings that were found on cigarette boxes, and which depict severe handicaps for smokers. At one point in time, Government increased the price of cigarettes also, and at another time regulations to forbid the sale of cigarettes per stick was promulgated.

All those measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are good, but a survey, carried out by the International Tobacco Control Project Team in collaboration with the University of Waterloo, Canada on the effectiveness of some of the measures taken by Mauritius revealed the following.

Let me give some of the findings of that project team. On the Sponge Media Campaign, which was displayed on several billboards, some chronic smokers were shocked. It had a positive impact on them but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it said that smokers, when they looked at that picture, thought about quitting smoking but, actually did not.

The second finding on the pictorial warnings stated that these pictorial warnings prompted a high number of smokers to start thinking about health risks. They only started thinking about health risks but, it had less impact on the smoking behaviour.

The third is the ban on the sale of single cigarettes. The survey showed that it is still the case, one third of smokers reported the purchase of single cigarettes and compliance with the ban on the sale of single cigarettes is low. I am mentioning these, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to show that Government is bound, as the hon. Minister has just stated, to implement the framework Convention. I think that it is the CFTC. It is bound to implement the Convention that it has signed and must do everything to implement all the articles of the Convention. Still, I would say that the responsibility rests on the population.

There are two issues here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. First, as I said, the responsibility is on the population but, second, which is equally important, is the monitoring of the implementation of the legislation.

The monitoring is very, very important. Let us take the purchase of cigarettes in packets of 20 instead of a single stick. If the survey, as I mentioned earlier, shows that one-third of smokers still purchase single cigarettes, there is a failure somewhere in the control of the implementation of the law. If, despite the regulation which says that people cannot smoke in public places, people still continue to do so again there is a failure in the control of the implementation of the law.

Coming back to the Bill which is in front of us, as I said, the intention is good but, I believe personally that it is a little bit weak. I cannot see in the Bill a very strong political will to ban completely the display of cigarettes in shops and supermarkets. The hon. Minister will surely agree with me that display of items is also a form of advertisement and promotion. I am sure that hon. Members of this House must have noticed that, in all shops and supermarkets, there is a special rack which is found near the counter and which is highly visible because those concerned know fully well that when people will go through the counter, they will see the different trademarks of cigarettes and that it is an effective form of advertising the product.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when I look at the Bill, my feeling - I may be wrong - is that the hon. Minister, himself, does not have the strong will to ban altogether the display of tobacco products for several reasons which I am going to mention. First, nowhere in the Bill is it stated in specific terms that a trader shall not display tobacco products. What he says in the Bill - and I find that the term is very mild - section 17, which is amended says that 'a trader shall display in that part of his trading premises to which the public has access a specimen of every goods stored in the registered warehouse' and he has added 'other than a tobacco product'. I believe that if we have at heart the health of the population, the terms should have been stronger.

Secondly, subsection 4 of section 3 says that 'the Minister may require a trader to whom subsection 3 applies to expose a specimen of a tobacco product only in such manner as the Minister may approve'. *Là, je sens comme-ci le ministre laisse une porte ouverte pour des interventions.* For me either the trader can display or cannot, *cela ne peut pas être mi figue mi raisin*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is worthwhile noting that the International Tobacco Control Survey revealed something which is very interesting and which, I think, I should

share with hon. Members of this august Assembly. I am going to quote what it says, the survey was carried recently and it says –

“The people of Mauritius, both smokers and non-smokers, strongly support a total ban on tobacco products within 10 years if Government provided assistance such as cessation clinics to help smokers quit.”

I know that we are still very far from this measure which can be seen as a very drastic measure. I should say, and the hon. Minister of Health surely knows, that there is a country which has banned tobacco altogether, that is, Bhutan where it is illegal even to sell tobacco. There is only one country in the world which has banned tobacco altogether. As I said, it can be seen as a very drastic measure.

I am not saying that we should apply this but, what I am saying is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *l'intention est très bonne* and each successive government which has come has tried to sensitise the population, has tried to see what can be done so that there are less and less smokers. I would still say that it would be difficult to control its implementation and, if the control of the implementation is not done then, once again it would be a failure. What I am saying is that I am not against the Bill, *l'intention est très bonne*, but I would say that I would have wished the hon. Minister to come with stronger measures especially if he has, at heart, the health of the population.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(7.40 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr L. Bundhoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me, first of all, to thank my colleague, hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen, Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, to have had the courage to bring in this House these amendments.

After having listened to hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee and hon. Dr. S. Boolell, I must say, we all seem to be in agreement. The question is how much we should be doing in order to prevent smoking and diminish the number of cigarettes that people smoke in this country. It is another step in the right decision. I am sure many more steps need to be taken until such time we achieve the objective of - if I may use the word - eliminating smoking of cigarette altogether. Though it is farfetched, still this is the final objective.

As my colleague rightly said, it ought to do with the display of cigarettes at points of sale. I do concur with hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee and hon. Dr. S. Boolell that it is part of commercial tricks and manoeuvre to have the display of cigarettes right at the end of the counter where you are about to pay for all the goods purchased. You put the goods in front of you and then you decide, before leaving, to buy the cigarettes, but it is different for shops and for *tabagies*.

I don't need to delve into the effects of cigarettes; we all know that cigarette is the mother of all killers. It is with cigarette that you have cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Just think of it! It is the mother of all the reasons behind all the diseases. This is why, as a responsible Government, we want to eliminate as much as possible the display of cigarettes in public places.

As far as effects of cigarettes on children are concerned, a survey was carried out, it is quite unfortunate, but I must say it as it is. Despite the fact that the number of cigarette sticks consumed in Mauritius is on the decline, according to the last survey that was carried out the number of young, unfortunately, starting to smoke is on the increase. Therefore, we have a serious problem at hand. Though our campaign for reducing cigarette smoking among the adults is working, it is the contrary that is happening with the young children. This is why we have probably to increase our efforts ten times especially with fourteen year old kids. According to the last survey – I don't have it in mind – out of every ten children of fourteen years old, four have already tasted their first cigarette before the age of fourteen. I think it is quite serious. I am not saying they are smokers, but they have already tasted their first cigarette.

(Interruptions)

As I said earlier, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection are going to work in close collaboration.

In fact, the presence of this Bill has shown the determination of both Ministries to work together because this part of the law lies with the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, whereas at the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life we have already legislated and we are putting ourselves aligned with the World Health Organisation recommendations. This is exactly what my colleague, the hon. Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection is doing in order to harmonise the law

between the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection.

Here, I would also like to thank my friend, hon. Dr. Sorefan. He just spoke softly in my ears and told me: 'Lormesh, when you stand up, do me a favour'. I asked him: 'What is it all about; do you want to extract my teeth?' He said: 'No, try to make a plea to the House. Is it not time for all those tobacco shops to stop being called *tabagie Antoine*, *tabagie coin de la rue*? Is it not time for us to come with a legislation to make sure that the word '*tabagie*' as it is publicised in all shops be discontinued. Let's call a spade a spade. It is a proposition coming from hon. Dr. Sorefan. He asked me to make this plea and I am making it on his behalf. I, being Minister, hon. Hossen being Minister maybe we will work together to fulfil the wish of my good friend from the Opposition. I think he has made a valid proposition.

(Interruptions)

With regard to advertisement, I must say one thing - it is not enough. As I said earlier, Mauritius has obtained the third price in the African Continent for its best advertisement against cigarettes. Despite having obtained the third price in the whole African Continent, still the number of cigarette smokers among the youth is on the increase. Therefore, to achieve our target, the law is in the right direction, but still we need, what I would call, a multisectoral approach. By this, I would think that the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Gender and Child Protection should all work together with NGOs in order to ensure that not only the law, but the implementation of the law is effective. At the end of the day, my personal belief, despite the fact that I am the Minister, is also to do with counselling, parent guidance on how to discourage young to start smoking. We are all Members of Parliament, how many times have we not heard the father say to his child: '*Eta garcon, ale la boutique, ale prend enn bouteille la bierre ek enn paqué cigarette, dire li marquee dans compte, amene lakaz.*' I think we should also sensitise the parents not to encourage young people to go and collect bottles of beer and rum or cigarettes on behalf of their parents. We have to do that because the sensitisation campaign is not meant only for

children, but for all people across the island. As I said earlier, this Bill is one step more in the right direction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to say something concerning the monitoring of the law. The law of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection and the law of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life are not harmonised that is why we are bringing this amendment in order to enable a better monitoring henceforth. I am not saying we are going to do miracles, but, at least, as I said earlier, we are going in the right direction.

My concern is when we work out the plan on how not to promote display of cigarettes, cigarettes will be kept under the counter, and we will have to ensure that this does not encourage the sale of cigarettes by a single stick. By law, this is not allowed, but then we'll have not only to double but maybe, by ten times, increase the monitoring. If I may add, we have to be more vigilant at discos, restaurants and all public places where people have a tendency to smoke while having a drink. I know people who don't smoke usually, but who smoke only when they are having a drink. Once the effect of alcohol is over, they stop smoking. So, we have to address all these issues. This is why I will probably agree with hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee and hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen. We also have to make sure that once we put cigarettes under the counter, this should not become a means to encourage people to sell cigarettes by stick. I believe the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development has got a very effective law; the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life have got a team and we should concert our efforts to ensure that this law is implemented to its full capacity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to trader not displaying tobacco products, we have already addressed this issue: 'Display in a manner which is agreeable by the Ministry'.

I am sure my colleague, with whom we have discussed before bringing the law, and our Ministry will set up a committee to see the best way to respect the rights of the consumers but, at the same time, to ensure that the rights of a smoker do not violate the rights of the non-smoker. This Bill goes in that direction to ensure that the rights of the smoker do not violate the right of the non-smoker.

With these few words, I thank my colleague for having brought this amendment to the House.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(7.51 p.m.)

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe and Midland): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, listening to the previous orator, one could be forgiven for believing that he is a Member of the Opposition for he is very strong on words, but that, precisely, is the difference between us and them, between the Opposition and the Government: we are judged by what we say in this House. Our job is to appeal, our job is to question, our job is to propose, but their job is to act. They are judged not on the basis of speeches in Parliament, but on the basis of their deeds, and history is made by deeds. Having listened to the hon. Member, who, I believe, was not on the list of orators a short while back, he said that he will now consider with his colleague to set up, I jotted down the words: ‘we are going to set up some kind of a committee’. Clearly, the planning is not there. The concrete strategy about implementation is not there and the hon. Minister is intervening as an afterthought. I have listened carefully; I have watched and I have listened.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister will have the time to take up the issue during his winding up. Allow the hon. Member to intervene without any interruption, please!

Mr Obeegadoo: This is not petty politics. Our concern is that this Bill leads to effective, concrete, meaningful actions against tobacco smoking in the country and that is what we will judge the Government on: action.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is the background to this Bill? In fact, it stems from the Public Health Act. I had a look at the Public Health Act and surprised to see that there is no explicit prohibition concerning tobacco smoking or displaying or selling and so on. What there is comes in the form of a Regulation that was introduced in 2008 - very recently. In 2008, the Regulation says - I am quoting from section 5 (5) of Government Notice no. 263 of 2008 published in December 2008:

“No seller of a tobacco product shall display a tobacco product for sale except in duty-free shops at the airports of Mauritius and Rodrigues”.

This is the 2008 Regulation and yet, as rightly pointed out by Members from both sides of the House, it is certainly not observed. Go to any *tabagie*, any supermarket, the cigarette is there on display! Why is that so? Why is it that, despite we had the Regulation since 2008, in deeds this could not be? This is so because, I am told, there is a problem of enforcement by the inspectors. The Ministry of Health tries as much as it can, but it does not have inspectors to run round the *tabagies* and supermarkets. Secondly, there was a blatant contradiction. On the one hand, in 2008, a Regulation says: ‘No seller of tobacco shall display’. On the other hand, we had the Consumer Protection Price and Supplies Control Act of 1998 which said exactly the contrary. It placed the duty on every trader, I quote:

‘A trader shall display in that part of his trading premises to which the public has access, a specimen of every goods kept for sale’.

A specimen of every goods stored in the registered warehouse. On the one hand, you had an Act of Parliament, a main legislation, saying that a trader must display everything including tobacco and then in 2008 - ten years later - you have a subsidiary legislation that comes to say that no seller shall display. It could not be enforced. Firstly, there was no sufficient number of inspectors at the Ministry of Health and secondly, there was a blatant contradiction. This amendment is absolutely commendable because it purports to correct this situation. On the one hand, the Act will no longer be in contradiction because what we are doing is to create an exception to the general duty to display. On the other hand, hopefully, the Ministry of Consumer Protection which also has inspectors can then play its part alongside the Ministry Health in ensuring that there is no display. It is a commendable initiative from the Government, but the challenge will be in implementation.

Now, the other problem I had with this initiative which seems, will be tackled at Committee Stage, is the 2008 Regulation: ‘No seller of tobacco shall display tobacco product for sale except in duty free-shops at the airports of Mauritius and Rodrigues’, and today’s amendment removes the duty to display in the case of tobacco, but states that duty-free shops, I quote -

‘A trader may expose a specimen of tobacco product at a duty-free shop at the airports of Mauritius and Rodrigues’.

The Minister was aligning the Consumer Protection Act with the Regulation. However, my attention has been drawn by hon. Dr. S. Boolell to the fact that duty-free shops do not only exist at the airport. I know that, in Floreal, there are a number of duty-free shops selling woollens. Are they really duty-free shops - I don't know - under the Schedule? They call themselves duty-free shops. At the sea port there are duty-free shops, including one, if I am not mistaken, falling under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, that is, the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Limited and scattered around the island there are so-called duty-free shops. Do they fall under the Schedule mentioned by the hon. Minister or not? I am not sure. However, it would seem that a good many of them pay exactly the same fee for the same licence. Whether or not we agree on a total ban of tobacco there would have been something discriminatory in the law, but I understand that the hon. Minister is bringing an amendment at Committee Stage to correct that. So be it! That again is commendable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we now learn that there will be a Government initiative for a complete ban on the display of tobacco products, whether in duty-free shops or not. I think, on this side of the House, we would welcome such a move because duty-free shops concern not only tourists. I understand duty-free shops at the airport certainly sell to Mauritians - whether they are departing or arriving, they are still Mauritians - as well as tourists, and duty-free shops outside the airport are also entitled to sell a certain quantity. I believe that is fixed by some regulation to the locals but, in any case, our objective cannot be to kill off the tourists. If there is to be a complete ban, so be it. I do not believe, on this side of the House, we would have any objections to that, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

There must be an effective campaign against tobacco smoking. So far, from what I have heard from hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, former Minister of Health, and from the hon. Minister, it does not seem - I think the Minister of Health as well raised it - that our campaign against tobacco smoking has been really effective. This is where we need more research to look at the profile of tobacco users, of smokers in Mauritius, so that the policy can be more effective. We need a much more imaginative mass campaign to be effective. We need a Government to act in law. We need enforcement and we are looking forward to hearing from both Ministers what and how concretely they will

cooperate; not just setting up some kind of Committee, but effective coordination in implementing the legislation we are to adopt today.

I would like to raise one last point. When we leave the House today having voted this amendment, and it is going to be voted, of course, we will have a Regulation that prohibits the display of tobacco products. We will have an Act that does not prohibit the display, but merely remove the duty on all traders to display. So, the question I raise is: don't we need a specific proviso in the Public Health Act prohibiting display of tobacco products. Only then, I believe, Parliament will write into the law and will, thereby, signify its intention and determination to confront the tobacco scourge that has - wrecked havoc - done untold damages to generations and generations of Mauritians.

I have done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(8.03 p.m.)

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish, at the very outset, to thank all the hon. Members, on both sides of the House, who have participated in the debate in respect of this Bill and for their very positive contributions.

To show due respect, actually, to these interventions, I would like to comment very briefly on what we have heard. I must point out, to start with, that the fundamental object of this Bill is to harmonise two pieces of legislation - as the hon. Minister of Health has very rightly said - which were in contradiction. Hon. Obeegadoo has used the words 'blatant contradiction' which I have also mentioned in my speech and the key issue here is about display.

I listened to hon. Dr. Satish Boolell and just a few comments, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir: it is true that cigarettes are free for all except for minors, of course, at the level of selling. It is also true to say, at least to believe, that the absence of display at selling points may constitute a reduction in the temptation to buy cigarettes. Hon. Dr. Satish Boolell has also mentioned that we need to be fair to most shops which will, as from now - as from the proclamation of this Bill - need to hide their cigarette products beneath the counter. I must say that it is already the case in many shops; quite a number of shops actually do not display tobacco products.

Tobacco advertising, which was mentioned by the hon. Member, is also already banned. As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill has to do with display, and display is a very strong and very potent form of advertising. The hon. Member mentioned over-promotion, overexposing, over-displaying and, indeed, this has to do with advertising indirectly. Of course, we are very sensitive to the need to protect youngsters, to protect young people and non-smokers from being tempted to become smokers.

I also listened to hon. Mrs Maya Hanoomanjee and we agree actually on the scourge of smoking. The hon. Lady has mentioned quite some impressive, alarming figures. I mentioned in my Second Reading that there is an estimated eight million people who die yearly. I was very interested in something that the hon. Lady mentioned, that is, according to research carried out in our country, 40% of males are smokers, 2 out of 5. This afternoon, I read in one newspaper that within the health service of this country 32% of males are smokers, which is, indeed, an alarming figure.

Indeed, the hon. Lady has spoken about a series of measures which have been taken over a number of years by successive Governments to reduce smoking habits and she has concluded that the ultimate responsibility lies with the population. Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is up to each individual to shoulder his or her responsibility, but it is our responsibility, as a responsible Government, to take all the necessary measures to reduce the exposure to cigarettes and to reduce the temptation of non-smokers to become smokers. The hon. Lady has also spoken about the monitoring of the legislation; enforcement is absolutely important. Within this Bill that we are presenting today, which falls within the ambit of my Ministry, enforcement will be carried out by the Consumer Protection Unit. It is the job of the inspectors within the Consumer Protection Unit to ensure that the display of tobacco products, as defined by the Amendment Bill, is not carried out in the shops. One point on which maybe the hon. Member may have misread the Bill concerns what she has mentioned about the Bill being *mi figue mi raisin* relative to the powers of the Minister, I quote the subsection -

“The Minister may require a trader to whom subsection (3) applies to expose a specimen of a tobacco product only in such manner as the Minister may approve.”

I must point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that subsection (4) has to be read after subsection (3). Subsection (4) refers to a trader for whom the display of tobacco products is allowed, that is, these are few exceptions on which I will comment later on.

Finally, I thank hon. Steven Obeegadoo for having reiterated and repeated a number of things, which I have said, much more dramatically, I must confess, much more theatrically, concerning the object of this Bill; the object of the Bill is to harmonise two pieces of legislation which were not at par. These two pieces of legislation presented a blatant contradiction between themselves and again, the hon. Obeegadoo has mentioned the great importance of the challenge in implementation, that is, in enforcement. The same remark which I have made just now would apply. I do not have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the impression that I have mentioned that there will be a complete ban on the display of tobacco products. There will be a complete ban for all points of sale other than those which are specified in subsection (3) of the amendment Bill. Subsection (3) will be governed by the, I would say, discretion - let's put it that way for want of a better word - of the hon. Minister to require a trader to expose a specimen of the tobacco product only in such manner as the hon. Minister may approve. I think this had to be made clear Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This being said I must express my appreciation that although there have been different views and different ideas from hon. Members on both sides of the House, although there might have been divergences in the expression of these opinions; what is more important is that there has been, what I see as, a convergence on the ideas and the proposals. The combat against tobacco use and abuse, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is far too major an issue to make of it a petty party political affair and I must appreciate that this has not been the case today. I am happy to note that the House has stood as one and I'm sure that together we can fight it.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

**THE CONSUMER PROTECTION (PRICES AND SUPPLIES CONTROL)
(AMENDMENT) BILL (NO. XIII OF 2012)**

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3 (Section 17 of principal Act amended)

Motion made and question proposed: "That the clause stands part of the Bill"

Mr Sayed-Hossen: Mr Chairperson, I wish to move for an amendment –

In clause 3(b), in proposed section 17 (3) –

- (a) by inserting, after the word "airport", the words "or port";
- (b) by adding, after the word "Rodrigues", the words ", or at any shop under the Deferred Duty and Tax Scheme prescribed under the Customs Act".

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Consumer Protection (Prices and Supplies Control) (Amendment) Bill (No. XIII of 2012) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 26 June 2012 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo) rose and seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Excuse me. Kindly take your seat. We have got a long list of hon. Members who have expressed their wish to intervene and I would ask them to be as short as possible.

(8.15 p.m)

MATTERS RAISED

BLACK RIVER AREA - SALT PAN EMPLOYEES

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member of Savanne & Black River): This is injury time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I hope the hon. Minister has received the notice that I have just sent to him. The point that I wish to raise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerns one of the poorest segments of our population and my Constituency. It concerns *les travailleurs des salines*, the salt pan employees. There are, in fact, four salt pans in the Black River area, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and around 150 employees earn their living from these salt pans. They have been informed recently that Government has now taken a decision to allow the total liberalisation of salt from foreign countries whereas, in the past, liberalisation was authorised on an *ad-hoc* basis, that is, during a certain period of the year, our local producers cannot meet the total demand of the population and importation was allowed to make up for the amount needed to top up, in fact, the national demand. The news of total liberalisation has traumatised all these employees as most of them are middle-aged and sole bread winners of their families and the employment opportunities for them are not very bright. Therefore, the threat of lay-off redundancies, of them losing their jobs is now hanging over their heads like a Damocles sword. This is why I am putting it to the hon. Minister to clarify this situation, that is, has Government taken this decision to liberalise totally the importation of salt, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As we know, for the producers this will be, in fact, a boon or jackpot because they have no problem in closing their salt pans. As we know today, there is *la ruée vers l'ouest*, I am talking of property development in that area of our country on the west coast. For them, it would be good to develop all these properties where there are presently salt pans. These salt pans form also the beauty of the region, part of the landscape, part of our legacy. It is a tourist attraction and this is why, therefore, I will appeal to the hon. Minister to revisit that decision if it has been taken or to set up a Ministerial committee to conduct an enquiry with regard to the social consequences which will result from the decision to liberalise totally the importation of salt, in particular, the loss of 150 jobs, the laying off of 150 bread winners and the difficulties that will entail to these poor families.

(8.19 p.m)

The Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr S. Sayed-Hossen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have taken good note of the representation of the hon. Member. I must say that my colleague, hon. Hervé Aimée, mentioned that to me last week and we have ...

(Interruptions)

... agreed that these are poor people; let's not make politics on their back. We have agreed, my colleague, hon. Aimée, and myself, to meet on Monday next to look into this particular unfortunate situation to which I am personally very sensitive. We will certainly look into that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(8.20 p.m)

VIEUX GRAND PORT & RIVIERE DES CREOLES – TAXI OPERATION

Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Merci, M. le président. Le sujet que je vais aborder concerne l'honorable ministre responsable de la NTA. C'est un problème qui concerne les chauffeurs de taxis de la région de Vieux Grand Port/Rivière des Créoles. Il y a, là-bas, des gens qui opèrent des taxis marrons depuis déjà quelque temps. Il y a eu des doléances déjà envoyées au bureau de la NTA et même au *traffic branch* de la police. Il y même des noms et la liste des véhicules qui pratiquent le taxi marron dans cette région. Ils ont été alertés. Il est vrai qu'il y a eu des officiers qui ont été dans ces endroits, mais, à chaque fois, il semblerait que ces gens-là aient déjà été avisés de leur visite, donc ils n'opèrent pas. Ils pratiquent bien souvent le matin, l'après-midi et le week-end. Ces gens sont des fonctionnaires.

Alors, je fais un appel au ministre d'assurer une surveillance dans ces deux villages: Vieux Grand Port et Rivière des Créoles, le matin, l'après-midi et le week-end, pour s'assurer que cette pratique s'arrête, et que les gens qui paient leurs patente de taxi, qui paient tous les frais de l'assurance additionnelle pour transporter les passagers ne soient pas pénalisés par une pratique illégale dans cette région.

Merci beaucoup.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will convey the request of the hon. Member to the NTA.

(8.21 p.m)

TROU AUX CERFS – TREES, CONSTRUCTION

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my point concerns the Minister of Local Government. It is something I have raised before. It is the issue of Trou aux Cerfs in Curepipe. I have disclosed my interest as somebody who lives in the immediate vicinity, and who also takes his walks there as often as possible, as do many Members on both sides of the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the site of Trou aux Cerfs is in a very sorry state these days. On the one hand, there has been the felling of trees, if not uprooting of plants, on both sides of the road going round the crater for no apparent reason. The most absurd aspect to it is even where there is marked ‘danger’, where there is the risk of land slipping away, they have uprooted the plants; ‘they’ being the Municipal Council.

Similarly, another very worrying point is that the land is being cleared on certain parts of the slope, presumably for some sort of development, and inhabitants of Curepipe are very concerned that the height restrictions which are imposed on construction around Trou aux Cerfs be adhered to.

The watchman quarters, an historic building I would say, which have been there for a long time - has been pulled down, as a result of which there appears to be no night watchman at Trou aux Cerfs, at a time when police patrols have become nonexistent. Even during those hours where no vehicle is supposed to go round the crater, I have, myself, witnessed motorcycles with impunity using the road at great danger for the joggers and pedestrians.

The stray dogs have come back with a vengeance after having been cleared some time back by the MSPCA. Today, it is full of stray dogs.

Finally, the parking issue remains a major challenge every morning, but especially every afternoon. The road linking Floreal to Curepipe is very difficult to use because it is now jammed with cars of people going to Trou aux Cerfs.

I would appeal to the hon. Minister to raise this matter, express our concern to the Municipal Council of Curepipe so that it may be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will inform the Municipal Council of Curepipe to take all possible measures to remedy the situation.

(8.24 p.m.)

RESIDENCES VALLIJEE - ROAD SAFETY

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): M. le président, le problème que je voudrais aborder relève du ministre des infrastructures publiques et concerne une question de sécurité routière dans ma circonscription, par rapport aux automobilistes venant du sud à hauteur des Résidences Vallijee à Port Louis.

Tout le monde sait que la plupart de ces automobilistes venant du sud, arrivés à hauteur des Résidences Vallijee, empruntent les chemins étroits des Résidences pour rejoindre l'autoroute. Dans le quartier, outre l'école du gouvernement fréquenté par les enfants de la région, il y a également les petits commerces et l'église, où vont régulièrement les vieilles personnes. Or, certains conducteurs font fi des habitants du quartier, des piétons, roulent à vive allure. Il y a eu dans le passé plusieurs accidents où des véhicules ont heurté des enfants et des vieilles personnes du quartier. Le problème est toujours présent.

Je fais donc un pressant appel au ministre pour que des obstacles soient installés. En attendant, il serait peut être souhaitable de placer des agents de police dans les artères des Résidences Vallijee pour éviter d'éventuels accidents.

Merci.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have stopped the practice of putting up humps. I will have a look at it, and request the TMRSU to conduct a site visit and see what other measures can be taken.

(8.26 p.m.)

FLOREAL - DISPENSARY

Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like very briefly to raise two issues with regard to my Constituency. It concerns the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and maybe the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

M. le président, cela fait plus d'une année que le problème du dispensaire de Floréal a été soulevé dans cette Chambre par les membres ici présents. La dernière réponse du ministre nous parlait du bâtiment qui est condamné, aussi bien d'un bâtiment à côté. *The answer was 'adjacent building'*. Peut être le ministre n'avait pas reçu l'information qu'il y a un autre bâtiment qui a été rénové récemment, dont je vais faire circuler les photos. Ce bâtiment a été rénové il y a quelque temps, ce qui me laisse croire que ce bâtiment n'a pas été condamné. Présentement, il y a de vieux meubles, de vieilles chaises, et un tas de dossiers qu'on met dans ce bâtiment.

Ma question, M. le président, est : pourquoi ne peut-on pas utiliser ce bâtiment, rénové il y a quelque temps, pour le dispensaire de Floréal, parce que c'est vraiment très difficile pour les habitants de Floréal, particulièrement par ce temps hivernal, d'aller à Castel, prendre deux autobus ou marcher pour des prises de sang alors qu'il y a un bâtiment qui est là.

D'autre part, M. le président, il y a deux bâtiments qui sont occupés par le *Mauritius Film Development Corporation*. Ma question, M. le président, est : pourquoi ne peut-on pas bouger le *Mauritius Film Development Corporation* ? Quelle différence ça ferait d'avoir ce bureau à un autre endroit au lieu de pénaliser les habitants de la région?

Voilà les deux propositions que j'aurais aimé faire. Il y a le bâtiment du *Mauritius Film Development Corporation*, ou le bâtiment rénové récemment où on ne garde que des vieux meubles et des vieux dossiers. Donc M. le président, je voudrais déposer ces photos sur la Table de l'Assemblée.

REUNION GOVERNMENT SCHOOL

Mon deuxième point, M. le président concerne le *Reunion Government School*, aussi connu sous le nom de l'école Cantin. M. le président, les photos que je vais faire circuler parlent d'elles-mêmes. Je ne comprends pas pourquoi on doit garder un baril rouillé dans la cour d'une école, alors que c'est un risque pour les enfants. Combien de temps ça prend pour qu'un baril soit aussi rouillé, et combien de temps doit-t-on prendre pour enlever un tel *drum*, tôle, de la cour d'une école ?

Il y a aussi, M. le président, des tuyaux mal raccordés qui sont un danger pour les enfants, parce que plusieurs enfants se sont pris dans ces raccords et se sont blessés. Sur la photo, on peut aussi voir les plantes qui ont poussé sur les *dalots* de l'école qui sont sur le point de s'effondrer.

Il y a aussi des arbres abattus - et ces photos ont été prises, M. le président, la semaine dernière - depuis un bout de temps. Il y a tout un désordre dans la cour de l'école et aussi le danger que cela représente. M. le président, ces photos vont certainement aider l'honorable ministre à comprendre la situation et à prendre les décisions qui s'imposent. Je fais aussi déposer, M. le président, la photo des toilettes sans portes. Les portes sont là, déposées à côté du bassin et, encore une fois, photos prises la semaine dernière, mais ce n'est pas depuis la semaine dernière que les portes des toilettes sont déposées par terre, que dans ces toilettes il n'y ait pas de portes.

Donc, je voudrais attirer l'attention du ministre sur cette situation. Je crois que nos enfants méritent mieux et que cela demande un peu de bonne volonté pour leur donner un environnement approprié.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr L. Bundhoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Member for having raised the issue with regard to the proposed construction of the Medi Clinic at Floreal.

I would like to assure the hon. Member that hon. Minister Bappoo, hon. Ms Stephanie Anquetil did raise the matter with me.

It is subsequent to them having raised the matter with me that I have answered questions in Parliament, and hon. Minister Bappoo and hon. Minister Martin have kindly agreed to put at the disposal of the Ministry of Health to be used every Friday, the Social

Welfare Community Centre in order to enable the collection of blood for the old-age pensioners and alleviate their difficulties. This is number one.

Number two, with regard to the construction of the Medi Clinic, as I stated earlier, the building where was located the previous Health Centre was derelict. It had to be brought down but, unfortunately, the plot of land was not sufficient for the construction of a Medi Clinic. That is why we have negotiated with the hon. Vice-Prime Minister. He has agreed to give us the plot adjacent to the previous Area Health Centre and both put together is now enough for us to construct the Medi Clinic.

I guess the hon. Member would stand up again and say thank you hon. Bundhoo for making all the efforts, first, to my answers to Parliament; second, to make provision for the collection of blood every Friday and, third, in order to start the construction of the Medi Clinic and, God willing as soon as possible.

Thank you.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): M. le président, j'ai pris note de ce que vient de dire l'honorable madame Labelle concernant cette école. Je ne sais pas combien de temps cela dure mais une enquête sera faite et les décisions qui s'imposent seront prises. Merci.

TERRE ROUGE – VEHICULAR ACCESS

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you for allowing me to raise this matter which concerns the hon. Minister responsible for Public Infrastructure at adjournment time,

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a group of people residing at Terre Rouge next to Highway M2 and near to the Jin Fei roundabout have made representations to Government with regard to a vehicular access that they had to their place of residence and they fear that, with the commissioning of a third lane along Highway M2, the vehicular access might be closed. I tried to meet the Minister responsible. I have with me copies here of dates and times where these inhabitants have tried to meet Members of Government: hon. Minister Bachoo at 18.15 hours on 09 April 2012, and documents

were also submitted to the attention of hon. Minister Mireille Martin on 28 February 2012 at 14.00 hours.

I am raising the issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to make an appeal to the hon. Minister to consider not closing that access while they are commissioning the third lane because this is the only vehicular access that these people have to their place of residence.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Deputy Prime Minister and hon. Minister Mireille Martin have raised this issue with me. I had also met a few members of that committee and I have already requested RDA to have a proper look at it and see in what way we can help them.

RESIDENCE CORPS DE GARDE - COMPLAINTS

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill): M. le président, avec votre permission, je voudrais faire part au ministre des administrations régionales des doléances des habitants de la Résidence Corps de Garde qui tombe sous la juridiction de la municipalité de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

Cet endroit était autrefois connu sous le nom de la Cité Malhorie mais malheureusement son nom a souvent été déformé sous le nom de 'Cité Mal Nourrie' avec pour résultat que cela continue à laisser une certaine confusion au grand détriment des habitants eux-mêmes et tous ceux qui désirent se rendre à cet endroit. Ces habitants ont donc fait une demande pour qu'un panneau indicateur soit installé dans un endroit approprié pour remédier à cette situation.

Les habitants se sont aussi plaints d'un manque de poubelles fixes, ce qui laisse beaucoup à désirer. Le système de voirie est non seulement irrégulier mais aussi défaillant. Les choses sont encore plus compliquées par la transformation d'un grand terrain en friche en dépotoir, attirant souvent les chiens errants, ce qui est devenu un risque à la santé et la sécurité, d'autant plus qu'une partie de la Résidence est totalement dépourvue d'éclairage publique et autres équipements collectifs pour leur bien-être.

Pour terminer, M. le président, je voudrais vous prier de bien vouloir transmettre ces doléances à qui de droit pour les habitants de la Résidence Corps de Garde pour qu'ils cessent de se considérer comme des citoyens de deuxième grade. Merci.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will inform the Beau-Bassin/Rose-Hill Council to take appropriate action.

GORAH ISSAC STREET, PORT LOUIS - DRAINS

Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East): M. le président, je vais soulever un problème dans ma circonscription. Cela concerne les travaux des drains qui se trouvent à la rue Gorah Issac, ce qui tombe sous le ministère des infrastructures publiques

Les travaux durent trop longtemps et cela cause beaucoup d'inconvénients, des problèmes de sécurité et d'environnement. Pour cause, le vendredi 15 juin, il y a eu un accident sur cette même route. Un motocycliste avec sa motocyclette ont atterri dans un caniveau qui, à mon avis, doit faire dans les deux mètres de profondeur. Le caniveau était submergé d'eau et la personne étant blessée a été transportée à l'hôpital.

En tant que député de la circonscription, j'ai dû descendre sur les lieux pour calmer les esprits et la police a aussi été mandée sur les lieux.

(Interruptions)

Les travaux durent depuis six mois. Ce n'est pas moi le responsable, vous êtes les responsables alors faites votre travail et faites en sorte que ce problème soit réglé.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry. Hon. Ameer Meea! Hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mohamed! Allow the Vice-Prime Minister to reply now. Order!

(Interruptions)

I am talking to both of them.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the first time in the history of this country much money and investment are being put in Constituency No. 3.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Let the Minister reply now.

(Interruptions)

Enough of it! Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, please!

Mr Bachoo: Concerning the so-called incident, we have requested the Police to investigate into this matter. I am not in a position to speak more than that.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Ribot!

Mrs Ribot: M. le président,....

(Interruptions)

Si je pouvais avoir un peu de silence, cela arrangerait les choses.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, allow the hon. Member to express her views.

MSSSA – CROSS COUNTRY COMPETITION & REFRESHMENT

Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): M. le président, le point que je vais soulever concerne le ministre de la jeunesse et des sports, aussi bien que le ministre de la santé.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Time is very limited. Let the hon. Member express herself.

(Interruptions)

Silence, please! Order, please! Please, go ahead!

Mrs Ribot : M. le président, année après année...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I want order!

Mrs Ribot: M. le président, pour la troisième fois, année après année, la *Mauritius Secondary Schools Sports Association* (la MSSSA) fait le calendrier annuel de ses activités de telle manière que la compétition de *cross country* se tient au premier trimestre, soit en février, et de par une température de 30 degrés à monter.

M. le président, cette compétition se tient au moment même où le ministère de la santé, avec raison, émet des communiqués pour demander à la population de rester à

l'ombre, de ne pas s'exposer au soleil, de porter des vêtements appropriés et de boire beaucoup d'eau pour ne pas se déshydrater.

M. le président, je suis un témoin privilégié de ce que je vous dis. Il suffit de voir l'état de ces enfants, de ces participants, à l'arrivée, pour réaliser que les choses ne peuvent continuer ainsi. Alors qu'il y a le réchauffement de la terre, allons-nous attendre que l'irréparable se passe avant de réagir? Ma requête aux deux honorables ministres est de bien vouloir demander à la MSSSA de revoir son calendrier d'activités, afin que la compétition de *cross country* se tienne par une température plus douce, soit au deuxième trimestre. D'autres activités moins éprouvantes peuvent se tenir au premier trimestre. Je soulève ce point maintenant, M. le président, car il est encore temps pour que la MSSSA adapte son calendrier et ne dise pas que le calendrier a déjà été fait comme les années précédentes.

Le deuxième point s'adresse toujours aux deux honorables ministres. M. le président, alors qu'on est à cheval sur les produits en vente dans les cantines scolaires, ne voilà-t-il pas qu'après le *cross country*, on remet à chaque participant un jus et un gâteau sucré! On encourage même les participants à consommer du jus car il n'y a que quelques rares bouteilles d'eau qui ont été prévues.

Je demanderais aux deux honorables ministres de bien vouloir prendre ces deux points que j'ai soulevés avec la MSSSA.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

(8.42 p.m.)

The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr S. Ritoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just want to inform the hon. Member that *ceux qui pratiquent le sport n'ont jamais peur ni du froid, ni de la chaleur*. According to me, there is no question...

(Interruptions)

The calendar of activities for the MSSSA is prepared in consultation with all the schools. The hon. Member is the first to say that we cannot run. So, there is no question, on our side, that we should change the calendar.

At 8.43 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 26 June 2012 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**MAJOR CRIME INVESTIGATION TEAM – COMPLAINTS AGAINST**

(No. B/309) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Major Crime Investigation Team, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Complaints Investigation Bureau, information as to the number of complaints for police brutality lodged against the members thereof since the setting up of the Bureau to date, and
- (b) state if consideration will be given for the dismantling thereof and for the police inquiries to be carried out by the Central Crime Investigation Division.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since the coming into operation of the Complaints Investigation Bureau in January 2000 to 14 June 2012, a total of 39 complaints of Police brutality, have been reported against Police officers posted to the Major Crime Investigation Team (MCIT).

The MCIT was set up in June 2000 under the Central Crime Investigation Division to investigate into cases of murder and homicide committed island-wide.

In September 2005, for practical reasons, the MCIT was decentralised with the creation of the MCIT (North) and the MCIT (South) covering the northern and southern parts of the island.

In regard to part (b) of the question, as part of the implementation of the National Policing Strategic Framework which was launched in February 2010, the MCIT has been restructured its activities have been centralised and it is based at Line Barracks, Port Louis as from 28 September 2011. The restructure of the MCIT ensures greater operational efficiency, more judicious use of its resources and a high standard of investigation. The MCIT, which operates under the Central Crime Investigation Division, has a specific mandate to investigate only cases of homicide where accused are unknown

and other high profile cases island-wide rather than carrying out parallel duties that the local CID/Regular Police perform themselves.

Over the years, the MCIT has become a specialised unit and comprises skilled and knowledgeable officers who have been extensively trained in homicide and high profile investigations.

It is a world-wide trend for law enforcement organisations to have specialised units to deal with major crimes such as murder, manslaughter and homicide.

Being given that the MCIT already operates under the Central Crime Investigation Division, and keeping up with the world-wide trend, it is not proposed to dismantle the Unit. Besides, the MCIT is one of the best performing units of the Police Force. The House would like to know that, over the past two years, the Unit has elucidated all the cases of homicide expeditiously.

LARCENY – PERPETRATORS – INTEGRAL HELMETS

(No. B/310) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to larceny and other related offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police information as to the number of reported cases thereof wherein the perpetrators thereof used integral helmets during the commission thereof, since 2005 to date.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since 2005 to 14 June 2012, there have been 788 reported cases of larceny and other related offences wherein the perpetrators were wearing integral helmets.

While the integral helmet provides an effective protection to the skull and the face of autocyclists and motorcyclists, wrong doers also use it as a means to escape recognition.

Section 123N(4) Road Traffic (Amendment) Act which came into force, with effect from 15 October 2009, prohibits the wearing of an integral helmet unless someone is riding a motorcycle or an autocycle; or riding a motorcycle or an autocycle as a pillion rider. A person, who is convicted for such an offence, is liable to pay fine of Rs10,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months.

The statistics show that the promulgation of this section of the law has resulted in a reduction in the number of such cases.

SAINT PIERRE POLICE STATION - RENOVATION

(No. B/311) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Saint Pierre Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if there is a lack of space thereat and the yard thereof is in a bad state, with the presence of pot holes, damaged vehicles and wastes and, if so, indicate if remedial measures will be taken.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the building housing the Saint Pierre Police Station, which was constructed some 60 years ago, was upgraded in 2011 to provide additional office space.

However, in line with the policy of Police to provide modern working environment to its personnel, it is working on a project for the renovation and the extension of the Saint Pierre Police Station. The project will provide additional working space to accommodate personnel of the Central Investigation Division, the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, additional cells and an Exhibit Room. The project is scheduled to be implemented next year.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that actions have already been taken for the patching of the pot holes.

The scrap body of a private car has remained at the Police Station because the owner is abroad. Police will consult the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice regarding its disposal.

PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS – GRANT

(No. B/335) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the pre-primary schools, he will state the number of children –

- (a) attending same, and

- (b) who do not benefit from the grant of Rs200, indicating the reasons therefor.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, the number of children attending pre-primary schools was 29,907 as at February 2012.

Regarding part (b) of the question, 1,378 out of the 29,907 do not benefit from the grant. This is explained by the fact that -

- (i) 232 children attend pre-primary schools where the total number of children is less than 10, the basic requirement to register as per the ECCEA (Registration of Pre-Primary Schools) Regulations 2011;
- (ii) 1,042 children attend 16 pre-primary schools which have opted not to take the Per Capital Grant, and
- (iii) 104 children attend private pre-primary schools which are presently awaiting registration.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - TAXES AND DUTIES

(No. B/336) 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 petroleum products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, for 2011 and since January to May 2012 respectively, information as to the –

- (a) amount of Value Added Tax and excise and other duties collected, indicating the incidence thereof on the retail prices of mogas and diesel, and
- (b) if Government proposes to reduce the taxes and duties thereon, and if so when, and if not, why not.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that the total amount of taxes on mogas and diesel, that is Value Added Tax, Excise duties and MID levy, is as follow -

For financial year 2011, Rs 4.62 billion; and
From January to May 2012, Rs 1.84 billion.

The weight of government taxes in the retail price of mogas and diesel has in fact remained, on average, unchanged since February 2010. For mogas, it is 36% (compared to 59% in April 2004) while for diesel, it is 22% (compared to 36% in April 2004).

With regard to part (b) of the question, it is not proposed to review the rates of excise duty on mogas and gas oil as these have remained fixed in rupee terms during the period 2002 to 2010 at Rs 9.80 and Rs3.00 per litre respectively. The cumulative inflation during that period was 67%, which led to significant erosion in the real value of the tax collection. It is only at the close 2010, that the rates were adjusted by 10%. With a view to protecting the purchasing power of the population, we have not adjusted upward rates in 2011 despite an inflation rate of 6.5% to make good the loss in the real value of tax collection.

On the other hand, VAT is levied at a single rate since its introduction in 1998, irrespective of the good or service. There is no plan to deviate from this policy.

RUPEE - EXCHANGE RATE

(No. B/337) 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 exchange rate of the rupee, he will state, for 2011 and since January to May 2012 respectively -

- (a) the percentage of the total -
 - (i) imports, and
 - (ii) exports, paid in US Dollars and Euros, respectively;
- (b) the trend in the rate of exchange of the rupee *vis à vis* the US Dollars and Euros, and
- (c) if the rupee is overvalued, and if so, indicate the implication thereof on the exchange rate policy.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I have been informed that the percentage of total imports of goods *cif*, denominated in US dollar and euro for the year 2011 stood at 68.6 per cent and 21.4 per cent, respectively, while for the first quarter of 2012, the share amounted to 68.3 per cent and 22.6 per cent, respectively.

The percentage of exports of goods *job*, excluding ship's, stores and bunkers, denominated in US dollar and euro for the year 2011 was 40.6 per cent and 40.2 per cent, respectively, while for the first quarter of 2012, the share stood at 43.8 per cent and 39.4 per cent, respectively.

As regards part (b) of the question, the exchange rate of the rupee for the year 2011 averaged 27.90 against the US Dollar and 38.54 against the euro. During the period January to May 2012 the exchange rate of the rupee averaged 28.29 to the dollar and 36.64 against the euro. In recent months, the trend has been clearly towards appreciation of the rupee.

As regards part (c) of the question, Mauritius has a floating exchange rate regime. Thus the exchange rate of the rupee is determined by market forces, both internationally and domestically. The Bank of Mauritius normally manages the exchange rate to avoid gaps between demand and supply and to ensure that the market is operating efficiently and effectively.

However, in a communiqué issued on 09 June, this year, the Bank of Mauritius has expressed its concern about an increasing misalignment of the rupee exchange rate with underlying fundamentals.

In the same communiqué of 09 June, the Bank of Mauritius has also announced that it will purchase forex on the domestic market to build up the official reserves. This should help to realign the exchange rate with the economic fundamentals.

This does not represent any major change in exchange rate policy which has always been to maintain the foreign exchange value of the rupee in line with economic fundamentals.

NTC - SECURITY SERVICES

(No. B/338) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping Whether, in regard to the security services at the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the -

- (a) security services provider thereof;

- (b) contract value therefor, and
- (c) duration of the contract therefor, indicating if same has been extended and, if so –
 - (i) when, and
 - (ii) the value thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the National Transport Corporation (NTC) that the contract for the provision of normal security services has been awarded to RSL Security Services Ltd on 03 February 2012 for an yearly amount of Rs5,417,840.00.

The contract of one year duration starts from 01 March 2012.

With regard to part (c) of the question, as the contract will lapse on 28 February 2013, the question of extension does not arise.

I am further informed that the services of the Police Force have also been enlisted to provide security services by armed guards at the five depots where cash is collected daily, against remuneration.

MINISTRY OF GENDER EQUALITY, CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY WELFARE - PSYCHOLOGISTS

(No. B/339) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether she will state if psychologists are employed by her Ministry and, if so, indicate in each case –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) if they are employed on a part time or full time basis;
- (c) the number of hours and days they are required to work, and
- (d) their posting.

Reply: I am informed that there are 11 psychologists in post. One psychologist who has been newly recruited, will assume duty on 01 August 2012.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the working hours of the psychologist are from 8.45 a.m. to 4 p.m. on week days. They are on call after office hours during weekends and on public holidays.

In regard to part (c) of the question, six psychologists are posted at the Child Development Unit, four are at the Family Welfare and Protection Unit and one is under interdiction with effect from 18 May 2007.

TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS - EVALUATION REPORTS

(No. B/340) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the tertiary education institutions, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission information as to if the Mauritius Institute of Education, the University of Mauritius, the Mauritius Institute of Health and the Mauritius College of the Air have -

- (a) respected the deadlines for submission of their self evaluation reports as per their commitments taken during the Quality Assurance Committee held on 19 October 2011, and
- (b) used the Quality Assurance Model presented by the Commission during that meeting for their respective progress reporting, indicating if a copy thereof will be tabled.

Reply: I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that -

- (i) at the Quality Assurance Committee meeting held on 19 October 2011, the time plan for the second cycle quality audit (2011-2016) and the dates for submission of reports, including the Self Evaluation report, were circulated to the publicly funded tertiary education institutions;
- (ii) according to the time table, the University of Mauritius was expected to submit a first draft of the Self Evaluation Report by February 2012 and the final Report in March 2012. On 20 March 2012, the University of Mauritius requested for an extension of four weeks as members of the Academic Management Committee were not convinced that the report was ready to be submitted. The Tertiary Education Commission did not agree to the extension. The Self Evaluation Report was submitted on 06 April 2012, and

- (iii) the Mauritius Institute of Education was expected to submit its self-evaluation report in June 2012. At a meeting held at the Tertiary Education Commission on 13 April 2012, the MIE requested for a postponement. The date for submission of the Self-Evaluation Report was, therefore, extended to January 2013.

As regards the Mauritius College of the Air, quality audit is scheduled in 2014 and the Self-Evaluation Report is due for submission in November 2013.

With regard to the Mauritius Institute of Health, the institution will not be involved in the second cycle quality audit, but would be included in the subsequent quality audit.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that, during the meeting held on 19 October 2011, the Tertiary Education Commission presented the Approach, Deployment, Results and Improvement (ADRI) as a model to be used whilst submitting their Progress Report, which is submitted to TEC on a yearly basis to inform the Commission on the actions taken to address the recommendations of the audit report. The Progress Reports are due to be submitted in 2013 by the University of Mauritius and Mauritius Institute of Education.

MOBILE PHONES - SHORT MESSAGE - REVENUE COLLECTED

(No. B/342) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the mobile phones, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the amount of revenue collected on each short message over the first three months of the imposition of the tax thereon.

Reply: I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that the amount of levy collected on short messages for the first three months of the imposition was Rs22.4 m.

ROCHE BOIS - ESTUARY - DEAD FISH

(No. B/343) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Fisheries whether, in regard to the recent case of a large

quantity of dead fish found at the estuary of Roche Bois, he will state if the inquiry carried out to ascertain the causes thereof is now complete and if so, indicate the -

- (a) outcome thereof, and
- (b) measures taken to avoid the recurrence of similar cases in the future.

(Withdrawn)

FISH AUCTION MARKET - OPERATION

(No. B/344) Mr J.C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Fisheries whether, in regard to the Fish Auction Market, he will state if it is in operation and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

GRNW & PORT LOUIS WEST – MARSHY LANDS & WASTE LANDS

(No. B/345) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the marshy lands and the waste lands in Constituency No.1 - Grand River North West and Port Louis West, he will state if consideration will be given for the carrying out of disinfection exercises thereat to get rid of mosquitoes and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

SECONDARY SCHOOLS (PRIVATE) – STUDENTS – TRAVELLING PASS

(No. B/346) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the private secondary schools, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Private Secondary Schools Authority information as to the number of students thereof who have not yet been issued with a student travelling pass since January 2012 to date, indicating the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

VETERINARY OFFICERS - EMPLOYMENT

(No. A/160) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Veterinary Officers, he will -

- (a) state the number thereof employed in his Ministry who are Mauritian nationals, indicating the number thereof employed on a -
 - (i) permanent basis, and
 - (ii) contractual basis, indicating their respective grades, and
- (b) obtain from the Medical Council, the number thereof -
 - (i) registered therewith but who are unemployed, and
 - (ii) working in the private sector.

Reply: There are 25 Veterinary Officers in post of whom 23 are on a permanent basis and the remaining two are on contract. Out of the 25 officers, one holds the post of Principal Agricultural Officer, one Senior Veterinary Officer acting as Divisional Veterinary Officer, five Senior Veterinary Officers and the remaining 18 are employed as Veterinary Officers.

The Veterinary Council has indicated that there are 66 registered Veterinary Surgeons out of whom 31 are working in the private sector while no one is unemployed.

MINISTRY OF AGRO-INDUSTRY AND FOOD SECURITY – VETERINARY OFFICERS (FOREIGN) - EMPLOYMENT

(No. A/161) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & RoseBelle) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the foreign Veterinary Officers employed on a contractual basis by his Ministry, he will -

- (a) give the list thereof, indicating, in each case their respective -
 - (i) date of employment, and
 - (ii) duration of contract, and
- (b) state -
 - (i) the names thereof who have attended overseas conferences/trainingcourses/workshops offered by his Ministry, since July 2005 to date, giving, in each case, details thereof;
 - (ii) if they are still in post in Mauritius, and

- (iii) if consideration will be given for a review of the policy of granting overseas conferences/trainingcourses/workshops thereto.

Reply: The requested information is as follows –

Name	Nationality	Date of employment	Duration of contract	Remarks
Dr. Vinay Singh Bhadoria	Indian	15.07.05	1 year renewable	Present contract will expire on 14.07.12
Dr. Anupam Kumar Srivastava	Indian	15.07.05	1 year renewable	Present contract will expire on 05.08.12

Dr. Vinay Singh Bhadoria has not attended any overseas conference/workshop while Dr. Anupam Kumar Srivastava has attended six workshops as follows -

Course title	Country	Period
SPINAP Regional Technical Committee	Botswana	02-04 October 2008
PCR Techniques for Avian Flu	South Africa	23-27 November 2008
SADC Diagnostic Sub -Committee Meeting	Namibia	15-17 April 2009
Communication Strategy on Avian Flu	Botswana	10-14 August 2009
Lab Diagnostic Sub -Committee	South Africa	14-16 October 2009
Joint Meeting of the Epidemiology and Informatics and Laboratory and Diagnostics Sub-Committees of the SADC Livestock Technical Committee	Johannesburg, South Africa	21 to 23 June 2011

The policy for the granting of overseas/conferences/trainingcourses/workshops is generally reviewed as and when required.

AIL DORÉ STREET, PORT LOUIS - DRAINS

(No. A/162) 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 drains situated at Ail Doré Street, in Port Louis, between the junction thereof with Canal Bathurst Street up to the Ail Doré Sporting Club, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if they are in bad state and whether water accumulates thereat during rainy seasons and, if so, indicate if remedial measures will be taken.

Reply: I am informed by the City Council of Port Louis that the drains situated at Ail Doré Street in Port Louis between the junction thereof with Canal Bathurst Street up to the Ail Doré Sporting Club are actually not in a bad state as the few damaged slabs have already been replaced last month.

I am further informed that no water accumulation occurs in this region since the drains have been cleaned last month.

**BEL OMBRE PRIMARY GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - MRS S. A. -
REMUNERATION**

(No. A/163) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he has been informed that one, Mrs S. A., who worked as attendant during the last summer school at the Bel Ombre Primary Government School, has not yet been remunerated therefor and, if so, indicate if remedial measures will be taken.

Reply: I am informed that Mrs S. A. is not an attendant of the Ministry, but a cleaner employed by a private contractor to perform cleaning services during school hours and school holidays in Government schools.

As such Mrs S. A. did not directly form part of the staff (Head Master, Teacher, Resource Person and Caretaker) who was involved in the Summer School Programme. However, the Head Master of the school had retained her services on specific days (Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays) for period 30 November to 22 December 2011 for the whole day for cleaning purposes as the pupils were attending school on full day during the Summer School Programme.

The issue of an additional payment for such services has been sorted out and arrangements have been made for payment at the level of the school.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT UNIT – REFERRED CHILDREN - NUMBER

(No. A/164) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the children, she will state the number thereof who have been referred to the Child Development Unit, since January 2012 to date, indicating –

- (a) in each case, the -
 - (i) reasons therefor;
 - (ii) age group, address thereof and
- (b) the number thereof who have been sent to the
 - (i) Rehabilitation Youth Centres and
 - (ii) shelters.

Reply: Since January 2012 to date, 4,350 cases have been referred to the Child Development Unit. The reasons for referral in general, the age group which is from birth to 18 years and the number of cases reported at the six outstations are being laid in the Library. The names, addresses and reasons for referral in each case are of confidential nature and, therefore, cannot be disclosed.

In regard to part (b) of the question, 17 children have been sent to Rehabilitation Youth Centres and 76 to Shelters/Residential Care Institutions.

CHILD DAY CARE CENTRES - INSPECTORATE UNIT

(No. A/165) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Day Care Centres, she will state –

- (a) the number thereof, indicating in each case, the number of children attending thereto and
- (b) if an Inspectorate Unit has been set up therefor, and if so, indicate the number of officers attached thereto.

Reply: As at date, according to information available at my Ministry, there are 272 Child Day Care Centres.

As at 15 June 2012, there are 3,694 children in all the Day Care Centres. A list of the number of Day Care Centres together with the number of children attending thereto is being placed in the Library.

In regard to part (b) of the question, an Inspectorate Unit has been set up and there are presently 7 officers attached thereto.

BEAU BASSIN - DE ROSNAY STREET - RESURFACING

(No. A/166) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the de Rosnay Street, in Beau Bassin, he will state if he has been informed of the deplorable state thereof and, if so, if consideration will be given for the resurfacing thereof.

Reply: De Rosnay street is located in the township of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill and falls under the responsibility of the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill. According to information obtained from the latter, the road has sustained damages following excavation works by the Central Water Authority and the Mauritius Telecom.

The Local Authority is proposing to resurface the street at an approximate cost of Rs3.2m subject to availability of funds and in accordance with the priority list for works which will be established by the Municipality in consultation with other authorities concerned.

EBENE CYBERCITY - LESSEES

(No. A/167) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the Ebene Cybercity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd., information as to –

- (a) the names and addresses of the lessees of plots of land thereat who -
 - (i) have not started construction, indicating the criteria used for the allocation of land thereto;

- (ii) still owe rent, indicating the quantum thereof and the actions, if any, taken against them, and
- (b) if any reallocation of the plots of land has been effected by the initial lessees thereof and, if so –
 - (i) why;
 - (ii) when, and
 - (iii) to whom.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the names and addresses of lessees of plots who have not started construction are as follows -

<u>Plot No.</u>	<u>Name of Lessee</u>	<u>Address</u>
8 - 9 - 10	The Mauritius Post Ltd	3, Dumas St., Port Louis
14	Cellplus Mobile Communication Ltd	18th Floor, Telecom Tower, Edith Cavell St. Port Louis
30	BR Capital Ltd	c/o Gamma; Royal Road, Chapman Hill Beau Bassin
37 - 38	State Bank of Mauritius	State Bank Tower, Queen Elizabeth Ave. Port Louis

42 - 43	Société Bhumi Investissement	c/o Mindspace 45, Cybercity, Ebène
46A	Kingsgate Holding	Stamford Ltd Level 5, Alexander House 35, Cybercity Ebène
46B	Centreview Investment	c/o Gamma Royal Road, Chapman Hill Beau Bassin
46C	Arushi Development	Impasse des Ibis Sodnac, Quatre Bornes
50A	B & S Park Ltd	9th Floor, Orange Tower Ebène Cybercity
55	Anderson Ross Holdings	2nd Floor, Wing B Cyber Tower 1, Ebène
65D	Indian High Commission	6th Floor, LIC Building President John Kennedy St., Port Louis
66	Cyberplex Ltd	c/o PAD & Co Motorway M 3 Riche Terre

66C1	Centreview Development Ltd	c/o Gamma Royal Road, Chapman Hill Beau Bassin

The criteria used for land allocation are as follows -

All applications for land are subject to the approval of the Board of BPML. Each application is assessed on its merit and the criteria adopted comprise:

- The field of activity (preferably ICT-related or office building).
- The Business Plan proposed (size of building, aesthetics, etc.).
- The capacity and resources of Promoter to undertake the project within the periods specified in the Lease.
- Reputation and track record of promoter.

(ii) The lessees who owe rent and respective actions taken against them are as follows -

Plot no.	Lessee	Address	Amount Owed (as at March 2012) (RS)	Action Taken
3	Société Civile Immobilière D'Attribution Nundun Gopee Tower	Abbé de La Caille, Beau Bassin	325,215.00	Reminder issued

15,16,17	Apavou Immobilier- Société Futura	17 Cybercity Ebène	2,708,868.00	Letter issued by BPML Attorney
40	Laser Informatics Ltd	Ground Floor, Heritage Building, Emmanuel Anquetil Street Port Louis	225,739.00	Letter issued by BPML Attorney
55	Anderson Ross	2nd Floor Wing B Cybertower1 Ebène Cybercity	225,739.00	Reminder issued
64	Ebène Hypermarket Property	SuperSpar Cybercity Ebène	984,222.04	Re-scheduling of payment as proposed by Lessee & accepted by Lessor
TOTAL			4,469,783.04	

As regards part (b) of the question, re-allocation of plots has been as follows -

Initial Lessee	Plot	Reason for Re-	Date of Re-	New Lessee
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	No.	allocation	allocation	
Central Electricity Board (CEB)	23	Project abandoned by CEB	06.10.09	Maeva Tower
	24		17.05.06	International Proximity
	25		23.07.09	Mosther Ltd
State Informatics Ltd	42	Project abandoned	02.04.09	Société Bhumi Investissement
	43			
University of Mauritius	63	Reduction in project size	25.08.09	MTML
Mauritius Post Ltd	6 - 7	Reduction in project size	26.05.09	Maxcity
Wastewater Management Authority	66	Project abandoned	10.07.07	Cyberplex Ltd

COLVILL DEVERELLE BRIDGE/GREWALS PROJECT - CONTRACT

(No. A/168) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Colville Deverell bridge /Grewals Project, he will table copy of the -

- (a) contract awarded to Sinohydro Corporation;
- (b) design of the bridge extension, and
- (c) certificate of urgency forwarded to the Independent Review Panel by the Road Development Authority.

Reply: The “widening of Motorway M1 from Colville Deverell to Grewals” is an ongoing project and it would not be appropriate to table a copy of the contract document

and design details because of risks of litigation. A copy of the Letter of Acceptance and of the Agreement and Conditions of Contract are, however, being tabled.

A copy of the “Certificate of Urgent Public Interest” issued to the Independent Review Panel by the Road Development Authority under Clause 45(5) of the Public Procurement Act 2006 is being tabled.

BELLE RIVE TO QUARTIER MILITAIRE – ROAD CONSTRUCTION

(No. A/169) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the construction of the road running from Belle Rive to Quartier Militaire, he will lay copy of the -

- (a) the contract thereof;
- (b) variations, if any, claimed, and
- (c) amount paid as at to date.

Reply: The answer is as follows –

- a) The upgrading of Quartier Militaire road (B6) from Belle Rive to Quartier Militaire is an on-going project and it would not be appropriate to table a copy of the contract document because of risks of litigation. A copy of the Letter of Acceptance and of the Agreement and Conditions of Contract are, however, being tabled.
- b) there is no variation to the contract to date.
- c) as at date Rs309,506,764.11 have been paid to the contractor.

QUATRE BORNES - PAVILLON COMPLEX - SWIMMING POOL

(No. A/170) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the swimming pool at the Pavillon Complex in Quatre Bornes, he will state since when same is not operational indicating the remedial measures taken to date.

Reply: Le Pavillon Swimming Pool is not operational since June 2011 as it was observed that the level of water in the swimming pool was continuously below the required level causing a threat to the users.

Actions were taken to determine the cause of this persistent drop in the water level. In parallel, in view of the water loss and the severe drought prevailing at that period, the swimming pool had to be closed.

Since then, several tests, namely plug-in test, pressure test and valve test have been carried out and these tests have revealed that the water loss is most probably due to a leakage in the piping system.

Being given that the piping system is embedded underground, below the base of the swimming pool structure, it is difficult to identify the exact location of the leakage.

The possibility to by-pass the existing piping system and install a new piping system above ground level was proposed by my Ministry and the design was prepared by the Architect Division, however, the Mechanical Engineering Division was not agreeable to this proposal due to safety reasons and other technical problems.

The Ministry is working in close collaboration with the Public Infrastructure Division and the Central Water Authority with a view to attend to this problem. Tenders have already been floated for the hiring of a consultant to conduct a proper investigation and propose remedial action.

EBENE CYBERCITY - BUS STOP SHELTER & TAXI STAND

(No. A/171) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if he has received representations for the construction of a bus stop shelter and a taxi stand in the area of the Ebene Heights at the Ebene Cybercity, and if so, indicate if he will cause a survey to be carried out in relation thereto.

Reply: Representations for the construction of a bus stop shelter and a taxi stand in the area of the Ebene Heights at the Ebene Cybercity have been received.

However, it is worth noting that Ebene Cybercity is actually provided with a scheduled service of public bus transport particularly from the urban regions along a fixed route through the area to drop passengers to their places of work. Bus stops have been sited within walking distance [5-10 minutes walk] of all development within the

Cybercity area. A survey is currently being carried out to look into the possibility of providing shelters at these bus stops.

As regards a taxi stand in the vicinity of Ebene Heights, the National Transport Authority will give due consideration in case it receives any such request. In the meantime, the licensing of taxis for four points by Sheraton Hotel at Ebene Cybercity is under consideration.

DAUGUET, ROLAND ARMAND & SIGNAL MOUNTAIN HEALTH TRACKS - UPGRADING

(No. A/172) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to Dauguet Health Track, Roland Armand Health Track and Signal Mountain Health Track, he will state if consideration will be given for urgent upgrading and uplifting thereof.

Reply: Maintenance works are carried out on a regular basis at Le Dauguet and Signal Mountain Health Tracks and once a year at Roland Armand Health Track which is under the responsibility of the Municipality of Beau- Bassin/Rose Hill. In addition, the following upgrading and uplifting works are being undertaken -

- (a) Le Dauguet Health Track
 - (i) reinstatement of damaged wooden handrails;
 - (ii) upgrading of Watchman's Post, Grotto & 'Kalimaye';
 - (iii) supply & fixing of metal slabs on drain;
 - (iv) upgrading of "kiosk d'Accueil";
 - (v) spreading of crusherun on the track (12 km x 3 m), and
- (b) Signal Mountain Health Track
 - (i) reinstatement of damaged wooden handrails;
 - (ii) construction of low masonry wall (15 m);
 - (iii) upgrading of gate post.

QUATRE BORNES FIRE STATION - RELOCATION

(No. A/173) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the

relocation of the Quatre Bornes Fire Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Government Fire Services, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the Fire Services Department that it intends to relocate the Quatres Bornes Fire Station.

In May 1984, a plot of land of an extent of 0A73 was vested in the Ministry of Local Government for the construction of a Fire Station at Quatre Bornes opposite St Jean Church.

However, that plot of land was retrieved from the Ministry in October 2009 against an agreement that an alternative site would be offered for the construction of a fire station.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to identify an appropriate plot of land. The Ministry of Housing and Lands has informed that no State land is available within the region of Ebène, Trianon and Phoenix and as such, either the possibility for acquisition of private property will be looked into or alternative sites will be identified.

MONSEIGNEUR LEEN STREET - DRAINS

(No. A/174) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Monseigneur Leen street, from its junction between Labourdonnais street to Desroches street and in the vicinity of the primary school thereat, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if water accumulates thereat during rainy periods due to absence of drains. If so, will consideration be given for the construction of drains thereat and when? If not, why not?

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that it is aware of accumulation of water in the vicinity of Immaculée Conception SSS Vocational School at Mgr Leen street from its junction between Labourdonnais street to Desroches street during heavy rainfall.

I am informed that consideration will be given for the construction of drains thereat to remedy the problem upon availability of funds.

MORCELLEMENT LA CONFIANCE, BEAU BASSIN**– ROADS – RE-INSTATEMENT**

(No. A/175) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Morcellement La Confiance, in Beau Bassin, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain, from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, information as to if they have been informed of the bad state of the roads thereat, including the presence of pot holes and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the re-instatement and tarring thereof.

Reply: I have been informed by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill that the road network within Morcellement La Confiance in Beau Bassin is not in a bad state.

I am informed that reinstatement and patching works will be undertaken soon at some scattered spots caused by excavations carried out by the Central Water Authority, Wastewater Management Authority and Mauritius Telecom.