



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION

FRIDAY 27 JULY 2012

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Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues
Dr. the Hon. Ahmed Rashid Beebeejaun, GCSK, FRCP	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
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Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping
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Hon. Mrs Maria Francesca Mireille Martin	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sutyadeo Moutia	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 17 of 2012

Sitting of 27 July 2012

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

at 3.30 p.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office –

The Piracy and Maritime Violence (Memorandum of Understanding between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Mauritius) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 135 of 2012).

B. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

(a) The Value Added Tax (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 136 of 2012).

(b) The Statutory Bodies Pension Funds (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 4) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 138 of 2012).

C. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands –

The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes (Naming of public places) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 139 of 2012).

D. Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Consumer Protection –

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 137 of 2012).

E. Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives –

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Saint Antoine Planters Co-operative Trust for the period 01 July 2009 to 31 December 2010.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

ALLEGED ARMS TRAFFICKING

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the recent reported cases of attempts to use Mauritius for trafficking of arms, following an interim report from the Conflict Awareness Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the –

- (a) Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto, indicating –
 - (i) if two known Russians, former associates of convicted arms trafficker Viktor Bout, are involved therein and, if so, why their involvement went undetected, and
 - (ii) the identity of their local contacts;
- (b) Financial Intelligence Unit, the Financial Services Commission and the Independent Commission Against Corruption, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiries carried out thereinto, indicating if –
 - (i) a local bank reported a failed compliance check involving the two known Russians referred to above, and
 - (ii) officers of the Police, of the Board of Investment and of the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations are involved therein.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer to the statement I made in the House on Tuesday 24 July 2012, regarding the recent reported cases of attempts by foreign nationals to use a number of countries including Mauritius for trafficking of arms, wherein I stressed in no uncertain terms that the Mauritian Government is taking a very serious view of this matter and shall undertake whatever action necessary to prevent Mauritius and its institutions from being used for any illicit purposes. We will spare no effort to unflinchingly maintain our standing as a jurisdiction of sound repute.

Furthermore, Mauritius is fully committed to, and engaged in international efforts to promote a legally binding instrument setting the highest international standards with respect to transfers of conventional arms. In 2009, Mauritius was among the 151 United Nations

Member States which supported continued talks on Arms Trade Treaty. We remain engaged with all our partners to ensure that the outcome of the negotiation process is as comprehensive and effective as desired.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have already indicated, it is noteworthy that a previous application by Superfly Aviation Ltd. for an Air Operation Certificate was not proceeded with as the document purporting to be an Air Operation Certificate issued by the Director of Civil Aviation was found to be fake. Further processing of the application of Superfly Aviation Ltd. was discontinued. The matter was submitted by the Director of Civil Aviation to the Commissioner of Police on 27 July 2011, which led to the arrest of a Mauritian national. He was provisionally charged for swindling.

Subsequently, one of the Directors of Superfly Aviation Ltd, Mr Kosolapov informed the Director of Civil Aviation that he wanted to pursue his business venture in Mauritius and his project had been jeopardised earlier by the action of the Mauritian national. He submitted a fresh application for an Air Operation Certificate under the name of Island Air System Ltd. The application was turned down on 11 July 2012, that is, well before the publication of the preliminary report of Ms Austin thanks to our vigilance.

Regarding part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Passport and Immigration Office, before issuing an Occupational Permit, that is, the Occupational Permit goes to the BOI first and then after they do all their checks or whatever, it comes to the Passport and Immigration Office. Now before issuing that Occupational Permit, they verify the name of the applicant on the Control List of its Computer System. The National Control List Database consists, among others, of persons wanted by Interpol, and terrorists certified by the United Nations and Interpol.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Computer System in operation at the Passport and Immigration Office at the Border Control will automatically display an alert in case anything adverse is known against an incoming passenger whether he is an investor or a tourist.

If an application for an occupation permit is being processed at the level of the Passport and Immigration Office after recommendation from the Board of Investment to which, as I said, the application is first submitted, it is an established practice for the Police to seek information from Interpol on the foreign national.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, at the time of their arrival and during the processing of their application for an Air Operation Certificate, none of the two persons mentioned in the report was the subject of any of the adverse notices of Interpol, referred to, depending on the level, it is either red, blue, green, yellow or orange, all of which relate to criminal activities.

In regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, the persons concerned locally at different points in time are as follows -

(i) For Superfly Aviation the names of the shareholders/Directors are -

1. Mr Marie Teddy Sergio Harrison
2. Mr Alen Keswachand Topsy
3. Mr André Louw Pretorius
4. Mr Mark Owen Ferreria
5. Mr Andrey Kosolapov
6. Mr Sergey Denisenko
7. Mr Nadeem Aktar Talat Mosafeer

(ii) For Island Air System Ltd the names of the shareholders/Directors are as follows -

1. Mr Mohammad Ajmal Gooman
2. Mr Andrey Kosolapov
3. Mr Sergey Denisenko

I am also informed that as from 27 July 2011 Mr Yousouf Abdul Razack Mohamed, Senior Counsel, was the legal representative of Mr Andrey Kosolapov, the prospective investor, and he was assisting him in the forgery case lodged by Mr Kosolapov against Mr Teddy Harrison, Director of Superfly Aviation Ltd. With regard to Island Air System Ltd, which was incorporated on 13 April 2011 the CEO is Barrister Zakir Mohamed.

As regards part (b) (i) of the question, all banks in Mauritius have to comply with section 14 of the Financial Intelligence and Anti Money Laundering Act and submit to the Financial Intelligence Unit a Suspicious Transaction Report in case of suspicion of an illegal transaction. I am informed that the Bank of Mauritius and the Financial Intelligence Unit, are

already investigating whether suspicious accounts may have been opened in Commercial Banks in Mauritius one of which has been named in the Conflict Awareness Project Report. The House will appreciate that it will not be in order for me to give the names of the banks. I should like to remind the House that non compliance with relevant provisions of the banking and other financial laws may entail severe penalties.

All the other institutions concerned are also proceeding with their enquiries. Investigation is also being carried out into whether any Mauritian company has been used for transferring proceeds of trafficking in arms or money laundering.

Regarding part (b) (ii) of the question, I am informed that there is no evidence as at now to suggest the wrongful involvement of any Police Officer, or any officer of the Board of Investment and of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the matter of attracting foreign investments and boosting business in Mauritius, there is always a need to strike the right balance, on the one hand, between regulation, control and monitoring by law enforcement and regulatory Bodies and, on the other hand, the objective of not frustrating and discouraging genuine and *bona fide* investors. It is in that spirit that we enacted the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous provisions) Act 2006. It even earned Mauritius the rank of “First in Africa in Doing Business” according to the “World Bank Doing Business Report” and Mauritius has witnessed an unprecedented inflow of foreign direct investment in recent years. This has also explained partly how we have been able to weather the storm of the financial crisis.

I wish, however, to assure the House that we will consider all additional measures that would be necessary to strengthen our control monitoring and detection systems.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have, earlier, explained that our control systems, in place at the material time did not reveal any links between the two Russians and Viktor Bout.

Indeed to quote Ms Kathi Lynn AUSTIN, she said -

“You can have solid laws, good track records, and well-meaning intentions; but without a uniform international standard, arms traffickers can still take advantage of the best-governed nations of the World”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to assure the House, as I have done in so many occasions before, that no one in this country is above the law and I will never in anyway intervene to

prevent the enforcement of the law against anyone involved in any criminal or wrongful activities whoever that person may be.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been informed by the hon. Prime Minister that, at the time concerned, the two Russian persons concerned were not on the control list of Interpol. Will he agree with me that those two Russians were known to be traffickers, not just in the report that we are discussing, but in the international press like “The Guardian”, “The New York Times” and so on? Is he aware that these two persons were on the US Specially Designated Nationals list that is enforced by the department of treasury against all persons found guilty of past trafficking activities and on the US visas vital list which is a watch list used internationally by the State department of the US to track known or suspected terrorists? Is he aware that if you go on internet – I suppose the Police have internet – and you refer to those names, or if you go on the internet, Russian mafia, you will meet with these two persons’ names. Will he agree that there is, therefore, need not just to rely on the Interpol control list, but to be more thorough in checking, especially, coming from places like Russia where you have, unfortunately, a very powerful mafia operating?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I explained, the names did not flag up because they were using whatever they use from Interpol. So, the name did not flag up at the material time, but I tend to agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we need to maybe strengthen. In fact, we have had discussions at the Home Affairs Division about whether we can put in an additional system - we are still looking at proposals - which, unfortunately, will cost money and that will have to go on the airlines. I think it will be about 12 euros additional. I think, in the circumstances, maybe we should consider having that system also in place.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether Mr Andrey Kosolapov who has a house here, was resident here and so on, is he still in the country or has he left the country since the coming out of this report?

The Prime Minister: He has already left the country, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know the date on which he left the country and whether the Police did anything following the publication of that report to prevent him from leaving the country?

The Prime Minister: No, he had already left the country before the report came out, from what I understand. I can give the hon. Leader of the Opposition the dates when he left, not

only he left, but I think, his partner also left. Mr Kosolapov arrived on 08 April 2012 and he left before the report came out, and the others also have left before.

Mr Bérenger: I hear the hon. Prime Minister say he arrived on a given date. He must be aware that he has property here, that he is a resident here, that even his wife has been residing here with *la bénédiction* of all those concerned. Therefore, it is not really a question of having come here. He has left Mauritius although having been a resident here with his wife for a long time.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we were looking at this. It appears that when Mr Kosolapov comes here, he seems to be living sometimes in hotels, sometimes in a hotel complex at Flic en Flac. We have not been able to see whether actually it belongs to him yet or not, but he seems to be living in hotels. His partner also seems to be living in these complexes and hotels. Maybe the hon. Leader of the Opposition has the details.

Mr Bérenger: Can I congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for the powerful statement he made last Tuesday, and which he has repeated today, having informed us that, I quote -

“Government is taking a very serious view of this matter”

Congratulations! Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he finds that it tallies that when the hon. Prime Minister is coming out with that kind of statement, a Minister is doing all he can to denigrate the report and the lady concerned and to *décrédibiliser* that lady and her report?

The Prime Minister: Well, from what I understand, I think, there is a court case that has been against this lady, and, I suppose, I will have to wait until what happens to the court case.

Mr Bérenger: I suppose the Privy Council because I understand that money will not be lacking to go the Privy Council if required by the persons concerned. Mr Speaker, Sir, be given the very, very grave allegations levelled against the Minister I have just referred to, does not the hon. Prime Minister think that it would be decent, correct for him to step down as a Minister, pending all the ongoing enquiries?

The Prime Minister: I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister himself told me that if I felt that way, he would do it. First, I want to establish whether there is prima facie case. If ever there were, then we will look at that matter.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Prime Minister say that nothing has been found against the Police. I am sure that he is aware of that paragraph in the report, where the

lady says that she met with a local lawyer, and she felt so threatened that she went to the CID Headquarters and made a statement. I quote -

“(...) left Mauritius that same afternoon on a flight to South Africa fearful for my immediate safety.”

Can I know whether the Police carried out an enquiry after that lady made that statement?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot give a clear answer yet because it does not seem to be known whether actually a statement was made to the Police. The other thing is that - we have checked - the lady, in fact, was meant to travel on that day, but, whether that statement was made, we are enquiring into it.

Mr Bérenger: Again, the hon. Prime Minister has found nothing against the Police; so far the enquiry is ongoing. Will he ask the Commissioner of Police to look into whether, in fact, when that quarrel erupted between Mr Andrey Kosolapov, the former lieutenant of that famous international arms trafficker, and a Mauritian, whose name was given earlier on, Mr Harrison, the Police, influenced by the lawyer of Mr Andrey Kosolapov, not only harassed that Mauritian national, but put him in jail on a fabricated charge, with his life being later threatened - I mean Mr Harrison?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am, in fact, very grateful to Ms Austin for having brought all this in - all these allegations are there - but there are some different versions. When I went to look into the details of it, it appears that Mr Kosolapov sent money from abroad and wanted to have the Air Operation Certificate (AOC) document submitted. When he came to Mauritius, he wanted to look at the document, and Mr Harrison did not give him the document. So, he was unsure - he has sent money from abroad - whether, in fact, the document is there or not. So, he wanted to check on whether the document exists or not. From what I understand, the document that was given to the Department of Civil Aviation was a fake one. It was an Air Operational Certificate (AOC) that, in fact, belonged to Catovair, which had then been tampered with and given. This came to light because Mr Kosolapov wanted to see his certificate; because he had transferred money and because he could not get it from Mr Harrison, he asked his Director of Finance, that is, of Superfly Aviation Ltd., to go and check on that document which was supposedly with the Department of Civil Aviation. It is only when the Director of Finance of Superfly Aviation Ltd. went to check, as they wanted to see whether that document existed, that it was found out that it was a fake document. I think facts may not necessarily be as is said

in the report. It appears, from what we see, that it is Mr Kosolapov himself who wanted to assure himself that he has a proper certificate, which he did not have. I would rather let the enquiry settle this matter, but this is what has come out so far.

Mr Bérenger: I hope the hon. Prime Minister will allow me to express my surprise that he relies so much on what a known trafficker, Mr Andrey Kosolapov, has been saying. It is his version; the version of a known trafficker. Would the hon. Prime Minister see to it, again through the Commissioner of Police, that we check whether all this was not concocted by this known trafficker and others, fabricating this so-called false document – I am not saying that this local Mauritian chap is an angel; I do not hold a brief for him – including the lawyer of Mr Kosolapov, to get rid of Mr Harrison, who was playing difficult by that time?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not relying on his word. There is a letter from the Director of Finance of Superfly Aviation Ltd., Mr Anuth, who wrote to the Director of Civil Aviation long before all this came out, to say that they wanted to find out whether the AOC that had been sent to them was genuine because they have not actually seen it. So, there is a letter that he had actually sent much before all this happened. Two things come to mind. Why would they themselves draw attention that they had not seen the AOC, and wanted to see whether they had actually an AOC? That is what is questionable in this case.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister will allow me to say that I am not surprised that a part of the gang should write such a letter, but we should not rely at all, on the contrary, on the versions put forward by a known trafficker, Mr Andrey Kosolapov.

Can I move on, if you will allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir. As far as the reference which I made to the Board of Investment and the Ministry of Labour is concerned, has the Board of Investment been involved in granting occupational permits, residential permits, in allowing for purchase of residential property in those two cases of Messrs Andrey Kosolapov and Sergey Denisenko?

The Prime Minister: From what I understand, the BOI has done the usual checks; nothing was flagged up. So, they gave the occupational permit. Once they gave the occupational permit, that was it. I think about a year and a half ago or two years maybe, because really these kinds of problems might happen, I decided that once the occupational permit is given, the ‘go ahead’ and registration is given by the BOI, it has to come to the Prime Minister’s Office for us to re-check whether there is something suspicious.

I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in a few cases, while occupational permit was given provisionally by the BOI, we have rejected the occupational permit precisely because we found some things not to be correct. That is what the situation is.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know whether the hon. Prime Minister has checked whether the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations was involved in granting work permit to either of these – I was going to say gentlemen – known traffickers?

The Prime Minister: As far as we see, Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is no.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, since this is a very serious matter, and we all wish to establish the true facts. Will the hon. Prime Minister kindly confirm who is leading this enquiry? On Tuesday last he said, and I quote –

“An enquiry into the matter has been instituted by the Commissioner of Police, the FIU, FSC and ICAC.”

So, who is leading?

Secondly, have all documents, the exchange of mails between BOI, the Department of Civil Aviation and all other bodies been impounded and secured, so that there is no attempt to have relevant documents made to disappear?

Thirdly, will he confirm whether Ms Austin has been invited by the Mauritian Authorities to come to Mauritius for the purposes of this enquiry, and that she will be given all the necessary protection to do so?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I believe ICAC has asked her that they want her cooperation; she has agreed. We agree totally that when she comes, we will make sure that she gets all the security measures.

The other question was about whether BOI has impounded all the documents?

Mr Obeegadoo: And whether all documents have been secured.

The Prime Minister: Unfortunately, we cannot have one person to lead the enquiry because they are different. For example, the FIU, we can't go into their enquiry, ICAC is doing the enquiry separately, but all four are doing their enquiries at senior levels. All the documents that are pertaining to that have been impounded.

Mr Uteem: In the report of the Conflict Awareness Project, the lady mentioned that considerable pressure had been put and I quote: ‘some officials complained that the Minister of Labour had extended pressure in order to further the passage of Island System's AOC

application'. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether this matter also is being looked into by the investigators?

The Prime Minister: We have already looked into it. I can say that the hon. Minister did not put pressure as such. He did mention that this is being delayed and that's it.

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Prime Minister has not told us when these two Russians left Mauritius. Is it before they put the application on 26 November 2011? Is it before the Conflict Awareness Project had sent some documents to the foreign Ministry in Mauritius? Or, is it before the application was rejected?

The Prime Minister: They have come many times to Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, but Mr Kosolapov, in fact, left Mauritius before the report came out. All of them left before the report came out.

Mr Ganoo: Has the hon. Prime Minister verified whether any of these two Russians nationals have acquired property?

The Prime Minister: In fact, looking into that, Mr Speaker, Sir, it's a procedure that we have to go through because it hasn't turned up yet that they have acquired property. I see that they have been staying in hotels and complexes. We are still investigating into that.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, throughout the process when the file was dealt by the Civil Aviation Department, any officers from the Department complained of undue pressure?

The Prime Minister: No, there was no such complaint.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister - he has mentioned the names of certain persons of the companies, one Mr Topsy and Mr Mosafeer - whether, in the course of the enquiry, the Police or the relevant authorities conducting the enquiries are going all through into the activities of these two companies and the persons who formed part of the Board members or the shareholders of this company?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the enquiry is pursuing; that is what they are doing.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, since there have been information that lawyers, including senior lawyers would have been associated with these two unreputable Russian persons, will Government consider approaching both the Bar Association and the Law Society so as to advise all lawyers to exercise caution and observe the due diligence process before associating with foreigners bringing in such vast sums of money before doing business?

The Prime Minister: In that case as the hon. Member knows, there is a lawyer-client relationship. A client comes to see a lawyer, the lawyer takes the case, and in that case the lawyer takes the case about the swindling at the beginning. That was the original thing. He went to defend his client. How can you say to a client that he cannot see a lawyer. I suppose that it is his right to have a lawyer; the lawyer went to defend the client and put a case for swindling.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm that the counsel of these two Russians signed on their behalf abroad - countries such as Soudan and South Africa?

The Prime Minister: I did not quite follow the question, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am sorry. Does the hon. Member mean: signed, resided?

Mr Fakeemeeah: Signed on behalf of these two Russians on arms dealing.

The Prime Minister: You mean somebody from Soudan and ...

Mr Fakeemeeah: No, the Mauritian counsel of these two Russians. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether he signed on their behalf because these two are *persona non grata* in South Africa?

The Prime Minister: No, they did not sign on their behalf, whatever the connection is from Soudan and Iran. They did not sign on their behalf. The lawyer went to defend the client; supposedly, he had been swindled by this Mr Harrison and that's it.

Mr Bérenger: I have two final questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am sure that the hon. Prime Minister is aware of the paragraph at page 2 of the report that we are discussing, which reads thus, I quote –

“What is disconcerting is how dangerously close that network had come to activating their lethal arms transport business.”

I heard the hon. Prime Minister insist, on several occasions that, in fact, Mr Kosolapov, had left before the report was published. Mrs Austin came here, met people from the Foreign Affairs – I am not sure whether she had met the hon. Minister; I think she met the Minister also - from the Civil Aviation, but specially the Minister, and warned everybody. Can I ask the hon. Prime whether Mr Kosolapov left after the visit of Mrs Austin in Mauritius, that is, before the report came out, but after the visit of Mrs Austin in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: I have details here, Mr Speaker, Sir. My understanding is that he left before, but if the hon. Leader of the Opposition will give me a second, I will check whether he actually left and on what exact date.

Mr Bérenger: She met him here, in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: Yes. Then...

Mr Bérenger: How can he have left before meeting her here in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: The report came afterwards, from what I understand.

Mr Bérenger: My question is whether she met Mr Kosolapov. My question is whether Mr Kosolapov left after meeting her and the report came out later on. Did he leave after meeting Mr Kosolapov? I am sure being informed by his counsel and so on, that something was coming.

The Prime Minister: Clearly, he left after the meeting; if whatever the meeting was held, but before the report came out.

Mr Bérenger: I just want to conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir. I understand that, on both sides, we want *de faire toute la lumière* on this matter. The hon. Prime Minister is aware that the lady concerned said that she is ready to depone. Can I just quote that part?

“The Conflict Awareness Project has agreed to cooperate with any Mauritian enquiry or criminal investigation.”

I don't rely on ICAC and even on the Police in that case. Will the hon. Prime Minister tell us whether he will see to it that Mrs Austin is given the possibility of coming here to depone, to cooperate. Will her security and the security of any other witness fully guaranteed?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am certainly going to give this guarantee, Mr Speaker, Sir, because we want to also. As I said, my first duty is to protect the reputation of Mauritius; if something has gone wrong, we have to see and we have to go to the bottom of this. This, I can give a guarantee to the House.

Mr Speaker: Time is up! I suspend the sitting for forty-five minutes.

At 4.14 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.14 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O.10 (2)

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

L'EXPRESS newspaper – article - “Affaire Harte - Ramgoolam blâme le jury”

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to inform the House that, on 19 July 2012, my predecessor received a privilege complaint from Dr. the hon. Hawoldar, Chief Government Whip, in relation to an article under the caption “*Affaire Harte - Ramgoolam blâme le jury*”, which appeared in the daily l'Express on 18 July 2012.

I have considered the matter. The contents of the article entitled “*Affaire Harte - Ramgoolam blâme le jury*” may constitute an offence under section 6 subsection 1 paragraph (o) of the National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act.

I would invite Dr. the hon. Hawoldar to make the appropriate Motion under Standing Order 74, paragraph 4 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly 1995.

Dr. Hawoldar: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of your ruling, I move that the article under the caption “*Affaire Harte - Ramgoolam blâme le jury*” which appeared on the daily l'Express of 18 July 2012, be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for appropriate action.

I am laying a copy of the article on the Table of the Assembly.

Ms Deerpalsing rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

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 circularised amongst Honourable Members, be and is hereby approved.”

Question again proposed.

(5.12 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister (Dr. R. Beebejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, today happens to be the 27 of July and it is 5.17 p.m. and it is one year, one day and six hours or five and a half hours since, what I call, the high treason happened. It was on a Tuesday, 26 of July 2011, when, by appointment, the Leader of the MSM, Minister of Finance in the Government of hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, came to my Office and handed me a copy of the letters of resignation of six MSM Ministers and, this, in the absence of the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, who happened to be in London. Of course, I had been in touch with hon. Dr. Ramgoolam, the Prime Minister and it was not entirely unexpected, but the first question I asked of the then Minister of Finance was –

- (a) Why didn't you wait for the Prime Minister who was due back in a few days, and
- (b) What was he hoping to achieve with these collective *démissions* and I could not get a clear answer.

Within two hours, Mr Speaker, Sir, our partners from the Government, the PMSD and the MR phoned me spontaneously, the news had broken that they were *solidaires* and they were there and that they were with hon. Dr. Ramgoolam and, incidentally, when these resignation letters came, the assurance was that these six Ministers and the MSM party would continue to back hon. Dr. Ramgoolam in Government and as backbenchers. So, the exercise of *leve paké rester*, was there and it started and a week later, on the return of hon. Dr. Ramgoolam, things evolved and *zonn leve paké zonn aller*.

Incomprehensible at the time it happened and I still have to fathom personally what it was all about. Was it an attempt to bring Government down and have a new Government? Was it an attempt to avoid a scandal that was brewing at that time? I am not here to lay judgment, Mr Speaker, Sir, but it is the saddest episode, I think, of our recent history in political affairs. History will retain it. *Trahison vers l'électorat, trahison vers le peuple, trahison vers le partenaire, le Labour Party and the PMSD, who, I know, had gone out of their way, to accommodate and to have a coalition for the 2010 election.*

The sacrifice that was made by the Labour Party was to move hon. Dr. Kasenally, who was the first elected Member of Constituency No. 15 and he was moved to another constituency to make room. And the other thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, we even had an MSM candidate in Port Louis, Constituency No. 3. We knew that there was no way that an MSM candidate would get elected in Port Louis, Constituency No. 3. Let alone No. 2!

(Interruptions)

That was the generosity with which hon. Dr. Ramgoolam, Leader, accommodated this party. Since then, what has it been, a year, *ena fit pé coller*, I can't understand. I hear also: "*Nous pas faire zigzag.*" What zigzag? What is this all about? I leave it to history to pass judgment. I think, as we live through it, looking back in time, we will see the things when *ene bêtise énorme*, was committed which has cost the country, its serenity, its tranquillity, its peaceful term at that time.

Be as it may, today, we find ourselves here *solidaires*, speaking as one, there are no two leaders; there is only one leader and a respected leader who has the authority and also the cooperation of each and every one.

So, there it is, Mr Speaker, Sir, and, today, once again, we speak with the Opposition being absent and I welcome my three friends on the opposite side who have consistently been present and have attended the debate and I must say whilst I am at it, I appreciated all these three speeches from the other side. They were of very high level and I thank also hon. Cehl Fakeemeeah for his intervention. I think, he said what had to be said though I don't agree, of course, with everything he says, but that's democracy.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, *pena fit pou coller*, no nonsense and here we are. The three year Government Programme is in front of us and unequivocally clearly it charts the course which Government has set itself and this is –

- (i) to achieve its goal of creating a more prosperous and equitable society where every Mauritian will find opportunities to thrive and improve his quality of life;
- (ii) it is an ambitious programme which builds on past successes, and
- (iii) proposes new and innovative measures, and this commitment to improve the quality of life of our countrymen is at the heart of this programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from *état d'urgence économique* of 2005, this Government has, during these past few years, skilfully steered our way through the dangerous waters to achieve and sustain a growth rate, deemed by all to be respectable in the circumstances. We have not compromised on our democratic principles and values and have, in fact, consolidated our Welfare State, keeping in mind more particularly the interests of the vulnerable groups of our society.

The Government Programme 2012-2015 contains over 250 measures to move the nation forward and this is the theme 'To Move the Nation Forward', and they cover -

- (i) all sectors of the economy, and
- (ii) the needs of all segments of our society.

It puts in place the conditions necessary for the country to succeed in its next stage of development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleagues and hon. Members present in the House have comprehensively elaborated on the various components of the programme. So, I will not elaborate further except to underline a few measures like putting in place a National Strategic Transformation Commission - to me this is vital. The Government is ensuring that strategies in different fields are consistent and have a holistic approach in order to avoid much wastage of scarce resources and, of course, to see that they are done on time.

Secondly, I note once again, the further improvement of the Public Procurement System to accelerate decision-making with accountability to ensure fast and efficient implementation of public infrastructure plan. This is to me so important that we re-look at the Public Procurement System in the sense that it has been presented in the Programme.

Thirdly, we have plans for major rationalisation of parastatal bodies and State- owned Enterprises with a view to improving cost-effectiveness, quality of services and optimal use of human resources, and these are long overdue and much welcome steps.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have in my Ministry, the CWA, the CEB and the WMA, and I know how important this measure of re-looking, rationalising, our parastatal bodies and I have in mind these three amongst others which are *d'actualité*.

Lastly, the social integration and not merely poverty reduction in its efforts to increase opportunities to all: the Government Programme 2012-15 gives much importance to housing and education aid for increasing social integration.

As for the tourism industry, my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister spoke lengthily on reviewing the product itself and I entirely agree with him. It is time that we re-look at our tourism industry, especially in reviewing the product, how we are presenting Mauritius abroad.

Having said this, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will move to what is under my responsibility: the energy sector, the water sector and the wastewater sector.

In the energy sector, the Long Term Energy Strategy, approved by Government in 2009 places emphasis on three things -

- (a) energy security,
- (b) diversification of our energy sources through the development of renewable energy, and
- (c) most importantly, affordability.

This question of affordability is central to a lot of the decisions that we will have to make in the years to come, and the long term strategy also talks about adjusting the targets - the targets to be reviewed and adjusted every year depending on technological developments and international trends.

A road map for the development of renewable energy is being finalised with the assistance of an expert from the Planning Commission of India. The report is expected by end of this month following which we shall be able to come up with a realistic target in terms of capacity of renewable energies that can be integrated in the system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are inundated week after week by unsolicited requests for setting up renewable energy projects. With this Master Plan of a road map for the development of renewable energy, we will be able then to answer to all those who are interested as to what our capacity for integration is and what we should be doing in the months and the years to come.

There are, however, impediments for renewable technologies. Firstly, it is the intermittent nature of the supply which limits its level of integration into the grid, and this very important nature of intermittent supply, I believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, is not well appreciated or well known to the public and in the absence of energy storage, this is a major problem that will limit

our capacity to integrate renewable energy into the grid. The second is the high investment costs requiring subsidy or tariff increase.

So far, Government has been supporting the implementation of renewable energy projects through the Maurice Ile Durable Fund and we have a lot of projects that have been so far supported and I will give a few, the -

- (a) Small Scale Distributed Generation (SSDG) at household level,
- (b) micro hydro power projects at Nicolière and Midlands,
- (c) gas to energy at Mare Chicose,
- (d) wind farm already operational in Rodrigues, and
- (e) 30 MW wind farm at Plaine Sophie expected to be operational in 2015.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a few words about SSDG - a problem has been raised in this House recently - the SSDG scheme was launched in 2009 for a capacity of 2 MW at low voltage comprising units of up to 50 kW. Numerous applications for photovoltaic projects were received and oversubscribed and we had to increase the capacity to 3 MW in 2011. So far, unfortunately, the uptake has been slow, but during recent months, there has been acceleration in the implementation of the projects.

I would like to inform the House, here, that part of the problem has been - apart from the cost - the lack of the technical appreciation. We did a survey recently to find out why this uptake has been slow: quite a number on financial grounds. Secondly, the sites chosen were not suitable. The roof chosen was not suitable. The site was not suitable and the technique was not appropriate. We had a number of reasons and we have learnt from these. I have made an appeal to those who are providers or suppliers of photovoltaic units to make sure that they are providing quality so that at the end of a few years, we don't have equipment that is not functioning.

For the information of the Members of the House, apart from the 3 MW SSDG scheme, a second scheme of up to 2 MW was launched for

- (a) public,
- (b) educational,
- (c) charitable and religious institutions for sale of electricity to the CEB at marginal cost. This is not a preferential tariff. This is at marginal cost.

One example is the 50 kW system which was recently inaugurated at the Municipality of Port Louis. I congratulate the Port Louis Municipal Councillors and Lord Mayor for their

initiative. I hope that soon this will be followed by the Municipality of Vacoas-Phoenix and also to the South District Council . It will be an example for others to follow.

This week, I gathered on the educational side, for the educational institution. The Bureau de l'Education Catholique (BEC) has launched its project on this scheme.

Thirdly, we have a third scheme which is very interesting. The third scheme is connection to the grid at medium voltage and at no cost to the CEB. This is an interesting one where private producers exceeding 50 kW are allowed to use this scheme as they need to stabilise their electrical system through connection to the grid, which means they produce photovoltaic electricity and unless they are connected to the grid, their system is unstable. So, they use the grid to stabilise their system and in return, there is no payment. It's at no cost to CEB. Under this scheme, the Mauritius Commercial Bank (MCB) at St Jean has full PV system of 400 kilowatt already connected to the grid at no cost to the CEB.

The other barriers, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the development of the power sector are first, land availability, and the second is the obtention of EIA licence.

For example, renewable technologies require around 1.5 hectares of land for 1 MW capacity of wind power and 0.8 hectare for 1 MW of photovoltaic. The demand for land is quite extensive. Appropriate sites for the implementation of power plants are limited and they are mostly owned by the private sector.

One of the difficulties encountered by potential bidders for the 10 MW PV project in units of 1 or 2 units disseminated around the island has been the difficulty to secure land for the project. This is the reason why the extension was granted. This matter was raised here and I am giving the explanation.

As to wind farms; the first wind farm of capacity 30 MW had to be re-sited twice, first it was at Bigara then Curepipe Point and then it had to be shifted again to Plaine Sophie because of environmental issues and potential interference with aircraft communication and landing systems and this explains the difficulties sometimes not foreseen in the implementation of these projects.

As to the 18 MW Aerowatt project at Plaine des Roches, it is a question of purchase price and I insist that we must negotiate to get the lowest price possible so as we do not have expensive electricity, the cost of electricity does not go up.

We are also exploring other avenues, geothermal, the question was raised about four or five years ago, about potential of geothermal amount in Mauritius and a consultant has already

identified a site at Bar le Duc where a 500 meter core hole will be drilled shortly to confirm or otherwise the availability of geothermal energy in Mauritius, but I am sure, knowing how things are, somebody would tell us why did you put a borehole there why not go at the other side and the discussion will go on forever, but we have to start somewhere. To my mind a very competent consultant, who having gone round the island, identified this site, so we are going to go for this site for geothermal exploration.

We now come to the latest thing, latest Mr Speaker Sir, is LNG. LNG is now the thing on the market and according to industry experts there are now reserves for LNG for more than two hundred years arising from the exploitation of shale gas which is cleaner, safer and less costly than other fossil fuels. Therefore, a pre-feasibility study for LNG power plant and other uses of LNG will soon be undertaken.

A few words about energy efficiency: for long, energy saving has been given priority. Energy management is not just about energy saving, it is really about making more with less energy, meaning about energy efficiency. It is about being energy-intelligent and energy-conscious. It is about a new culture of generating, distributing and consuming energy.

With the proclamation of the Energy Efficiency Act last year and the setting up of the Energy Efficiency Management Office, actions are being taken on a number of fronts.

Emphasis is here placed on:

- (i) education,
- (ii) training,
- (iii) awareness and sensitisation,
- (iv) institutional capacity-building,
- (v) introduction of labels and standards that will initially be on a voluntary basis,
- (vi) the *Observatoire de l'Energie* is already in place to provide the pulse of the energy sector, and
- (vii) voluntary initiatives involving industry as well as domestic demand-side management will be promoted through several concrete actions from dedicated campaigns to the conduct of on-site energy audits.

The Building Control Act 2012 also provides for energy savings and optimum energy consumption to be incorporated in the -

- (i) design,

- (ii) construction, and
- (iii) maintenance of buildings

in line with the concept of energy conscious architecture. For instance,

- (i) designers,
- (ii) architects,
- (iii) engineers,
- (iv) promoters,
- (v) clients and
- (vi) local authorities

will have to work hand-in-hand to ensure that buildings are energy-efficient. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is going to be a long process. Energy management all down the line from generation transmission to distribution to usage will have to change. It will take time, we have got the will and I am sure with efficiency and savings we will be able to curve this increase in the energy demand in the years to come.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now turn to water sector. For the information of the House - and I have repeated it many times - our water requirements are met from -

- (i) ground water 50%,
- (ii) river-off takes 20%, and
- (iii) storage reservoirs 30%.

Only 30% of our water comes from storage reservoirs and obviously this is too low. Our priority - afterwards I come to leakage and so on - is to have adequate storage facilities.

Groundwater and river-off takes account for 70% of the resources that we use for potable water, and they are subject to rapid fluctuations as a result of several variations in climate change and rainfall patterns. The availability is unstable, water from boreholes, water from rivers during the dry season when we need the most we don't have them, so we have to rethink our whole system.

Mr Speaker, Sir, bearing this in mind, this is the only Government, since independence, that has addressed the issue of water storage. In 1999 this Government, the Labour Party under Dr. Navin Ramgoolam began the construction of the Midlands dam. The only dam that has been constructed since independence and today Mr Speaker, Sir, we have two projects for mobilisation and storage of additional water, with two major on-going dam projects, at Bagatelle

and Rivière des Anguilles again under the leadership of Dr. Navin. Ramgoolam. Some Rs8 billion will be invested in the construction of the two dams and the dyke on Rivière du Poste. These three projects will mobilise an additional 85 million m³ of surface water annually. As for the question of ground water, some 180 boreholes have been developed between the period 2006-2012. An incredible figure - 180 boreholes to supplement domestic, agricultural and industrial water supply with a yearly contribution of some 22 million m³.

Mr Speaker, Sir, water demand in the region of Mare aux Vacoas has increased significantly over the years due to population growth and socio-economic development. This increased demand coupled with the prolonged drought of last year and the leakages in the network led to a situation of severe water shortage in the region and reminded us of the vulnerability and the need to build a resilient water supply system not only in the Mare aux Vacoas region, but also nationwide.

In Mare aux Vacoas the emergency projects that we implemented were -

- a) the transfer of water from Mare Longue Reservoir to La Marie system,
- b) the introduction of mobile pressure filters to supply water directly from rivers,
- c) the construction of a dyke at Rivière du Poste which is still under construction to divert water into Mare aux Vacoas reservoir, and also
- d) a new project for pumping some 20,000 m³ daily from Midlands into the Mare aux Vacoas system to supply some 20,000 households in the regions extending from Camp Fouquereaux to Nouvelle Découverte and this is at a feasibility stage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the reason for using the Midlands dam is that it is often overflowing. It is in a region of very generous adequate rainfalls and the next step will be also to raise a capacity of the Midlands dam. So, as a first step, we are going to extract some 20,000 m³ daily and I hope in the months to come the project will start.

The problem of non-revenue water - quite a number of projects have been implemented Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not going to go through the list. Quite a number, but it is totally inadequate. We have replaced major leaking pipes in various regions of Mauritius from the centre, to the north, to the south, to the east, but the leakages are still there at around 50%, sometimes less sometimes more and we have to address this issue in a comprehensive manner. Plugging leakages as we go along is not good enough; we have to change the system, the network. While we addressed, last year and beginning of this year, the short term problem of

water, especially in the Mare aux Vacoas region, we have to look at reform of the water sector in depth.

The management of the water sector has to be drastically reviewed and improved, and state-of-the-art technology such as telemetry and automation, including pressure control, has to be introduced.

Mr Speaker, Sir, part of the problem is intermittency of the water supply. Every time that the water supply is switched off, the system empties, and when you have release of water, the effect is to break the system by a sudden upsurge of water into it.

Also, the other problem that we have is supplying water at elevation. To do that, we have to keep a high pressure within the system, and this also causes leaks. Unless and until we have a system running 24 hours out of 24, we will see what is called the water hammer pulse – hon. Dr. Bunwaree will know what I am talking about. Pumping water into an empty system causes a water hammer pulse, and it breaks the system.

We also have the Singapore Corporation Enterprise. We have been talking about it since last year. They have just submitted their final report on the water reform sector, and the issue of Non Revenue Water, starting with the Mare aux Vacoas system and spreading throughout the island, will be addressed. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Singaporeans are probably the best in the world when it comes to water management, and we are looking forward to some rapid improvement over the months to come with the reorganisation of the water sector.

Ensuring long term water security is ongoing. The Master Plan has already been prepared, and it makes provision for up to 2050. The Master Plan has assessed water availability and the different options available to meet future water demands, but here, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have a major problem, and the major problem is the rationalisation of water rights dating some 200 years back, mainly for agricultural and milling purposes. We are all aware that the pattern of land use has changed significantly, and that water rights granted may no longer be justified. Regulations were made in January 2012 to conduct a census on all water rights. It is most unfortunate and disturbing that the response to the census has been well below expectations, despite appeals to the private sector, through the Joint Economic Council and the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association, to collaborate. My Ministry is consulting the State Law Office to promulgate Regulations, to make it mandatory for the water rights holders to provide the requested information. It is only in the light of this response to the water rights census that we

will be able to come up with an action plan to rationalise the existing water rights according to the principle: “Not water you want, but the water you need”.

I take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, to express my appreciation of the spirit of understanding and collaboration of the population, in particular the residents supplied from Mare aux Vacoas reservoir, during the difficult dry period from October 2011 to February this year. I am happy to note that this difficult situation has led to a positive change of mindset, and has developed a certain degree – I am not saying in a large degree – of consciousness amidst the population of the necessity for judicious use of this precious resource, and has given rise to a culture of rain water harvesting. This culture of rain water harvesting, I think, should be totally exploited. I thank Dr. Bunwaree who has always spoken about water harvesting to me, and I gather he is one of the pioneers; he installed it in his house and makes good use of it. The credit goes to the younger generation, especially primary and secondary school students, who have actively participated in the ‘save water’ campaigns.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, our present per capita water consumption still stands at 170 litres/day and should be brought down, and I am targeting a figure of 120-140 litres/day.

I will now turn to the Wastewater Sector. The prime objective of the National Sewerage Programme is to protect our environment, including our lagoons, and especially our ground water resources.

Started in year 2000, the wastewater projects have since 2005 been implemented at an accelerated pace, mainly with the mega Plaines Wilhems sewerage project. Some Rs20 billion have been invested to provide collective sanitation facilities to some 640,000 inhabitants in Plaines Wilhems, Baie du Tombeau and Grand’ Baie area, representing more than 50% of the population.

I wish to explain certain things without necessarily expressing criticism at certain reports or anything of the sort. We have had criticism and concerns expressed about increase in cost in the implementation of wastewater projects initiated under the National Sewerage Programme Phase I, which started in year 2000. I am not blaming the previous Government; they happened to be there; the projects started between 2000 and 2005, and have been ongoing since. The works include mainly –

- (i) construction of street sewers, and
- (ii) house connections.

For the information of the House, the project areas were well defined. However, bids were invited in respect of estimated quantities based on preliminary designs. Contractors were required to carry out appropriate topographical surveys and detailed designs only after award of contract. It is only after award of contract that the contractor was asked to carry out appropriate topographical surveys and detailed designs. This is a very serious flaw in the process, Mr Speaker, Sir. This gave rise to additional quantities and extension of time, resulting in substantial additional cost.

For example, the Plaines Wilhems sewerage projects were being implemented in densely populated areas and, during the implementation phase, it has been found that a number of lanes were not included in the original scope of works but had to be sewered. Furthermore, in many places, the main sewer lines had to be laid at higher depths resulting in additional quantities and impacting significantly on the final contract price.

I hope that the House has now understood why the sewerage works initiated and designed, as mentioned earlier, have ended with significant increase in contract prices. Hon. Lesjongard who, week after week, has criticised the Wastewater Management authority, should know that part of the problem arose in the 2000-2005 period. I am not blaming them; I am saying this just as a matter of fact, and it should be accepted as such that the 2000-2005 projects were badly designed and now we have learned from the lesson.

In the Pailles and Guibies, Grand' Baie and Baie du Tombeau projects, provisions have been made for full scale topographical surveys followed by detailed design prior to launching of bids. This ensures a well defined scope of works that can be completed with a minimal increase in contract price. At the same time, while doing sewerage works, we have used this opportunity to replace old water pipes, which happen to be present. The Local Authorities will also be glad to know that full width instead of trench width reinstatement of roads will be carried out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that the implementation of wastewater projects is a source of inconvenience to the public in terms of traffic diversions, dust, noise and water supply disruptions. The end result, however, is a better living environment...

Mr Speaker: Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister how long he will be because we will break for 20 minutes.

The Deputy Prime Minister: It's alright.

Mr Speaker: So, I suspend for 20 minutes.

At 5.54 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.18 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that the implementation of wastewater projects is a source of inconvenience to the public in terms of traffic diversions, dust, noise and water supply disruptions. The end result however is a better living environment with improved sanitary conditions and water supply and better roads. As a result of a good public relations exercise, helped by local residents, Councillors, MPs and *Forces Vives*, the Wastewater Management Authority obtained the full collaboration and understanding of residents in the concerned regions and the public at large and my thanks go to all of them.

However, there is one problem which has yet to be resolved and sorted out in the wastewater sector and this is the reuse of treated wastewater and this has yet to be fully addressed. Out of the four major treatment plants that we have, St. Martin, with a capacity of 69,000 m³ daily presently treats 40,000 m³ daily and that is being used for sugar cane irrigation. Discussions are still ongoing with the syndic regarding the sale price.

Effluents from Montagne Jacquot and Baie du Tombeau are disposed of via long sea outfalls. The 1,500 m³ of treated effluent from Grand' Baie is presently disposed of into boreholes for aquifer recharge. However, *compagnie sucrière de Mon Choisy* has agreed to purchase the effluent for irrigation of a golf course in the North.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is still much to be done to extend the collective wastewater facilities to other parts of the island. The roadmap for the next 20 years, that is, up to year 2033, has been defined by this Government. Some 13 projects have been identified for implementation at an estimated investment cost of Rs28 billion. The priority areas for the next ten years, selected on the basis of environmental, socioeconomics and cost effective considerations are Vacoas, Rivière du Rempart/Plaine des Roches, Goodlands/Roche Terre, Mahebourg/Beau Vallon, Centre de Flacq and Port Mathurin (Rodrigues). The estimated cost is around Rs14 billion and will provide collective sanitation facilities for an additional 240,000 inhabitants.

Mr Speaker, Sir, so much so far for the Government Programme and, as I have said, the future presents challenges, we live in challenging times and this is the time that we have to put our heads together and face these challenges. I have no doubt that under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister we will be able to face the future with serenity, with a determination to do

what has to be done. This Government Programme, with its 250 measures is a roadmap and takes us into the future and the saying is -

“For those who can’t stand the heat get out of the kitchen.”

The MSM has done that. With the horizon being so uncertain, I hope that the public will be made to understand about the difficulties and about the challenges ahead so that we can have the collaboration of each and everyone.

Thank you.

At 6.22 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.42 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained several times why I prorogued Parliament and we came up with a new Government Programme.

We were elected on a manifesto and a programme in May 2010. Coincidence has it, Mr Speaker, Sir, exactly, one year and one day later, on 26 July 2011; the MSM decided to betray the verdict and the trust of the electorate and joined the ranks of the Opposition, on the grounds that one of the Members was being investigated by ICAC. Mr Speaker, Sir, public opinion has already condemned the peril action. This, at the time when the world was still facing an unprecedented, economic and financial crisis and the Euro zone crisis was creating havoc in Europe.

The European Union, our main trade partner, clearly, if they are affected, then the Euro crisis was bound to affect us. We have said it many times and yet, at a time like this, the Minister of Finance thought it right to resign on such grounds. At such a time of uncertainty, Government decided to give priority to the forthcoming Budget which was at the beginning of November. It was also clear that we would have to reorient our strategy for growth given the worsening of the Euro zone crisis. Hence, I waited for the presentation of the Budget and then I prorogued Parliament and presented this new Government Programme 2012-2015.

The theme of our Programme is: ‘Moving the Nation Forward.’ It is about reorienting our growth strategy at a time of an ongoing global economic crisis, including future pillars of the economy and present a roadmap to transform the Mauritian economy from middle income to high income. It is about development, it is about a better future and one that is created by the whole nation and for everyone regardless of the walk in life or the background.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I see this Programme as the third stage of Government policy under my stewardship. The first stage launched a series of brave reforms that helped to propel the economy to its faster growth rate, lowered unemployment and gave opportunities to many and expectations of better times to all. The second stage was aimed at securing these gains and achieving stability in the face of the world's global crisis, the world has known for 80 years. Now that the post-crisis world can be seen more clearly, it is necessary to embark on a first stage of my Government - one that faces new realities and moves Mauritius forward.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are rightly proud of our achievements as a nation despite the doom-mongers, the naysayers who predicted hard times at independence, we have flourished. Still today, there are those who would rather preach of impending disaster rather than focus on achievements, who would doubt of our abilities rather than focus on strategies for success. That is what we need to do.

Since 2005, Mr Speaker, Sir, or more precisely 2006, this Government has undertaken bold reforms to further open up the economy to expertise, to new ideas, technology and these reforms were made to usher in a new development model. A globally competitive paradigm that shuns reliance on trade preferences and that marks the second turning point in our economic history. Thus, since 2005 we have been developing new areas of comparative advantages. The world changes fast and global events with adverse ripple effects occur more often than ever before.

Since 2005, our economy has been subjected one by one to external shocks, one after the other. We have had to ride out the surge in petroleum and food prices. We have had to face the global financial turmoil and the worst recession that the world has experienced and now, we are dealing with the crisis in the Euro zone and the rebalancing of the global economy. It is a lot of crises in a short span of time. Throughout and until now, our economy has shown extraordinary resilience. The performance of our economy has indeed been impressive, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have attracted record levels of FDI at a time when the global economy was at its most precarious state. Moody's has upgraded our country at a time when three rating agencies, including Fitch and Standard and Poor's, have been downgrading many countries, and countries which are much more advanced than us: the United States of America, France, Spain, Italy and so on. In fact, Moody's has in the past 18 months downgraded 23 countries and some of them for several times. This surely says a lot about the performance and management of our economy.

Our consistent improvement of the public debt situation since 2006 has contributed to this increased rating. I think the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance mentioned it in his speech. It did not happen by itself. Public debt today stands at one of its lowest levels in many years: 54% of GDP. Our banks too have been upgraded at a time when so many banks around the world are being downgraded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as we say, this did not happen by itself, neither did it happen by luck. The resilience of our economy is in no way fortuitous. We all know that it is underpinned by well thought out strategy centred on diversification of the economic base, moving to high value added activities, ease of doing business, good governance, greater openness, infrastructure development, appropriate macro-economic policies and bold reforms whenever required. Most importantly, our economic performance throughout the various crises results from the prompt and appropriate intervention of the Government. Our policies have created the fiscal space necessary to deal with external shocks. We stood prepared and we were ahead of the curve.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as they say '*gouverner c'est prévoir*'. This is precisely why during the worst economic crisis the world has known we have had an enviable growth rate during these last years. There are gathering clouds and strong headwinds ahead. Fundamental problems remain in the Euro zone which brought badly for the euro. The Euro crisis is likely to persist which means that the growth outlook for Europe remains at best weak and has the potential for much worse. The implications for the Mauritian economy are clearly there. We must not succumb to the pessimism of some. We have demonstrated time and again our ability to change and prosper where others were saying we could not survive, that we were doomed. That is why we must read the signs of changing times and adapt, be innovative, develop new pillars of our economy while building on our strength and develop a new strategic vision.

This Programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, integrates economic growth, social development and environment enhancement in an unprecedented way. This is why we have formulated a Programme that sets out Government policies for the next three years in six main areas, namely prosperity, connectivity, people, society, nation and sustainability. These are the main areas on which we will act over the period 2012 – 2015 and act in a decisive way. Let me stress, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Programme for three years, it might be for three years, but it is cast in a long term vision for the country. As the Programme puts it -

“Government will remain rooted to the underlying philosophical values that have always guided its actions: Progressive Politics, that is, “*mettre l’humain au centre du développement*”. We have always considered economic success to be meaningful only – and only - if it leads to improvements in the quality of life for all in a sustainable way. Government will maintain its unflinching determination to nurture a more inclusive, plural and cohesive society based on human dignity, equality of treatment, economic efficiency and social justice.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, thus the core feature of our vision is a high income economy that is, a *per capita* income exceeding USD12,000 at this stage. Our aim is to avoid the middle income trap where a country can be stuck because its wages are too high to compete with low wage economies and it does not have the skills, the technology or the efficiency to compete with advanced economies, especially in higher value added products. Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, can find itself in that situation if we are not careful and vigilant. It is a challenging task to avoid the middle income trap. There are examples of countries, South Africa is an example and Brazil is another one. They have been languishing for decades in what the World Bank calls ‘the middle income range’ because they have not been able to build competitiveness in high value products.

The Government Programme of 2012-2015 charts the way to avoid precisely the middle income trap by setting out the necessary ideas, policies and measures. We are conscious that such an outcome entails higher investment ratios, a major boost to the manufacturing sector, further industrial diversification, high skill innovations, supportive labour market conditions and to ensure that we increase our competitiveness and productivity. Thus, the high income challenge is about moving from resource driven growth that is dependent on cheap labour and capital to growth based on high productivity and innovation. This, Mr Speaker, Sir, requires massive investment in infrastructure and people. That is why we have announced Government’s commitment to ensuring a high quality education system which encourages creativity and innovation.

We must ensure that our education system corresponds to the 21st century needs. That is why also we have set out a plan for public infrastructure that will require investment, both public and private of over Rs200 billion rupees during the next ten years. Our commitment to modernising Mauritius and laying the foundation for a still more prosperous nation is clear. We have already invested - I think the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of

Public Infrastructure has already said - a total of Rs62 billion in infrastructure since 2005. Works on the Mass Transit System will start next year. This is only part of the broader and more comprehensive plan for road decongestion.

In 2007/2008, Government embarked on a comprehensive Road Decongestion Programme, which we can see is delivering time and cost savings. Government will also accelerate the implementation of the Master Plan for modernisation and development of the port. We must, Mr Speaker, Sir, position Mauritius as the freight hub between Asia and Africa. We must capitalise on our geographical position. I have always been saying for some time now that we have been called the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean. It was for a reason. We are strategically positioned and we are positioned within, what we call the golden triangle of growth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards diversification, Government Programme 2012/2015 includes a major innovative initiative to develop the immense potential of the country as an Ocean State. We see the ocean of a new frontier for expanding development and work creation. This is a key channel through which we can move forward towards greater prosperity.

Mauritius, as we all know, has one of the largest Exclusive Economic Zones in the world. We must tap this potential. We will propel our economy to increase the per capita income to USD12,000 and higher by creating high value added jobs. I made it, Mr Speaker, Sir, a priority to work with the Seychelles, so as to get additional joint jurisdiction of an area of our continental shelf, extending over 396,000 km². Thus Mauritius now has a total area of 2.3 million square kilometres over which it can exercise various economic rights. We have amended the Maritime Zone Act to provide for Mauritius to exercise joint sovereign rights with Seychelles in the joint zone of extended Continental Shelf, pending delimitation in accordance with the treaties entering between the two States.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Task Force on the Ocean Economy, led by the Mauritius Research Council has already submitted its report. We are now in the process of charting out a road map for ocean development. With the Ocean State Project, we are transforming our sense of our own geography and constraints, but we will not stop here. We can go even further. As stated in the Government Programme, we will be making further submissions to the United Nations with respect to other parts of our Continental Shelf, including around the Chagos Archipelago, which forms part of our territory.

As I have just said, Government Programme of 2012/2015 is an example of how the economy, society and environment integrated in our overall vision. The days of segmented policy of growth, equity and sustainability are behind us. In fact, it is a global trend to which the Programme is adapting.

In Mauritius, we have been in many policy areas ahead of the curve. A prominent example of how we have taken an integrated approach to development is, for example, the Statutory CSR, which is the direct linking mechanism between wealth creation and social development. The setting up of a Ministry for Social Integration to ensure that no one is excluded from the wealth we create and the income we generate.

The *Maurice Ile Durable* vision focuses on the five 'E's', that is, Education, Environment, Energy, Employment and Equity. The endeavour to eradicate absolute poverty and economic democratisation - this integrated approach to development is what will make us realise our vision of joining the league of higher income economies.

Our success, as we have said in the Programme, will not only be measured by the amount of goods and services we produce in the economy but, most importantly, by improvement in human development, in quality of life, in progress made on gender equality, in sustainability of our development, in employability of our youth and others joining the labour force and in the overall well-being of our people. This is the way forward.

As announced at paragraph 12 of the introduction of the Government Programme, and I quote –

“The quality of life for our people is of paramount importance as we progressed to a higher development level. Government is of the view that conventional economic indicators like the GDP do not take into account some of the cost and consequences of economic activities on such things of the physical or social environment within which our people live, work and play. Government action will, therefore, continue to be guided by what is important to the quality of life of our citizens”.

We will thus develop the appropriate indicators to reflect the integrated approach we are taking. We will follow in the full steps of Buntang, which has been a leader in this, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Australia and other countries, on measuring and monitoring the well-being of our people. GDP, Mr Speaker, Sir, does not capture everything; not everything has a price.

Measuring national well-being will provide a more coherent measure of how the country is doing than stand-alone metrics such as GDP.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to a few specific issues. The protection of our citizens has been one of the main priorities of the Government. It should be the priority of any Government, whilst considerable progress has been made in ensuring that our citizens live in a secure environment, there are always new challenges and the Government will ensure that citizens are given more protection through better policing and an improved legal system. We are firmly determined to track down on crimes. We are pursuing with the implementation of the recommendation contained in the National Policy Strategic Framework, which was published in February 2010.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to enumerate some of the measures we have implemented recently, to combat criminality in general. These include the installation of CCTV Street Surveillance System at Flic-en-Flac - it was a huge success. Crimes dropped by over 80% in part of Quatre-Bornes, Port-Louis and Grand' Baie, installation of a new digital radio communication system - installation of a new coastal surveillance radar system. We have commissioned a state-of-the-art fully equipped, offshore patrol vessel undergoing construction in India and which will be ready in 2014. Implementation of a Crime Occurrence Tracking System, the recruitment of 1,758 trainee Police Constables, the fleet of vehicles for the Police Department has been regularly renewed to increase their effectiveness. In 2011 itself, 107 vehicles were acquired and since the beginning of this year, 48 additional vehicles have been acquired. We will continue to make use of the latest technology to improve the effectiveness of the Police. This afternoon, Mr Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned in response to a supplementary question to the Private Notice Question, we are considering strengthening our Board of Control with a new data system. Obviously, it will have a cost, but we cannot put a price on security.

In the Government Programme of 2012/2015, we have enunciated a series of measures to further deal with the problem of criminality. We are going to extend the CCTV Surveillance System to other areas across the country. We are extending the Digital Radio Communication System to cover Rodrigues and Outer Islands; five-day stations will be installed for the system in Rodrigues and will be linked to the main server in Mauritius; the replacement of the 999 analogue emergency call systems with a new digital emergency response management system. The new system will comprise modern technologies such as computer telephony, integration, the

geographic information system and integrated communications to improve response time and coordinate the action by the Police. We are additionally recruiting trainee Police Constables to reach the target of 5,000 recruits by 2015. The enlistment of these trainees is expected by October this year.

In order, to combat criminality, the legal framework should be continuously reviewed to meet the emerging safety and security challenges.

Emerging safety and security challenges - a new Police and Criminal Evidence Bill will be introduced as the hon. Attorney General mentioned, with a view to providing for clause of conduct that would regulate the conduct of Police and other investigators and address a number of issues relating to criminal enquiries, including victims' rights. The Attorney General's Office has already produced a draft which is currently the subject of consultation. Emphasis is placed on scientific led investigation instead of the confession based one. This is the trend worldwide.

Since September 2011, the Forensic Science Lab has been accredited for DNA finger printing, alcohol level determination, identification of drugs such as heroine and cannabis. Adequate resources in terms of equipment and staffing are being provided for the Lab. The provisions of the Bail Act relating to the introduction of electronic monitoring mechanism are being now implemented. The terms of reference and specifications for tender as regards consultant services, I think, are being finalised. The Criminal Code will be reviewed as we mentioned from an international and comparative perspective. The Asset Recovery Act will be further extended. In fact, it came today, I think it is going to be circulated; it is going to be on the Legislative Assembly side.

In the Government Programme of 2012/2015, we have announced that the Act will be amended to cover all accumulated assets of persons convicted of specified offences. The Enforcement Authority will be vested with powers to probe into illegal assets, that is, proceeds of drugs which have accrued to the guilty party of the benefit not only at the time of the offence, when the offence is detected, but also accumulated at a time prior to the detection of the illegal activity. That is why we bring also an amendment to that. We are also strengthening the institutional set up; a Transnational Organised Crime Unit will be established with the assistance of UNODC. This will comprise relevant Law Enforcement Agencies with a view to combating international and other crimes. A working group has been set up at the Police Department to work on the modus operandi of this unit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with our relentless fight against crime, we are obtaining positive results. In fact, the crime rate is going down. Since 2007 the number of reported cases of crime has constantly been decreasing from 7,166 in 2007 to 4,563 last year. Offences classified as misdemeanours have decreased from 47,515 in 2008 to 39,093 in 2011. The overall crime rate has declined from 5.4% in 2007 to 3.7% in 2011. I grant you Mr Speaker, Sir, when you get a crime which is horrendous, all crimes are horrendous but with all the international implications by the recent case of the Harte murder case, you get coverage, you get all sort of things - but the fact is that the crime rate has declined.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government fully recognises that there is a need to continue to professionalise the Police Service. Besides the various local and overseas training provided, in September last, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the University of Mauritius for short term training of Police personnel. On completion of the course, they will receive a Certificate in Police duties from the University. 3,500 Officers will complete training and information technology at the University and learn to operate the new crime occurrence and tracking system. A Police Academy will be established to enhance the human resource capability of the Police Service. It will replace the existing training school which no longer meets the requirements of a modern Police Service. In order to respond to new challenges and integrated development project for the National Coast Guard including the construction of new headquarters and enhanced dock facilities are being formulated. A team from the Indian Navy was in Mauritius from 27 May to 02 June of this year to undertake a survey and we expect the report shortly and to further strengthen the marine commando, anti-terrorism and anti-narcotic operations, new high tech equipment will be acquired.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Government is firmly committed to tackling the drug problem. I have on numerous occasions stated in this very House that the fight against the drug scourge remains one of the priority issue of Government. Mauritius is, of course, not unique in having to confront this problem. New methods and technologies are increasingly being used to improve the operational capabilities of law enforcement agencies in combating drug trafficking. These are yielding positive results; the number of persons arrested in connection with drug-related offences has increased. From 1,504 in 2000 to 1,910 last year and up to 25 July, the number is 946. Large quantities of illicit drugs have been seized and they have been seized thanks to the new approach of ADSU. There is an integrated approach and it is reinforced by intelligence. For instance, this

year, about 13 kilograms of heroin, 6 kilograms of cannabis and 9,724 tablets of Subutex were seized, for a total value approximately; a total value of Rs223 m.

The Legislative Institutional and the Administrative Framework to deal with the problems of drugs are constantly being reviewed. We are continuously reviewing the operation and capabilities of the law enforcement agencies and those organisations involve in the prevention, rehabilitation and treatment of drug users in order to improve their effectiveness. A national drug control master plan is currently being prepared with a view to addressing substance abuse. Emphasis will be laid on more effective ways of reducing criminality amongst drug abusing offenders by addressing their drug dependency. Recently, I have read comments by various people, *Père Labour* where he acknowledges the efforts of Government to fight against drug trafficking. Dr. Faizal Suliman, former coordinator of the methadone substitution therapy, also stated a couple of weeks ago that Government had the courage to come forward with such a programme. He added that the number of drug users is declining with consequential positive impact on the number of new HIV infection.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now come to road safety. Road safety remains one of the priority issues of Government. Today, in fact, we have seen another young man has lost his life tragically. It is in this context that a Special Road Safety Management Unit has been set up since 2009, under the aegis of my office to coordinate all road safety activities. We need to adopt an integrated approach to the issues. The main objective is to have an effective road management team comprising officers of the Police Department, the Traffic Branch, Management and Road Safety Unit of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping and the Special Road Safety Unit of my office, which can elaborate measures to enhancing road safety.

We have voted the Road Traffic Amendment Bill to introduce the penalty point system, under which road traffic offenders will be sanctioned, not only by fines, but also by penalty points which may lead to disqualification of the licence of the driver. Once this new system is implemented, further amendments will be worked out for the introduction of a Probationary Driving License Scheme. Mr Speaker, Sir, emphasis is being laid on the need to teach people to drive properly. It is in this context that the Special Road Safety Unit at my Office is working with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, on the project of setting up a Driver Education and Training Centre which will provide

formal and systematic training and education programmes designed to improve road user skills and to promote responsible behaviours amongst drivers. I think I mentioned the other day that we will also take school children to make them learn the Road Safety Code.

As for prisons, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government Programme announces that there will be continued improvement of the physical infrastructure in the existing prisons and emphasis will be laid on the acquisition of new technology and equipment to ensure that prisons operate at the required level of safety, security and human right norms. Apart from the ongoing physical improvements of the existing prisons, the proposed new prison at Melrose which is under construction will be a high security prison providing accommodation to 780 detainees who will be serving long sentences. The contract for the construction of the Melrose prison was awarded in August 2010 and we expect the project to be completed as scheduled by June of next year. A new prison will be constructed to accommodate pirates captured in the context of the agreement signed between Mauritius and the European Union and the UK.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to reinforce security in the prisons, the prison service has been provided with new communication and security equipment to meet the security challenges. In this regard, handheld and deep such metal detectors and what is called TUM Trolley Vehicle Search Mirror have been acquired for assisting research of detainees and vehicles.

The CCTV system is operational already at the Central Prison of Beau-Bassin, New Wing of Beau-Bassin, the Grand River North West Remand Prison, and the Phoenix Prison. The system is being extended to Petit Verger Prison, Women Prison, Barkly Special Prison, and the Correctional Youth Centre. The constructions of gate lodge and watch tower at the Women Prison has started this year, and the existing towers in the prisons are being renovated.

The prison service is implementing an e-prison project. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Government of India for the implementation of the project, and the main objectives of the e-prison system are to use information and communication technologies, first of all, to create a centralised database of all records with respect to detainees in terms of case and conviction details, history, visitors' information, biometric details and medical records. There will be biometric authentication of each prisoner. That is completely new. There will controlled registration of inmates; monitor the prisoners and the visitors movement at any point of time; monitor prisoners having spent more than half of their term in prisons without completion of their trial; record punishment awarded to prisoners; monitor prisoners on parole,

respite and bail; compute sentence and remissions earned; record and monitor all movements of personnel at the gate, and register all particulars of babies in prisons, and the information will be useful to the Civil Status Office for registration purposes. Other Ministries and Departments such as the Police, the Judiciary, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions will be able to interface with the system.

This project, Mr Speaker, Sir, is estimated to cost around Rs32.2 m., and with the coming of the e-prison project, hopefully by early of September of this year, biometric technology, security access card, vehicle management information, visit management information, gate management system would be resorted to for enhancing control of the access to the prisons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a lot of emphasis is being laid on the rehabilitation of detainees, so that once out of prisons they can integrate into society to live a normal life. Rehabilitation programmes are conducted in collaboration with other Government departments and NGOs, and provide an opportunity for detainees to learn skills in many fields such as agriculture, animal husbandry, masonry, automotive body repairs, garment making, wood trade, and also literacy and numeracy. The rehabilitative package also includes spiritual courses, in order to promote ethical and moral values.

Since the beginning of this year, 392 detainees followed vocational training, 382 underwent skills development training, 115 followed education programmes, and 731 followed life skills management programme. In collaboration with the Open University and the Indira Gandhi National Open University, two scholarships are being awarded to detainees to allow them to pursue higher education through distance education this year. I think this is a first, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Capacity building within the prisons' staff is very important, as prisons, Mr Speaker, Sir, are not easy places to work in. Prison officers are being provided with courses to acquire managerial, leadership, change management and life skills. Courses are also being dispensed in customer care and human values.

The Government programme also mentions the construction of an open prison for female detainees considered as minimum risk inmates. In this regard, a plot of land has been identified at Beau-Bassin to implement the project. The prison service is also in the process of finalising a ten-year strategic framework with the assistance of the UNODC. This will deal with the

management of prisons, sentence planning, and evidence-based rehabilitation programmes for adult detainees and multi-system therapy for juveniles.

Coming to HIV and AIDS, Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of HIV cases detected last year was 401. This is 20% less than in the previous years. This trend has also been observed during the first six months of this year. This is a clear indication that measures that are being implemented to prevent new HIV infection are yielding results. My Government has a clear vision to make Mauritius a country with zero new HIV infection, zero discrimination, and zero deaths due to HIV and AIDS by 2015, in line with the political declaration which was signed at the High Level Meeting in New York in June of last year.

The National Strategic Framework 2007-2011 has been implemented. A new National Strategic Framework 2012-2016 is being finalised. Wide consultations have been held with stakeholders from Government, Ministries and Departments, the civil society, the private sector, as well as HIV/AIDS patients. The document is expected to be finalised by the end of this month. The main thrusts of the new strategic framework are to prevent new HIV infections, to reduce HIV related deaths and to eliminate the stigma and the discrimination which people have towards people living with HIV/AIDS. Meetings were held with stakeholders in Rodrigues and a strategic framework for HIV and AIDS is being finalised to respond to the specificities of the island. This is the first time that a specific strategic framework has been worked out for Rodrigues to meet its specificities.

In order to respond effectively to HIV and AIDS, there is need to mobilise resources to prevent new infections among vulnerable groups, and to prevent the propagation of the epidemic. The main source of funding for the HIV response is Government. It accounts to 65% of the funding, 22% of the funds come as a grant from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. In the years 2010-2011, Mauritius received Rs76 m. from the Global Fund as part of the implementation of Phase 1 of the Programme, and Mauritius was among the first countries to sign this; to put this signature there. An amount Rs190 m. has been approved by the Global Fund for the implementation of Phase 2 of the Programme.

The HIV epidemic in Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, is of a concentrated nature with 68% of new cases diagnosed in 2001 being amongst people who inject drugs. Studies have shown that sharing of needles is common among drug users. A Harm Reduction Programme comprising of the Needle Exchange Programme and the Methadone Substitution Therapy is being implemented

since 2006, and has been significantly scaled up, reaching 75% of the estimated Drug Injecting Programme. 5,500 individuals are dispensed methadone everyday in the 16 dispensary sites situated in various regions of the island. 2,000 people who inject drugs are provided with clean injecting equipment through the Needle Exchange Programme to prevent needle sharing and, therefore, transmission of HIV.

Mr Speaker, Sir, women who inject drugs tend, in general, not to come to harm reduction services because of the more pronounced stigma that is associated with drug use among women. A Drop-in Centre will be opened to cater for them. During the next three years, the harm reduction will be scaled up to reach all people who inject drugs. Vocational training and child care facilities will be made available to the clients. Government will focus on the social integration of people who inject drugs, who are enrolled in our programmes. The Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, with the support from the private sector and NGOs, will provide vocational training and life skills education to facilitate their re-insertion in the labour market, as well as in their families and the community.

During the next three years, the quality of care and support extended to people living with HIV will be improved. A Pharmacovigilance Committee has been set up by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to monitor the quality of antiretroviral treatment with a mechanism of adverse drug reporting. Treatment adherence will be improved through increased drug literacy programmes among patients, thus improving the health and the quality of life of people who have been infected with HIV, and preventing drug resistance.

Mauritius has adopted the Treatment 2.0 initiative of the World Health Organisation. Point-of-care CD4 testing will be implemented in order to increase compliance to treatment, which can be a problem. The protocol for treatment and care of HIV patients will be updated to be in line with the latest developments in the various fields. The link between HIV and tuberculosis is now well established. Mauritius will strengthen its monitoring of the situation, and will reinforce HIV-tuberculosis co-programming. All HIV patients will be screened for tuberculosis. Those infected will be initiated in treatment early on while those who are not infected will receive prophylaxis to prevent co-infection with TB. Biological studies indicate a high incidence of Hepatitis B within the vulnerable population. Vaccination against Hepatitis B will be carried out among prison inmates, people who inject drugs, sex workers and among people living with HIV.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is continuing to invest massively in the modernisation and expansion of our physical infrastructure. I wish here to make special reference to our project to transform the SSR International Airport into one of the most modern Airports of the region in line with our ambition to become a premier regional business platform and a hub in our region. To achieve this, we need to equip our Airport with the latest technology in tune with international civil aviation norms, enhanced security and safety standards, while providing excellent quality of services, including modern logistic facilities for Air Cargo and Freeport activities.

The new terminal under construction and the passenger terminal will be able to accommodate four million passengers annually. It will have a state-of-the-art architecture, meeting international security norms, particular emphasis would be laid on the protection of the environment and the comfort of passengers. Works are progressing satisfactorily. I went to visit the other day, and it is expected to be completed by the end of the year and the new terminal should be operational by early 2013.

A project for the construction of a parallel taxiway is also being implemented. The construction of the parallel taxiway will be instrumental in minimising the runway occupancy time, thus increasing its capacity. This parallel taxiway will facilitate landing of aircrafts and will be able to accommodate large aircrafts, including the A380.

In addition, in the event of an impediment to the main runway, this parallel taxiway could be used as an emergency runway. The taxi project started in July 2011 and it is expected to be completed within the budget of Rs2 billion by June of 2013. Improvement work to the existing runway has also become a necessity, to ensure safe aircraft preparation. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the runway which was last resurfaced in 1998, has reached the end of its lifespan. The project was Rs1.1 billion, started in April of 2011 and is scheduled to be completed, I think in a few weeks time.

The existing Cargo and Freeport facilities at SSR International Airport are facing space constraint, constituting an important barrier to development of the airport. An area in the south eastern part of the Airport has been identified for the development of a new Cargo and Freeport zone. Such development will cater for the forecasted increase in freight volume in the long-term and will bring about substantial improvement in the logistic facilities in place. The ultimate objective, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to provide an appropriate platform to give a boost to air freight

traffic at SSR International Airport. The detailed design for the project was carried out by the German firm, Lufthansa Consulting Limited, in 2010. Airports of Mauritius Co. Ltd is on the process of appointing a Master Developer to design the basic infrastructure and the cost of which is estimated at Rs200 m. Once the basic infrastructure has been provided, plots of land will be leased to promoters who will set up facilities for Cargo and Freeport activities, and that development is expected to start by mid-2013. Many people do not realise it, Mr Speaker, Sir, more traffic through Cargo is undertaken in hubs than actually passengers and we must capitalise in this, because we are, as I said, at the centre of what we call the golden triangle, between Africa and Asia.

As for Border Management, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has an open economy. We rely heavily on Foreign Direct Investment, on labour, on tourism for our economic development. With globalisation and severe competition to attract foreign investors and visitors, we need to adopt the appropriate policy on Border Management. It is in this context that our visa policies are being reviewed with a view to facilitating the movement of business people and tourists. New regulations have been finalised to streamline our visa regime by the requirements for short stay for business or tourism purposes in respect, I must say, of holders of passports from a number of countries, which includes those from the African continent, is being relaxed. They will not require visa prior to undertaking the trip to Mauritius. One of the problems that they have, especially in Africa, is that if you want to get a visa, you have to send it somewhere else, you have to wait. We can't do this these days, Mr Speaker, Sir. The visa will be granted on arrival. This measure is in line with our commitment to further enhance the ease of doing business in Mauritius, and to attract more tourists from diverse countries.

While relaxing on control, it is imperative that, at the same time, to ensure the security of our borders. It goes hand in hand. With the coming into operation in 2013 of the New Airport Terminal, we expect the flow of passengers to increase significantly and this obviously will increase the risk of transnational crimes, drug trafficking or human trafficking as well as illegal immigration. The Border Control System at the airport will be enhanced with appropriate security measures based on the latest available state-of-the-art technologies, which would have the ability to detect any *mala fide* visitor and provide advanced information on passengers, even before they have taken their seats on the plane. The ultimate objective is to ensure that only genuine visitors get access to the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to say a few words about piracy. There has been an upsurge of piracy off the coast of Somalia, we all know, since 2005. Mauritius is committed to fight against this scourge that is adversely affecting economies of countries of the region and international trade. Mauritius is collaborating actively with the international organisations to tackle piracy. We fully support all regional and multilateral efforts undertaken by the international community to put an end to the destructive acts of pirates in our region. Government will ensure with international assistance that Law Enforcement Agencies and the Judiciary are better equipped to allow the prosecution of suspected pirates in our Courts.

In line with the commitment of Government to fight piracy, Mauritius signed an agreement with the European Union on 14 July 2011, and also with the United Kingdom on 08 June of this year, on the conditions of transfer of suspected pirates and seized property to Mauritius.

A new Piracy and Maritime Violence Act, was adopted in December of last year and, in fact, has come into effect on 01 June of this year. On 25 May 2012, Mauritius signed an agreement with the transitional Federal Government of the Republic of Somalia, and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Puntland State of Somalia for the transfer of convicted Somali pirates to their homeland.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have, on several occasions, reiterated my absolute respect for institutions and the fact that all the facilities should be extended to them for the fulfilment of the duties with independence and impartiality. My Government is fully committed in the fight against corruption. I must point out that since 2006 to date, 270 cases have been lodged before the Courts and as at 04 July, 97 persons have been convicted for corruption and money laundering offences.

Furthermore, the introduction of the Public Sector Anti-corruption Framework, which is presently being implemented, is already showing positive response, both in terms of acquiescence and motivation to promote the culture of integrity at all Government department levels and also to implement a full-fledged corruption risk management process. The Public Sector Anti-corruption Framework as a tool was subject to a competition at the level of the UN, and it has been awarded the first prize in the category "Preventing and Combating Corruption".

My Government also proposes to introduce amendments to reinforce the existing legal framework, including a complete overhaul of the Prevention of Corruption Act, taking into

consideration the experience gathered since 2006, also the trials and the views of international experts on the matter.

The Declaration of Assets Act was amended in 2011, making it mandatory for Municipal and District Councillors to declare their assets. He or she must deposit with the Chief Executive of the Municipal Town Council or the District Council as the case may be, a declaration of assets and liabilities in relation to himself or herself, also his or her spouse and minor children and grandchildren. The Chief Executive should therefore, thereafter, transmit that declaration to ICAC.

Another example relates to the Mauritius Revenue Authority where everybody who is employed on a permanent basis has to sign a Declaration of Assets Form. That was not the case before. I am currently looking into the possibility of extending the provisions of the Declaration of Assets Act to all political appointees, including advisers and Chief Executive Officers of State-owned enterprises.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has embarked on the ambitious societal project '*Maurice Ile Durable*', with a view to transforming the environmental, economic and social landscape of our country. To pursue our efforts in this direction, sustainability has been identified as one of the key six areas where Government will focus its strength and resources. To further enforce our willingness to move along the sustainable development trajectory, my Government is addressing a series of cross-cutting issues, such as water security, climate change, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, biodiversity protection, the Agro-Industrial Sector, Land Use and Fisheries. This reaffirms the commitment of my Government to integrate sustainable development concepts and norms in its overall policies and our strategic planning.

The '*Maurice Ile Durable*' national policy, a 10-year strategy in a 3-year action plan is presently being formulated by a team of foreign and local consultants. I would like to emphasise here, that in response to my repeated appeals, the private business sector and the Mauritian society at large, is embracing the MID concept. MID is gradually becoming part of the everyday life of each Mauritian citizen. Green enterprises, eco-tourism and bio-products are being promoted. Many schools are being introduced composting and recycling activities and created endemic garden to sensitise our children on the importance of sustainable development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the vision of Government is to create a business facilitation climate by fostering trust to encourage investment and to ensure that the privacy rights of all individuals are

safeguarded. Thus, with global capital markets moving at a rapid technological pace, there is a need to reinforce our existing legislations. The Data Protection Act is being amended to provide for the Data Protection Office to play a broader role in encompassing business and trade facilitation, consumer protection and protection of human rights in line with international best practices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Government Programme 2012-2015, we have clearly indicated that Government believes that our unique plural diversity is not only a major strength, but a source of great pride in our national identity. We are committed to move even further in our nation-building process. Mauritian society has proved itself to be capable to rely on the strength of its people to stand resilient in the face of major world challenges.

I am convinced that civic education remains the bedrock on which our future action would be based to nurture a sense of oneness in the hearts and minds of our people, to keep them engaged in the process of nation-building, while ensuring that our young are aware of the need to be disciplined. The Civic Education Programme aims at instilling in our younger generation a sense of patriotism which will unite the Mauritian nation of tomorrow. My office has already set up a coordinated team to start the implementation of the pilot project, hopefully, by the end of this year. The ultimate goal of this project is to inculcate in each youth the necessary civic skills to reinforce their existing potential.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the human rights landscape at the international level, as I said the other day, evolves in a very dynamic manner. Our country is continuously adapting itself to international trends and practices, not only because of commitments taken, but also because of our firm conviction that the respect of human right is the pillar of any modern society. A few days ago, we voted three important Bills relating to human rights, namely the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, the Police Complaints Bill and the National Preventive Mechanism Bill. We have amended the Protection of Human Rights Act to provide for the National Human Rights Commission to operate through the three Divisions, that is, the Human Rights Division, the Police Complaints Division and the National Preventive Mechanism Division. These amendments will help us restructure the existing Commission in such a way, that it becomes a key institution in the protection of human rights at national level. We will soon be setting up the Police Complaints Division which will investigate complaints made against members of the Police Force other than allegations of corruption and money-laundering, because

that is taken care of by ICAC. The Division will also be empowered to investigate the death of any person which occurred when the person was in Police custody or as a result of Police action.

We hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, with this and the new Police and Criminal Evidence Act, we have seen so many times, it is so easy to say the Police have used force; it is as if a normal reaction by some. You have seen in the case of this lady what the Judge himself said in his summation, how the confession was taken in front of his Barrister and then you see a new story that the Police has used violence. So, with these two, this will also protect the Police against such accusations. We will also comply with our international obligations other than the optional Protocol to the Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. As I stated last Tuesday, Mr Speaker, Sir, the conditions of detention in prisons and in the Police Detention Centres in Mauritius are generally satisfactory. One cannot say that torture or cruel inhuman or degrading punishment exists in our prisons, but, detainees who commit aggravated defaults and constantly defy authority, will have to bear the consequences of their acts. A national preventive mechanism will ensure that, what punishment is necessary is also proportionate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since the beginning of the year, my Office has organised various sensitisation and training sessions with regard to human rights, sensitising and training some 1,000 persons in various Citizens Advice Bureaux and Youth Centres around the island and also with NGOs. A leadership seminar in Human Rights was also organised in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat for the Heads of Ministries and some key Departments. These awareness campaigns aim at ensuring that the human rights culture becomes deeply embedded in the Mauritian society. We have also, thanks to the resolve and courage of this Government, the Criminal Code has been amended to allow termination of pregnancy in very specified circumstances. Such an important piece of legislation was long overdue, Mr Speaker, Sir. The *status quo* was no longer possible. I have already mentioned it in the House, inaction and caution on the part of successive Governments have led to the death of innocents, sometimes young women and to unscrupulous people illicitly enriching themselves. We could not remain indifferent to such situations and now women have the right to choose. It is up to the woman, she has a right to choose, whether or not to carry on with the pregnancy in specified circumstances.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Equal Opportunities Commission has already reached its *vitesse de croisière* with more than 150 complaints received since the setting up in April of this year. I

understand that some 1,500 persons have already participated in the various awareness sessions conducted by the Commission. I am pleased to note that the positive outcome of this Commission which augurs very well for the future of our country. I will personally see to it that it is provided with the adequate resources to fulfil its objectives in all independence as spelt out in the Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to say a few words about Rodrigues. Since 2005, Government has laid a lot of emphasis on the development of Rodrigues. Economic empowerment remains the linchpin of our efforts. We want to set up a strong and diversified platform to address poverty, to also address fight exclusion, to promote inclusiveness and sustainable growth and to secure social progress.

With the Rodrigues Division now falling under my Office, I am coming up with a set of new measures to help the Rodrigues Regional Assembly steer the island on a new strategic development path. We have discussed about the programme, but we want to implement it, which includes the following measures, will pave the way towards achieving the vision of Government for Rodrigues. Technical expertise is being provided to assist the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in the preparation of the 10-year economic and social transformation plan that will set out the strategies and policies to bridge the gap between Mauritius and Rodrigues and for the setting up of a rule-based regulatory framework to improve the business climate in Rodrigues so as to attract – not only attract - but also retain investors from Mauritius or from abroad.

Consultations are ongoing with stakeholders and donor agencies to identify and implement means to address the water problem for the long-term in a holistic manner. Consultations are also ongoing to develop new strategies, to put in place a Poverty Alleviation Programme, aiming primarily at strengthening capabilities of vulnerable groups in Rodrigues through empowerment.

The Project Management and Delivery Unit in ensuring the target set for projects, including the ICT sector, are closely monitored. A Land Administration, Valuation and Information Management System has already been initiated by the Ministry of Housing and Lands and provision is made for additional health facilities to provide a quality service and treatment to improve infrastructure, telemedicine, SAMU service and an Action Plan to address the problem of teenage pregnancy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I need not dwell at length on the issue of Mauritian sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. Suffice it to say that with the major diplomatic initiatives we have now reached an important stage where conditions have been created for starting a process of positive dialogue so that we can move forward on the issue. As I said in a question - I think to a Private Notice Question or a PQ – nothing was moving; we have taken the initiative and now we think we can start the process of positive dialogue. It will take time. There are Court cases now. I have taken the UK Government to arbitration. Therefore, all this should make us move in a positive way.

I would like to reiterate my appeal to all Members of the House and the community at large to support the initiative of Government and knock with the unity of purpose, to achieve our objective for our country to effectively exercise sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. We know the policy of divide and rule. That has always been the policy. That is why I say we must act with the unity of purpose as far as Chagos is concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I end, I see in the press – my good friends are there – that as if my speech and all this was not necessary, they just want to hear about Constitutional reforms. I think that is why all of them are here. Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope they don't know me. It is better for me. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are a modernising Government. We want to make of Mauritius a modern democratic State by continuing to improve what can be improved. As we said in the Government Programme, retooling for the future requires the review of our Constitutional regime. Mauritius is highly acclaimed as a model of democracy. As I have often stated, Mr Speaker, Sir, after 44 years of independence, I think, we should, as a nation, look at what works and what needs to be improved, including reforms in our electoral system and the financing of political parties. Forty-four years we have been independent - 45 years, very soon - and we need to be able to speak as one nation. We must be able to say we are the Mauritian nation. We are not "X", "Y" community or whatever. The country deserves an electoral system, I think, which is more equitable, fair and which promotes nation-building. It is essential that we promote nation-building and ensure that representation of women. I have engaged in consultations with Constitutional experts and others. We have had lots of consultations. I have invited Professor Carcassonne and others to come and tell us what they think. We did not interfere; he took us by surprise, because what was in the report is not necessarily what we were thinking. We have had lots of consultations.

We know what happened between 2000 and 2005. Professor Sachs who is well-known came here. He made, I think, a very good report, then there was debate in the House, then there were committees. Do you know what they say, Mr Speaker, Sir? I am sure you know it: the best way to kill something is to set up a committee. It's dead for ever. This is what happened. One committee was set up, then another one was set up. What is worse – I am saying worse for the Opposition – is that for the first time - and I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition was not Prime Minister yet, he saw it - you had the Leader of the Opposition saying that he is agreeing to reforms. It has never happened before. When one party was saying reforms, the other will say we don't want reforms. So, there was a majority in the House, yet it did not happen. We know why it did not happen. There is one party which did not want any reform - backward looking, they did not want any change. This is what happened. I think we need to move forward. Now, we had consultations with Constitutional experts. We had people giving their views, even local people writing in the papers and all this. We look at them because it is important that we listen to these views. We can't claim that we know everything. We must always provide for what you don't think will happen.

You know, Mr Speaker, Sir, you were yourself a victim. When in 1982 we had the first 60-0, in 'The Times' of London the title of the international section on that election, do you know what it was? 'Unique in the world - democratic State opts for one party State.' It is the people who opted for one party State. Normally, it starts with them. You must always look at what is not likely. What we don't think will happen, can happen. It is Murphy's laws. What you think won't happen, will happen. So, we have to look at it very carefully. This is why we are engaged in consultations with Constitutional experts, as I said, and politicians and all.

As I said, there is no perfect solution. There is no solution that will satisfy everybody because everybody is looking at it from a different angle. I believe we can and we must endeavour to the broad agreement on the main objectives and how to attain them. I hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in the near future we shall be able to present a Bill on electoral reform to the House. I have always maintained, Mr Speaker, Sir - not now, not today - when I was Leader of the Opposition, when the Sachs Report was out because there were long discussions, committees over committees, we said when we were in Opposition, that we will not agree to bring electoral reform just a few months before the election. Even though the good intention might be there, it will appear that Government is trying to move the goalposts. That is why it is no good to bring

electoral reform on the eve of an election. We are not - and I said that for the gentlemen and ladies of the press – on the eve of an election. Forget it! That is why I started the consultations early, that is why we are having discussions; that is why we have done what we have done but, as I said, it would not be right to present a Bill on electoral reform or whatever on the eve of an election. That would not be right. I myself did not agree with it, I am not going to change now. That is why, as I said, as soon the Bill is ready, I will present it to the House.

Such a Bill, I think, will go a long way towards strengthening our democracy and unity. Let me say something else, Mr Speaker, Sir. I see the speculations that I want to become the all powerful person, with all the powers that you can think of. I keep saying that I am very happy to be Prime Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am very happy to be as I am. There is no problem for me. I am looking at what could be better. Can we improve the system or not? Maybe not, maybe that's the system. I think we can improve the system, and if we can improve the system, we have to look at it. That is why we are looking at it very carefully and once the Bill is ready, we will get an opportunity to comment on it because each and everyone, not just here in this Assembly, but every citizen of the country, must be able to participate and have their point of view. They might look at it from their own angles, but they have an opinion. You cannot just foster - and I don't believe in it – an amendment to the Constitution just like that. It is not a question of trying to see what two leaders can have for themselves; which one will have which part of the cake and then finish with it. It can be done, but it won't be done. We want to have a proper debate and bring the Bill to the House. I think personally - I know my colleagues in the party think, because we have said it in Parliament, we have covered to cover a lot of ground - there can be agreement, there can be consensus. Not everybody will agree, as I said, but we have to look at it, prepare about it and bring the Bill. I want to bring the Bill not on the eve of an election; that is why I said, we want to bring it as early as possible. If the Bill were ready tomorrow - tomorrow I won't be able to bring it, we are going to break for the vacation - we can come and meet and discuss it, there will be no difficulty about that. As I said, what we want is to strengthen our democracy and also, very importantly, strengthen our unity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this country has made giant strides since we became independent and the party allied has its imprint in all the achievements that you see, there is the imprint of the Labour Party. We take great pride in the defining role we have played to shape the future of this country. It is no coincidence, Mr Speaker, Sir, if you look from Independence to now on how

many years the Labour Party actually has been in Government, practically all the time. For us human dignity and social justice are not empty electioneering slogans. Over the years, the Labour Party has given practical expressions to these fundamental values. We have taken revolutionary steps to move our nation forward and ensure our country's development. We have given full proof to our commitment in favour of the people's well-being. Earlier on I was talking about moving the country forward, about the education hub. Everywhere you go, Mauritius is ahead because of free education that was given. I met hon. Alpha Condé, he was just elected, I was sitting next to him and I did not know him. He had been in the Opposition I think for 40 years and I was sitting next to him and I was congratulating him and I was telling him that I was the Prime Minister of Mauritius. He said: "I know, I know Mauritius." He knew my father and the hon. Leader of the Opposition as well. He said: "You know what I tell my people in Africa, in my country? Look there is a country called Mauritius, a small island with one million inhabitants at that time, no resources yet doing much better than we, who have resources, oil, diamond, gas, whatever you name it and yet, we cannot give free education to our people."

It depends on the choice, I always say. It is a priority and it is a choice. We made a deliberate choice and it costs money to lay free transport. The Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has to go abroad and that is why he is not here – we know how it is costing us and we know the people, unfortunately, who are abusing the system. We are trying to find ways to stop this abuse. We know that it is costing Government a lot at a time there is an economic crisis, when there is a world recession, when the Euro zone is in deep crisis. It is in a very deep crisis, in spite of what they have said and what they have done. You have seen how the markets have reacted? The guarantees are not satisfying their market and we know that there is a real risk that Greece will leave the Euro. The risk exists. I am no big expert, but I know that the risk exists. You know if that happens, the cascade effect, the domino effect that it will have. At a time like this, we have to make sure that we prioritise, that we spend Government money properly and that we continue to grow. We need to increase our competitiveness and our productivity. If we do not grow, we cannot pay for the things that we want to pay, we cannot ask my good friend to build roads and bridges everywhere because he needs money to do this. Money does not fall from trees, as we all know. That is why it is important that we – and each time, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Labour has been in Government - have taken major decisions to shape the country's destiny. Since 2005, we have taken important measures to widen the circle of opportunities and

create conditions for real democratisation of the economy. It is not easy, we are trying to fight a system that has been there for centuries. It is *un Etat de droit*, I cannot go and just take land from people and say we are going to distribute it. My good friend has tried to do it in Zimbabwe and look at the result! So, we have to be very careful. We have taken historic measures to ensure that Mauritius becomes a land of equity and justice for all, a land of freedom or opportunities for all.

Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps many of us do not realise it, how lucky we are to live in a country like Mauritius! Of course, we have our share of problems but we have to grapple with them. A country which is the richest country in the world, which is today unsurpassed, America, if you go to New York you will see people sleeping under bridges, you will see just now President Obama has been able to pass his Health Care Bill, after so much fight! People do not realise, in America you do not have free health service and you pay for your education! In Canada recently, they increased the fee for students at University, all the students were on the street protesting and here, it is free! As they say it in English, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to cut our suit according to the cloth that we have. That is why it is essential that we innovate, that we move away from the old paradigm, that we understand what productivity means, why we need to compete in the world, we have to stand on our two feet and that is why we must devise ways and implement policies to overcome any obstacle in our way.

This Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been vested with a mission by the electorate. In 2010, the people of this country renewed the mandate of the Government for another five years. By the way, as far as I know, I think that this is the first time it has happened for a long time, since 1991, I think, no Government has come back after five years, but we have. Thus, that means that they endorsed the policies pursued during the previous mandate and hopefully it will next time, I hope. Thereafter, the Government set itself the objective of consolidating and building on what has already been achieved. Government reaffirmed that economic efficiency and social justice would continue to underpin all its actions. We also pledge, Mr Speaker, Sir, to pursue the democratisation of the economy and transform Mauritius into a society of equal opportunities, as I said, based on value, equity and modernity. Government reaffirmed its commitment to work resolutely towards strengthening national unity, promoting still higher norms of governance and ensuring that the population at large becomes stakeholders in national development. We are almost, not quite, half way through this present mandate. Government has

already implemented a significant part of the 2010-2015 Programme. We have succeeded in building resilience in the economy by acting ahead of the curve. We have managed to stay clear of the world economic turmoil. All the economic fundamentals have been set right. We are more determined than ever to move the nation forward towards a better and brighter future for all our citizens. Mr Speaker, Sir, only a couple of weeks ago, contrary to what some doomsayers are repeating *ad nauseam*, “The Guardian” published an article on Mauritius in which the author wrote and I want to quote. Look what the author said from “The Guardian” –

“With few natural resources other than its celebrated white sand beaches and exquisite clear turquoise waters, Mauritius has turned itself into an economic success story through innovation and ideas. By creatively exploiting its strategic location, the island has reinvented itself from a struggling monocrop economy to a vibrant jewel in the Indian Ocean, treasured by tourists and investors alike. Behind this idyllic picture is an impressive economic success story fuelled by the innovative spirit of its people and the Government.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have always maintained that politics and development are meaningless, just as I was saying for GDP, if the basic philosophy of putting people first does not underpin all the actions of Government. I want to make it clear to each and everyone in this House and to the population at large that I have never and I will never renege on my pledge to transform our country into a modern society for the benefit of each and every single one of our citizens and for future generations regardless of class, creed or colour.

With these words, I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(7.59 p.m.)

Mrs B. Juggoo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me, first of all to congratulate you for your election as Speaker of the House and also to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for his brilliant speech. I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister for giving me the opportunity to deliver the closing speech on the Presidential Address relating to the Government Programme 2012-2015 read by the then Ag. President of the Republic of Mauritius and now the vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius, Mrs Monique Ohsan Bellepeau.

I am deeply honoured, Mr Speaker, Sir. This was undeniably an ambitious programme engendered by the desertion of one of the partners of *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* over a delicate issue of perceived conflict of interest and poor governance.

As a consequence, Government, under the able and visionary leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, had to come with a revised Programme. Beside this political desertion, the various speakers underlined the need for a new Programme in the light of changing global economic outlook grisly trade prospects in the Euro Zone which absorb some 60% of manufactures exports and generate more than 60% of tourism traffic and domestic under performance by our own trendy standards, the third reason that justifies the introduction of a revised Programme, as underlined by the hon. Dr. Bunwaree, the Minister of Education, is that some 85% of 2010-2015 programmes are either completed or are in progress within two years of the five-year mandate. This demonstrates the seriousness of purpose of this Government and its rapid implementation, capacity and intervention for the progress of the nation and the well-being of Mauritians.

The orators pointed out that this Programme is consistent with the same objectives of unity, equality, and modernisation, and the ulterior motive of transforming the socio-economic landscape of the whole country by endowing the country with an arsenal of modern infrastructure, empowering the citizens, protecting purchasing power, and fighting poverty.

Policies have to be constantly revamped to build resilience against global threats and reinforce our capacity to cushion external shocks. This was a common linking thread in practically all the comments of our hon. Members.

A recurrent feature in the comments of the majority of the orators concerned the role of dynamic Opposition in a vibrant democracy. Members of the Government deplored the childish and childlike conduct of the Opposition. Hon. Members of the Opposition are paid from the tax payers' money to act as watchdogs, identify loopholes, if any, in the Government Programme, suggest amendments where appropriate, or call for the rejection of projects and ideas. This is what a liberal Westminster-type democracy is all about. Some of the hon. members of the Opposition had claimed that they will be or they will perform as a loyal Opposition, but the reality is different, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Members abdicated from their responsibility, choosing the coward way of opting out from the democratic process. Indeed, one hon. Member argued that, in light of the negative and uncooperative behaviour of the Opposition, hon. Members who

walked out during debate time should have the ethical qualms and audacity to deduct a proportion of their income and refunding the tax payers for the time that they have not worked, as I have mentioned previously in my opening speech.

Hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell broached a wide range of issues encompassing the macro-economic stability this Government, under the able leadership of the hon. Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, has endowed to the Ocean State, the economic diplomacy, which has brought a range of unquestionable benefits to the whole nation; the prospects of circular migration and economic partnership. Coming to external affairs, he summarised all the problems Mauritius has to face to impress and negotiate with international representatives on both economic and goodwill issues, including befriending eminent personalities to ensure positive lobbying in selected markets, to maintain or enhance the interests of the Mauritian nation. The AGOA is a case in point. He wasted no time to point out in international meetings that the very linchpin of the Government Programme hinges on ‘factor-driven, efficiency-driven and innovation-driven’ factor, in order to achieve the goal of a high wage economy. Underlying the need to build a stronger future, he talked of our goal to capture additional markets and the motivation to enter an interim Economic Partnership Agreement, which provides an automatic derogation of 8,000 tons of canned tuna and 2,000 tons of tuna line for the ESA signatory countries.

Having raised ethical issues on the subject of crossing the floor, while being careful in crossing the Ts and dotting the Is, the hon. Minister of Education broached on the various reforms his Ministry initiated. In an enlightened Welfare State, education is generally recognised as the engine for rapid socio-economic transformation. Hon. Dr. Bunwaree passionately elaborated on selected programmes catering for special education needs, which have been announced in the Programme. Training needs, as the hon. Prime Minister also mentioned, so crucial for both sustainable growth and attaining full employment, equally preoccupy the Ministry. Reforms as well as new measures proposed in the Programme constitute a new challenge both for the country and for the new generation. By far, the most striking feature is the announcement of compulsory education at the age of three years old, which is expected to have wide ranging implications pedagogically, socially and financially as well and, of course, economically.

This sector, which predominantly employs women, is critical in that it exteriorises the entrepreneurial skills of women, while preparing infants to face the challenge of primary schools and good citizenship, and simultaneously supporting the family income.

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, hon. Mrs Sheila Bappoo, explained the resilience and success of Mauritius as stemming from abstract concepts that have been carefully inculcated in the nation and practiced by the Government. Nothing happens haphazardly, Mr Speaker, Sir. There is trust and planning, good governance and efficient management, as well as economic diplomacy. All these have been crucial in the progress of the nation.

Citing the 'La Fontaine' fable on the frog and the bull, hon. Dr. Kasenally commented lengthily on the failed alliance. Before concluding, he said '*le ver était déjà dans le fruit*', and then moved to the supply and ownership of social housing. He highlighted the various projects, pointing out and the various steps taken by his Ministry to assist families and to promote child care and childhood development, which would require the setting up of *crèches de quartier* in all the NHDCs.

On health issues, the hon. Minister, Lormus Bundhoo, having qualified the Opposition as '*une honte nationale*', '*une alliance du passé*', emphasised that in the quest for a Maurice Ile Durable, a healthy population is a sine qua non condition to take Mauritius to the next level of socioeconomic development. More specifically, he argued that sound health is a necessary condition for the well-being of the community and a prerequisite for enhanced productivity.

This concern has prompted the Ministry to come with innovative measures and improve infrastructure through the construction of new hospitals or upgrading of existing ones. The Minister announced the publication of a New Comprehensive Health Sector Strategy (2012/2016), which would, among other things, focus of an enhanced surveillance of communicable diseases and the control of non-communicable diseases.

In the face of agri-inflation and food insecurity, after a long tirade on leadership and the abdication of the Opposition, the Minister of Agriculture, hon. Satish Faugoo talked of his plans to enhance food production, food sufficiency and food security so that to reduce imports.

Hon. Minister Shakeel Mohamed raised some pertinent issues on ethnic belongings, the constitution and youth and development but directed his attack on the Opposition for failing for assert its role as the alternative Government.

Sustainable growth has now become a priority as the hon. Prime Minister just mentioned. Hon. Minister Deva Virahsawmy stressed the importance of the *Maurice Ile Durable Project*, implicitly suggesting that for any sustainable development, is a function of three interlinked concepts of universal magnitude, namely Profit, Planet and People, the three Ps. They are the three bottom lines that we cannot evade if we want progress, cohesion, wellbeing of the nation and maintaining the balance of nature.

With the coming of the event of Rio + 20, Mauritius has a rich record and is well-documented with new sectors of development or new problems identified. Solar energy, reduction in carbon emission, transforming garbage into usable outputs and involving the private sector to promote a green economy are now firmly anchored in the mind of the new generation.

Speaking on the Government Programme, the young and dynamic Attorney General reviewed the various reports on legislative reforms, including the Mackay Report and the need to bring a greater touch of professionalism through judicial training to permit Magistrates to better perform their jobs. The reforms on which the Office of the Attorney General, hon. Varma, has embarked are expected to reflect more closely Mauritian realities and bring Mauritius in line with world trends. The proposed reform in the composition of the Judicial and Legal Services Commission is a case in point.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Gender, Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare commented that the Opposition does everything outside the National Assembly – “*C’est une Opposition conférence de presse*”, and of gossips. Quoting paragraph 16 of the Programme, she stated that her Ministry aims to enhance connectivity, empower people, promote a strong and cohesive society and achieve sustainability. She commented on the vast number of construction sites in progress and focussed on team spirit, leadership, which explains the success of this Government.

At the end of her speech, hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing raised two thought provoking concepts. Two of these deserve special reflection. The first one is the concept of the GDP, the Gross Domestic Product - there comes hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing - which does not take into account non-market economy of households, the community and contribution of women when working for the family. It reflects a grossly distorted picture as hon. Ms Deerpalsing mentioned. She proposes that attention be focussed on a new indicator, a Genuine Progress Indicator which

would measure environmental changes as well. The second concept she brought in was the difference between gifts and choices, whereby choices are often hard but make great stories.

This Government Programme will be assessed by the innovation it brings in terms of potential growth, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Blue Revolution is a living example of the economic potential of this Island Ocean state, which now extends over two million square kilometres, as the hon. Prime Minister just now mentioned.

The Government Programme has now identified the Economic Exploitation of the Ocean as a major pillar of growth. I spoke lengthily in my opening speech on this topic, Mr Speaker, Sir, as yet untapped natural resources.

Not only there exists an immense potential in terms of mining metals such as manganese or developing a deep sea fishing industry but, more importantly, the potential for generating electricity through wave energy, ocean thermal energy conversion, establishing windmills floating turbines and the land-based oceanic industry. Earlier on the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Beebeejaun was also referring to certain effects of getting to build up on the public utilities as water, electricity and so forth.

Shifting to an Ocean Development State can potentially halve our electricity bill, while opening numerous vistas of eco-friendly activities that can cluster around the development concept and create supporting linkages to other lead sectors such as tourism. Ocean state will be the locomotive driving force that will engineer the growth and development of Mauritius in the 21 century. It will be what king sugar had once been into the life of every Mauritian but with the difference of enabling us to enjoy double-digit per capita income, or to take hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing's proposed welfare measurement concept of Genuine Progress Indicator again.

Hon. Minister Suren Dayal broached on the historical stages of the Labour Party to strengthen the Welfare State and the steps he is taking to alleviate poverty. He mentioned several measures to come to the assistance of the vulnerable, concluding his speech on the many innovative proposals that target vulnerable groups.

The Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval discussed the view that things are under control, in spite of all the odds Mauritius continues to impress on the international community, the upgrading of the Mauritius by Moody's is a case in point. He stated that we are at a crossroad and about to live exciting times with new opportunities emerging with the rise of the 'BRIC',

that is, Brazil, Russia, India and China. Africa is another opportunity and if Mauritius does its homework well we can become the gateway to Africa.

We heard the hon. Prime Minister describing the issue of Africa and Asia, the Afro-Asian link as we would say is one of the best trends of business right now. We look at Africa, we look at Asia with all the raw materials that are available and with our Freeport facilities I am sure we should work together and works toward the trend of the Afro-Asian Link, but to do so we need to change our mindset, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval argues that here lies the importance of the new Government Programme. The Economic and Social Transformation Programme and the National Strategic Commission are an integral part of the programme. He emphasised the need of a complete package to sell and brand Mauritius. Using the image of trying to sell a car with a flat tyre, he cited a French survey showing the disappointment of tourists with the Mauritian product. He, therefore, urges that we attach more importance to develop quality products so as not to miss the opportunities that can be met if only we raise our productivity. We just heard the hon. Prime Minister again talking about the productivity issue. He deplores the low productivity and identifies the number of challenges we need to overcome. In another word which we understand is productivity is a priority. Next is the need for a cleaner environment and he urges local authorities to take up the matter which I am sure our friend hon. Hervé Aimée, the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, will take care of. He commented on the DTA and the importance of Mauritius in the FDI to India and his expectation to thrash out the outstanding issues swiftly in August. However, the most important concept of the Vice-Prime Minister was the transformation of Mauritius as a hub to improve connectivity, the necessary condition for all the sectors to grow, as the hon. Prime Minister, again, just now mentioned, and he put emphasis on the hub.

Quoting hon. Anil Bachoo's speech -

“...they were just like a bridge of vultures and opportunists, waiting to make a quick buck and then to disappear...”

This is what they did.

“...self-centred politicians only looking for their own selves.”

Hon. Bachoo continues to say -

“With the blessing of the hon. Prime Minister, we have built up the infrastructure of this country with the stones that they are throwing at us, Mr Speaker, Sir.”

Rs10 billion worth of architectural and engineering projects have been implemented for the last seven years. This is from 2005. As the hon. Prime Minister just mentioned, massive investment in the infrastructural sector has taken place. Now, we have modern road networks and billions of rupees are being spent to improve and expand our road networks. Our Prime Minister again, had spoken about it just now. As a responsible Government, hon. Bachoo confirmed having to provide road networks throughout the country and that could enhance the mobility of the people as well as goods. One would need days, maybe weeks, to describe the amount of work which has been done and placed on records. This is what hon. Bachoo said -

“...never in the past has so much of work been undertaken,”

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is *visibilité des chantiers de l'île Maurice*. We have seen all over Mauritius that there are a lot of *chantiers* going on.

The hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, emphasised his vision for a fair and just society. He said that as long as he lives, he would place his whole time and resource to the service of the nation. Few leaders have been as successful in building the team spirit, so critical to maintain harmony and ensure sustainable growth, as the Prime Minister. This is another comment that has recurred time and again from every hon. Member of this House de *l'Alliance de l'Avenir*. Few would disagree with hon. Ms Stéphanie Anquetil who had qualified the hon. Prime Minister as a leader *imbibé de qualités hors pair, solide et clairvoyant*. The importance of national unity, social harmony and social justice as a backdrop to ensure constant progress has been the priority of priorities in his endeavour in maintaining social equilibrium, sustainable growth and peace and in alleviating poverty while consolidating the Welfare State.

Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Prize in Economics rushed to fill the British press with articles on the lessons that can be distilled from the Mauritian experience after his departure from Mauritius. This equally generated a substantial traffic block on the internet worldwide. Notwithstanding, others equally contributed to this image. Much of the credit goes to the Prime Minister for strengthening this image on the international arena.

Mr Speaker, Sir, very rarely in the history of any modern nation, do we see a leader rising and asserting himself undisputedly. We have heard all the orators vouching their loyalty, because the hon. Prime Minister commands respect and has an enlightened vision with his critical mind to steer Mauritius out of the economic storm into a world of progress, equality and sustainable growth. He wants to govern with the people, by the people and of the people to cite

the proverbial adage on democracy by Abraham Lincoln, which explains why the hon. Prime Minister can take a mob bath without fear. This fearless leader commands admiration even from politicians who had been most critical of him.

Let me now conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the quote from Calvin Coolidge -

“All growth depends upon activity. There is no development physically or intellectually without effort, and effort means work.”

Be it Rodrigues, be it Mauritius, this is exactly what this Government is doing, Mr Speaker, Sir, while others choose to spend their time gossiping in street corners. As the hon. Prime Minister rightly said -

“What you think won’t happen, will happen.”

Before I conclude, I would like to say that this healthy and dynamic 2012-2015 Government Programme with my two colleagues, hon. Mrs Mireille Martin and hon. Mrs Aurore Perraud, and myself, will surely take the advantage of the Government Programme and act accordingly for the benefit of our Constituency No. 4. I also wish to thank all hon. Members, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Private Secretaries on both sides of the House with our friends, hon. François, hon. Guimbeau and hon. Fakeemeeah for their participation in our Government Programme. I read it somewhere, they say: ‘*de remercier ceux qui ont pris la parole, et de remercier aussi ceux qui n’ont pas pris la parole.*’ *Alors*, this is what I would say and with these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I now commend the motion to the House.

Thank you.

(Applause)

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Resolved:

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

Mr Faugoo rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Supplementary Appropriation (2011) Bill (No. XXIII of 2012) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 23 October 2012 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 8.34 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 23 October 2012 at 11.30 a.m.