



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2015

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THE CABINET**(Formed by the Rt. Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC)**

Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications
Hon. Showkutally Soodhun	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
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Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Marie Joseph Noël Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Ravi Yerrigadoo	Attorney General
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Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Mrs Marie-Aurore Marie-Joyce Perraud	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
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Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform

Institutions

Hon. Premdut Koonjoo	Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands
Hon. Jayeshwur Raj Dayal, CSK, PDSM, QPM	Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management
Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 08 of 2015

Sitting of 10 March 2015

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Papers have been laid on the Table -

A. Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport –

The Road Traffic (Taxi, Bus and Lorry Stands) (Amendment) Order 2015 (Government Notice No. 17 of 2015).

B. Ministry of Local Government –

The Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix (Fees for Classified Trade) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 (Government Notice No.18 of 2015).

C. Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment –

The Report of the National Economic and Social Council on Income Inequality in Mauritius – The Role of Wage policy.

D. Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands –

The Annual Report 2013 of the Fishermen Investment Trust.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

TOOFANY, MR IQBAL - DEATH - POLICE CUSTODY

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the death of Mr Iqbal Toofany whilst in Police custody at Rivière Noire, he will -

(a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information -

(i) from the Commissioner of Police -

A. if the Police objected to the release on bail of the Police Officers arrested in connection therewith and if not, why not;

B. if he or his representatives has/have received members of the family of the deceased, and

C. where matters stand as to the Police inquiry carried out thereinto;

(ii) if the Director of Public Prosecutions has received members of the family of the deceased, and

(iii) where matters stand as to the judicial inquiries carried out thereinto, and

(b) state if urgent measures will be taken for the protection of detainees from Police brutality.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, at the very outset, I would like to present my sincere condolences to the bereaved family of late Mr Mohamad Iqbal Toofany.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Monday 02 March, 2015 at 0105 hours along Black River Road near La Balise Marina, Black River, Police stopped a private car bearing Registration No. 3166 ZM 00, coming from the direction of Tamarin and proceeding towards Le Morne, which was driven by one Mohamed Iqbal Toofany, residing at Vingta No. 3, Vacoas, for stop and search purposes. Mr Toofany produced his driving licence on request.

Whilst checking the vehicle, the Police Officers noticed that the registration number on the insurance vignette was different from that on the said vehicle. When questioned, the driver failed to provide any explanation thereon.

Police effected a body search on Mr Mohamed Iqbal Toofany and secured -

- (a) one jigsaw, and
- (b) a Swiss knife;

The vehicle was also searched and a bag containing the following items were secured

-

- (a) a torchlight;
- (b) a cutter;
- (c) a pair of socks, colour blue;
- (d) one right hand side glove, colour white;
- (e) screwdrivers;
- (f) 3 cellular phones make Nokia, and
- (g) a sum of Rs345.

On being questioned about the items secured, he remained silent. He was consequently booked for the offences of “Insurance vignette not affixed” and “Motor Vehicle Licence not affixed”.

In view of the items secured during the search, Mr Toofany was brought to Black River Police Station for enquiry at 0145 hours. He was handed over to Black River CID for further questioning as he was suspected to be involved in cases of larceny of vehicles reported in Black River Station area.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police, that on the same day at 10.00 hours while Mr Toofany was being brought to Bambous District Court for lodging of a Provisional Complaint of “Rogue and Vagabond” against him, he complained of pain in the stomach. He was immediately conveyed to Victoria Hospital for treatment. Whilst he was undergoing treatment at the hospital, he collapsed. He was reanimated, but in vain. At 1050 hours, Dr Jeetun, Senior Medical Officer, certified death and the body was referred to the Police Medical Officer for an autopsy. The autopsy carried out at 1700 hours revealed the cause of death as being “Acute Pulmonary Oedema”. The body was, thereafter, handed over to the relatives.

Following the autopsy, the Chief Police Medical Officer informed the Commissioner of Police of the probable cause of death and the extent of injuries found on the body of Mr

Toofany. The Commissioner of Police referred the matter to the CCID in view of the seriousness of the case.

The CCID immediately initiated an enquiry in the course of which five officers of CID Western Division who dealt with the case were arrested on 03 March 2015. They were detained during the night and on the next day they were provisionally charged with the offence of "Torture by Public Officials" before the District Court of Bambous.

In regard to part (a) (i) A of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Police did not object to the release on bail of the five Police Officers for the following reasons -

- (i) the Police Officers were charged with "Torture by Public Officials" as a result of the injuries found on the body of the deceased and the cause of death was certified by Chief Police Medical Officer as "Acute Pulmonary Oedema";
- (ii) the Police Officers have denied the allegations levelled against them, and
- (iii) their defence statements were already recorded and they were not needed for further inquiry at that point in time, and their further detention was not warranted.

They were therefore bailed out after each furnishing a surety of Rs9,000 and recognizance of Rs50,000. They were all interdicted from duty on the same day and will appear anew before Court on 25 May 2015.

I must say, Madam Speaker, that I am personally not satisfied with the circumstances leading to the release on bail. I have already conveyed my dissatisfaction to the Commissioner of Police. He has reassured me that he has already issued the necessary Order to better guide Police Officers how to handle such situations.

In regard to part (a) (i) B of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 03 March 2015 between 1225 hrs and 1240 hrs, together with the Deputy Commissioners of Police, Administration and Operations and the Assistant Superintendent of Police Western Division, he received the father of the deceased and his Counsel, Mr Erikson Mooneapillay. Following representations made by the father of the deceased, the Commissioner of Police reassured him that the Police inquiry would be conducted in a fair and impartial manner.

In regard to part (a) (i) C of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the inquiry is in progress. The future course of action in the investigation will be determined, *inter alia*, by the outcome of the toxicological and alcohol report of the deceased.

With regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that following receipt of a letter dated 05 March 2015 from Counsel Mooneepillay, on the same day at 1100 hrs, the Director of Public Prosecutions received the father of the deceased and the said Counsel and another individual who accompanied them.

They made written and oral representations to the Director of Public Prosecutions to appeal against the decision to grant bail to the Police Officers involved. The Director of Public Prosecutions explained to them that there were no grounds of appeal. The meeting ended at around 11.30 hrs.

With regard to part (a) (iii) of the question, I am also informed that on 05 March 2015, the Director of Public Prosecutions lodged a judicial inquiry into the death of Mr Toofany before the District Court of Black River Bambous pursuant to sections 110 and 111 of the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act. The matter is ongoing and is scheduled for hearing today.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Commissioner of Police has initiated immediate measures for the protection of detainees in Police custody, whereby when persons are arrested and detained, the officers dealing with the case will henceforth have to furnish all details of the arrest to the Police Information and Operations Room as well as their Divisional/Branch Operations Room. The Officer-in-Charge of the Police Information and Operations Room and the Divisional/Branch Operations Room concerned will be responsible to communicate the information to any Counsel or relatives of the detainees.

All interrogations will be recorded using existing CCTV and Audio Recording Systems which are available at all Divisional Headquarters.

I can assure the House that in my capacity as Minister for Home Affairs, I will not tolerate any abuse by Police Officers encroaching on the fundamental rights of citizens. Any *'brebis galeuse'* within the Police Force will be taken to task.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, after he has confirmed that the charge was “torture” - the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has told us that he is not satisfied the way this bail issue was handled - will he agree with me that, in fact, recently in any case, be it the Roches Noires case, be it the La Caverne tape issue and so on, in all cases, the Police asks the Court not to grant bail; it objected to bails, whereas in this case where the provisional charge is “torture”,

the Police did not object? Will he agree with me that this is perceived as *deux poids deux mesures* because some Police Officers are concerned?

The Prime Minister: That was my own impression, Madam Speaker, and I said it to the Commissioner of Police. I said: “I find it strange that, in all cases, Police had been objecting and, in this case, they chose not to object as if there are two classes of citizens in this country and the law does not apply equally to all of them.” I was not happy at all with the situation, and the Commissioner of Police knows that.

Mr Bérenger: Thank you. Is the Rt. hon. Prime Minister also aware that, in fact, adding insult to injury - if we can say so - the Police Officers’ lawyer, in fact, stated on Tuesday 03: “*Demain, ils obtiendront leur caution.*” Before they were brought before the Court, the lawyer had been informed, apparently from the Police Officers, that: “*Demain, ils obtiendront leur caution*” and this happened. Was the Rt. hon. Prime Minister aware of that?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have read it also. It was in the newspaper. What can I say about it? That was the opinion of the lawyer.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know, at this point in time, who, in the Police Force, gave the directives for bail not to be refused?

The Prime Minister: Well, I don’t have this information. If a specific question is put, I will get the information for the House.

Mr Bérenger: I see that the Ag. Commissioner of Police did, in fact, receive – and it is a very good thing – the family of the deceased. In the case of the DPP also – we have been informed - he received the family of the deceased. In both cases, it is a very good thing, but in the case of the DPP, what we have been provided with is only the information that the DPP concluded that there was no ground of appeal. I know that the DPP is totally independent, but did the Rt. hon. Prime Minister look into that? Because we know of cases where the DPP stepped in, after the Court had granted bail, to have the accused arrested again.

The Prime Minister: Well, this may be the case, but in this case we know the stand that was taken by the DPP and I don’t think that it will be fair for me to comment on that.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the Police and Judicial Inquiry are concerned, especially the Police, it seems that there was doubt as to where the deceased was, in fact, detained. Is it established now where he was detained?

The Prime Minister: What I have been told, it was in Black River Police Station.

Mr Bérenger: I take it, Madam Speaker, that all forensic possibilities and so on will be used in this and other cases. In this case, is the DNA dimension to the inquiry and so on being taken care of?

The Prime Minister: This, I am not aware of. If a specific question is put, I will get the information.

Mr Bérenger: On the last part of my question, Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear the Rt. hon. Prime Minister say that the Ag. Commissioner of Police has taken immediate measures. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, being given that there is a lot of confusion, before when a detainee alleged to have been brutalised, the statement was taken in that Police Station, then it was felt that it would be better that it be not taken in the same Police Station, but at CID in Rose Hill. Of course, this took time, people had to travel to Rose Hill and so on; it has not worked. Also, we know that regularly Magistrates, when the detainee says he has been roughed up, would order an enquiry and nothing would happen. So, are we looking at that? Since an independent Police Complaints Commission, presided over by a former Judge, has been announced in the Government Programme, is this coming as soon as possible and what will happen to the Police Complaints Bureau in that case?

The Prime Minister: We certainly mean to implement what is in our Programme, but, of course, it takes some time. We have no magic wand to do everything in two months.

Mr Mohamed: I have two questions with your permission, Madam Speaker. Could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether he could tell us why is it that those Police Officers were provisionally charged with torture and not anything like murder or even manslaughter?

The Prime Minister: Well, as a barrister, I think that the hon. Member should know from what we have heard, from what we have as evidence. I do not think a charge of murder is warranted. If the enquiry later on reveals that there is enough evidence of a *prima facie* case of murder, then obviously these people will be charged with murder.

Mr Uteem: But there was, at least, a case of wounds and blows causing death. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister, in the Government Programme, announced an independent Police Complaints Commission, but that comes in after the event, after the brutality. In order to ensure that there is no Police brutality, would the Rt. hon. Prime Minister agree that it is urgent for the Commissioner of Police to designate what we have elsewhere, which is known as a Custodian Police Officer, who is independent from the enquiry, who ensures that, from

the day the suspect is brought in till his release, there is proper recording and his human rights are properly looked after?

The Prime Minister: Well, I will convey that to the Commissioner of Police and I agree that every step must be taken to ensure that everything is done properly and that there is no unfair treatment towards any detainee.

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister consider to ask the Commissioner of Police to investigate whether those Police Officers, who investigated the suspect, were under the influence of alcohol?

The Prime Minister: So far, I have no information whatsoever that they were under influence of drink or alcohol, but I will try to find out through the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Baloomoody: I have listened carefully to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister with regard to how events happened on the day when he was supposed to go to the District Magistrate. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether the Magistrate was informed because section 110 of the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) says clearly that where a person has died in prison or while in custody of the Police, the Magistrate should be informed and the Magistrate shall proceed or order an officer to proceed to the examination of the body and an investigation of the matter with the assistance of the medical practitioner? Can I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether the District Magistrate was informed that this gentleman has died whilst he was in Police custody?

The Prime Minister: I have no such information.

Mr Mohamed: Picking up from where the hon. Leader of the Opposition left off on the doubts as to where the deceased was detained, there is information to the effect that this deceased was detained not in Black River, but in Rose Hill. Could, therefore, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister verify, because if that is the case that this person was detained in Rose Hill and not Black River, this means that the persons who potentially could be still responsible for having caused his death, are still at large, and that those who are still responsible potentially for having caused this death unlawfully, are still roaming around and working as Police Officers day in, day out and not being worried at all by Police?

The Prime Minister: Well, they might have been transferred to Rose Hill, but I cannot confirm that, I will have to ask the Commissioner of Police.

Dr. Sorefan: May I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister that the disease was mentioned to be pulmonary oedema. Does that tally with the post-mortem report from the *médecin légiste*?

The Prime Minister: Well, yes. This is what the officer has found; it is his finding.

Mr Baloomoody: Coming to the provisional charge, normally when public officers are involved, especially in the case we have Senior Police Officers, the State Law officers are informed and they stepped in with regard to Bail Motion and what action to take with regard to the bail under drafting of the provisional information. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether the State Law Office was consulted prior to the drafting of that information and prior to the Police taking the stand of not resisting to bail?

The Prime Minister: I have no such information. I will ask the hon. Member to come with a specific question.

Mr Bérenger: If I can conclude! Being given that when I raised that issue, I must say, in a sitting position on Tuesday 03 March, hon. Minister Soodhun reacted. There was a discussion with the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and then Minister Soodhun said publicly that the Prime Minister was going to follow that case personally and, more recently, he has stated that Government will help the family in every possible way. Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister - we are dealing here with a young man who leaves daughters behind and a young wife, the whole family, but especially his children and his wife are going through very difficult time - whether we can have confirmation that Government will do whatever can be done to help them along?

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I must say that when this unfortunate thing happened, the very next morning when the Commissioner of Police came to see me, I told him what I felt about it. I told him that I wanted an enquiry to be fair, proper and to find out the truth so that the culprits may be brought to justice, and this is my line; I have been asking the Commissioner of Police every day how the enquiry is going on, but he assures me that everything is going well.

Madam Speaker: Any other question? No! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question B/160 addressed to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Local Government. Hon. Jhugroo!

SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – VIP LOUNGES - FACILITIES

(No. B/148) Mr. P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to access to the VIP facilities at the La Terrasse Lounge and at the State Lounge at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport granted at the discretion of the Prime Minister's Office, he will give a list of the

persons who have benefitted therefrom on direct request from the Private Office of the Prime Minister's Office, since July 2005 to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) date of travel;
- (b) capacity in which the person was granted the said facilities, and
- (c) name/s of the person/s who have seen off or greeted the person.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in regard to access to VIP facilities at the La Terrasse Lounge and at the State Lounge at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport granted at the discretion of the Prime Minister's Office, I am informed by the Airports of Mauritius Ltd that, according to records, direct requests have been made by the Private Office of the Prime Minister's Office only once since June 2008, and only in respect of access to La Terrasse Lounge.

No direct request has been made by the Private Office for access to VIP facilities at the State Lounge.

All requests which emanated from the Private Office concerned La Terrasse VIP Lounge until 11 September 2013. Thereafter, with the coming into operation of the new passenger terminal in September 2013, all requests for VIP facilities from the Private Office concerned the VIP Departure Lounge and VIP Arrival Lounge at this terminal.

In regard to the information requested by the hon. Member, I am tabling the list of passengers who have benefitted from facilities at the VIP Lounges, with the dates of their travel as well as the names of persons who had seen them off or greeted them.

However, in regard to part (b) of the question, no information is available as to the capacity in which the persons were granted facilities at the VIP Lounges.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister on what ground the officer-in-charge of the Private Office authorised Mrs N. S. to use the Private Office and the VIP lounge?

The Prime Minister: Well, there is no document, there is nothing to indicate the ground. It seems the person who granted the permission only knows on what ground. I am unable to answer that.

Mr Jhugroo: I have a similar question to the hon. Prime Minister. Under what authority the Head of the Private Office made arrangements for Mrs N. S. to use these facilities?

The Prime Minister: I will ask the hon. Member to query from the former Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

POLICE COMPLAINTS BUREAU - CASES

(No. B/149) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Police Complaints Bureau, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) the number of cases reported thereat, since the setting up thereof to date, indicating the number thereof disposed of, and
- (b) who is at the head thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I presume that the hon. Member is making reference to the Police Complaints Division operating under the aegis of the National Human Rights Commission.

In fact, following the proclamation of the Police Complaints Act 2012 in July 2013 and the setting up of the Police Complaints Division within the National Human Rights Commission which is empowered to enquire into cases of complaints against Police, the Complaints Investigation Bureau of the Police Department which was set up in November 1999 ceased its operation in October 2013 and all its pending cases were referred to the National Human Rights Commission.

I am informed by the National Human Rights Commission that, since the setting up of a Police Complaints Division within the National Human Rights Commission in July 2013, it has received 1,509 complaints against Police officers, out of which 893 cases were those transferred by the Complaints Investigation Bureau of the Police Department, which ceased its operation in October 2013. As at 28 February 2015, 930 cases have already been disposed of by the Commission.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Police Complaints Division is led by the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission.

Mr Bérenger: Can I, therefore, again put a question which I put earlier on when we were dealing with the PNQ? We have been reminded that there is a division of the Human Rights Commission - the Human Rights Commission being itself chaired by a former Judge of the Supreme Court - that is dealing in such cases of complaints against the Police and so on and, in the Government Programme of Government, another Commission to be chaired by another Judge has been announced, that is an independent Commission on such Police complaints. At this point in time, does the Government know which way we are heading? Will one absorb the other; will there be two Commissions dealing with the same issue?

The Prime Minister: No, I suppose when we will come with the new one, everything will be dealt with by the new one.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister gave the answer as to the number of cases and I think there are about 1000 cases. Can I ask him, out of the figure that he gave, how many cases are of Police brutality?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the information, I cannot answer that.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Since we heard that there is a substantial number of cases, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many staff are there at the Commission and whether the number of staff is sufficient to handle such substantial number of cases?

The Prime Minister: I must enquire about that.

Mr Baloomoody: Madam Speaker, one of the main criticisms with regard to that Police Investigation Commission is that once people make a complaint, they never heard about the result. They are not informed about the outcome and what enquiry has been carried out. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to look into it because we know that 930 cases have been disposed of, but the complainants are not aware of it? Can the complainants, at least, be communicated about the outcome of their complaints?

The Prime Minister: That has been the case in the past; we will look in the future.

Mr Ganoo: Does the hon. Prime Minister have the figure of how many cases have led to the prosecution of the Police Officers in the number of complaints that have been made against them?

The Prime Minister: No, I don't have the figure.

Madam Speaker: Last question on this issue, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: In fact, I was anticipating that a very low number of cases of Police brutality actually end up in conviction. I am going to ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister that, being given that there are so few convictions, whether he does not think that urgent measures have to be taken to speed up the enquiry process because he himself mentioned that there are around 900 cases that were handed over from the Police Complaints Bureau to the Human Rights Commission.

The Prime Minister: I must say, Madam Speaker, I am not happy at all with the situation myself. I am not happy that whenever there is a complaint against the Police, the Police itself enquires into it. We must have some other independent institutions to enquire and to say whether there should be prosecution or not.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Dr. Sorefan!

LA CAVERNE & PHOENIX – NDU PROJECTS

(No. B/150) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit -

- (a) information as to the projects being implemented thereat, and
- (b) table a list of the future projects earmarked for implementation thereat.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, with your permission, I am tabling the list of projects which were carried out in Constituency No 15, during financial year 2014.

Moreover, I am informed that four projects namely -

- (i) construction of Seeboo Lane, Vingta 2 (New), Solferino;
- (ii) construction of Reebye Lane, Vingta (New Road), Solferino;
- (iii) resurfacing and extension of Subway Lane, Solferino, and
- (iv) construction of bridge at Hollyrood.

are presently in abeyance due to absence of necessary clearances such as way leaves and road alignment, and also lack of funds.

As regards part (b) of the question, the NDU is presently working the cost estimates for a list of projects drawn up by the Parliamentary Private Secretary of that Constituency after consultation with the relevant stakeholders. In the absence of a voted Budget, it is premature at this stage, to table a list of future projects.

Dr. Sorefan: May I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he will consider with the PPS, hon. Benydin, to include in the list to come the bridge – they call it River La Caverne - behind l’Eglise Visitation? We visited the place recently and there was flooding there.

The Prime Minister: As I have said, it will depend on the financial situation and whether we have provision in the Budget.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Osman Mahomed!

POLICE OFFICERS – ASSAULT - INQUIRY

(No. B/151) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, following the case of assault of Police Officers whilst being on duty which occurred in the afternoon of 21 February 2015, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out there into, and
- (b) the measures taken or that will be taken to prevent the recurrence thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 21 February 2015 there has been no case of assault of Police Officers reported.

However, on 11 February 2015, a case was reported where one Police Officer, who was regulating traffic at the Southern Exit Crossing along Farquhar Street Port-Louis was assaulted, by a pedestrian, who grew vexed when ordered to wait until the road was clear. Two other Police Officers, who came to his rescue, were also assaulted by two other persons.

One of them was arrested on 20 February 2015 and the two others on 21 February 2015. All three have admitted their guilt and were remanded to police cell.

Police has completed its enquiry and has referred the case to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice. On 09 March 2015, the three assailants were released on bail.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the daily Police deployment of the Traffic Unit North based at Fanfaron Police Station has been reinforced and the number of daily patrols increased

Mr Mahomed: I had the opportunity to watch a video that was publicly broadcasted on the Internet wherein I saw that the Police Officers appeared defenceless. So, may I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether consideration may be given to the way they are equipped so that they can better defend themselves in such cases?

The Prime Minister: Well, we will look into it.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In this particular case, we heard the Rt. hon. Prime Minister say that those three accused parties were remanded at some stage. Obviously, if they were remanded, there was objection to bail. So, in this particular case, when there is an assault on the Police which is *condamnable*, there was an objection to bail. Could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister take it up with the Commissioner of Police not to have double standards in the approach? In one case where there is an assault against the Police there is objection, but whereas when there is assault causing death on a normal citizen, who was not a Police Officer, for that immediately there is no Police objection. This is a clear case of double standard.

The Prime Minister: I have already made that very clear to the Commissioner of Police that there should be no double standard. All citizens before the law must be treated alike.

Mr Mohamed: There is a circular which was issued by the former Commissioner of Police whereby if someone was on bail altogether, systematically the Police must object to bail without getting into the merits of the matter since we are talking here about bail issues. Could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister take it up with the Commissioner of Police or the person in charge of the Police Force that this issue should be looked into again and revisited in order to give again the discretion to the senior Police Officers to decide whether people should be released on bail on their own discretion, based on the merits of the case, not basing themselves on a circular issued by the former Commissioner of Police, that one-size-fits-all policy should stop?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree with the hon. Member. But, we must remember the case he is talking about. The previous Government should have taken steps and done something about it.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ganoo!

REMOTELY PILOTED AIRCRAFTS - LEGISLATION

(No. B/152) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the use of drone aircrafts around the country for reconnaissance exercises or for filming purposes, he will state if Government proposes to introduce legislation for the regulation thereof.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, a Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) is generally described as an unmanned aircraft which can vary in size, shape, forms and speed.

I am informed that the Civil Aviation Regulations 2007 presently cater for the operation of RPAs weighing between seven and 20 kgs and that smaller RPAs of less than seven kgs are not regulated as they are classified as “Model Aircraft” and used for recreational purposes.

Madam Speaker, however, recent technological developments have led to miniaturisation of the aircraft which can be fitted with cameras and other sensing devices. Such RPAs when fitted with surveillance equipment are known as drones.

Whilst it is recognised that the operation of RPAs are more cost effective to undertake commercial and scientific activities as well as security operations including *reconnaissance* exercises, their use also represents fresh challenges in areas such as privacy, security and aviation safety, and, therefore, needs to be regulated.

Madam Speaker, I am also informed that in this regard, draft regulations have already been prepared by the Department of Civil Aviation and will be finalised after consultations with concerned authorities. In the course of the exercise, which is a complex one, due attention will be given to aligning the regulations with best practices in the European Union and other jurisdictions.

Mr Ganoo: I thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for his answer. There was nothing sinister in my question. The purpose was precisely for Government to look at the new issues because this is an evolving legislation like privacy, security. I thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for having highlighted again that this is a complex issue. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister has informed the House that the legislation is being prepared now and they will look

at the best practices obtained in other jurisdictions. We all know that in the UK, Japan, US, the legislation is already there and is still evolving. Therefore, may I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, when the legislation is ready, whether it will be in the form of regulations or in the form of Bills?

The Prime Minister: So far, from what I have got in the answer, they speak of regulations. Well, we will see when finalising it, if there is need for a Bill, of course, obviously, we will come with a Bill.

Mr Bérenger: In the meantime, obviously new regulations are required and are being prepared. Can I know, in the meantime, is it free for all, as per the existing regulations which are outdated, obviously, *dépasseés*?

The Prime Minister: Well, that is how it was, and that is how it is right now until we do the needful.

Mr Bérenger: In India, for example, they are preparing new regulations, and they have decided no drone flights until the new regulations are ready. I am not saying that we must do the same thing, but the security aspect is such that I understand during the visit of Prime Minister Modi, drones will be banned completely. And there is privacy also, airports security. Therefore, it is a very difficult issue. But are we going to 'free for all' until the new regulations?

The Prime Minister: As far as I am concerned, I am prepared to ban them all.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, having heard all those issues raised by Members of the Opposition, and having heard the Rt. hon Prime Minister just give his views of wishing to ban it all, may I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to ensure that the regulations or Bill, whatever the shape it will take, does not tend to go towards overregulation, so much so that we create a situation where the use of drones for legitimate purposes, in line with the privacy laws of the country, are totally banned in the process, and the use of it is made so difficult because of permits being required and what have you? Because we have to at least not be overdramatic about this whole situation.

The Prime Minister: I have already answered that, before finalising, everybody concerned will have a say in the matter, and whatever would come must be in the best interest of the country.

CAP MALHEUREUX - POLICE STATION – CONSTRUCTION -

(No. B/153) **Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if consideration is or will be given for the construction of a Police Station in the vicinity of Cap Malheureux and, if so, indicate -

- (a) if a survey has been carried out in relation thereto, and
- (b) where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the need for the construction of a Police Station in a specific locality is determined by a number of factors, including the population density of that region; the prevailing crime rate; the extent of socio-economic and commercial activities; industrial development and assets, and the geographical area being covered by the nearest Police Stations.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that the village of Cap Malheureux falls under the policing jurisdiction of Grand Bay Police Station, and that Cap Malheureux and its adjoining coastal villages such as Péreybère, Calodyne, Anse la Raie, Petit Raffray are being adequately policed by Grand Bay, Grand Gaube and Goodlands Police Stations.

I am also informed that these Stations are reinforced by the Emergency Response Service, the Divisional Support Unit, CID, ADSU, *Police du Tourisme* and the National Coast Guard, which assist to maintain law and order in that region.

I am accordingly advised by the Commissioner of Police that the construction of a Police Station at Cap Malheureux is not envisaged for the time being.

Mr Rughoobur: Madam Speaker, may I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister when an appropriate survey was carried out during the last three or four years to determine - the Rt. hon. Prime Minister just mentioned there was a list of criteria that they will take into consideration - whether there is a need for a Police Station? I want to know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister if, during the last three to four years, there was such a survey that has been

carried out to determine whether there is a need for a Police Station in Cap Malheureux, because in the recent years there has been an increase of the inhabitants.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member has made his point!

The Prime Minister: From what I have answered, the information I have from the Commissioner of Police is that there is no need. Therefore, the survey must have shown that there is no need.

Mr Rughoobur: I will still request the Rt. hon. Prime Minister - because there is an increasing demand from the inhabitants in the region - to please make a request to the Commissioner of Police to have a look and try to see if they can consider the need.

The Prime Minister: I'll have to ask the Commissioner of Police to have a second look.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Aliphon!

PONZI SCHEMES – INQUIRY

(No. B/154) **Mr A. Aliphon (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Ponzi Schemes which have allegedly made one thousand nine hundred victims in the recent past, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiries carried out thereinto.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the Ponzi Scheme came to light following a case of “Embezzlement of funds” reported to the Rose Hill Police Station on 26 March 2013.

Enquiry initiated by the Police revealed that there were several companies involved in Ponzi Schemes. So far, 11 such companies have been identified, and 103 persons have been arrested in connection with this illegal activity.

The status of the enquiries in the cases involving the 11 companies is as follows -

- (i) in one case, the enquiry has been completed, and the case file already forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice;

- (ii) in three cases, the enquiry has been completed, and the case files are being finalised to be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice;
- (iii) in other three cases, the enquiry is nearly completed, and
- (iv) in four cases, the enquiry is in progress.

Madam Speaker, I must also point out that the Asset Recovery Unit is also following the matter insofar as tracing and forfeiture of assets are concerned.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, answering to a PNQ two years ago, the then Prime Minister stated that the Asset Recovery Unit would be going abroad and secure freezing orders for assets that are outside of Mauritius. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has any information whether the Asset Recovery Unit has indeed been able to secure any assets outside Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: No, Madam Speaker, I don't have such information.

Mr Jhugroo: May I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, with regard to the Ponzi Scheme, what amount of money has been seized, and whether after the enquiries this money will be refunded to the victims?

The Prime Minister: Which money? I don't know what the hon. Member is talking about. What money? Where is the money? How much money is there? We, ourselves, don't know! And all the money has not been traced out. So, whatever money there will be will legitimately be refunded to those who will be deserving.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/159 addressed to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has been withdrawn. Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question No. B/172 addressed to the hon. Minister of Business Enterprise and Cooperatives will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security. PQ No. B/180 addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands will now be replied by the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment. PQ No. B/195 addressed to hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development will now be replied by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands. PQ No. B/198 addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security. Hon. Ameer Meea!

CATTLE (LIVE) - IMPORTATION

(No. B/162) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to live cattle, beef, goats and muttons, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to -

- (a) the number thereof imported in 2014, indicating the -
 - (i) names of the importers thereof, and
 - (ii) measures taken/mechanisms put in place to control the selling price thereof, and
- (b) if the State Trading Corporation -
 - (i) floated tenders for the freighting thereof, and
 - (ii) will be importing same with a view to reducing the selling prices thereof, especially during the *Eid Ul Adha* and end of year festivities.

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, I must, at the very outset, state that the importation of live cattle, beef, goats and muttons is liberalised and any potential applicant complying with the requirements of an import permit issued by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security is authorised to import these live animals.

As regards part (a)(i) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security that, in 2014, a total of eight thousand three hundred and twenty (8,320) live cattle, beef, goats and muttons was imported by four importers, namely -

- (1) Socovia Belle Vue Ltée;
- (2) Bosmara Cattle Breeders Ltd;
- (3) Mauritius Meat Authority, and
- (4) Medine Ltd.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (a)(ii) of the question, I wish to inform the House that on 12 September 2014, the then Government agreed to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection making regulations under the Consumer Protection Act to provide for a maximum mark-up on the sale of live cattle on the occasion of *Eid Ul Adha* with a view to protecting consumers interest. The retail selling price of imported live cattle *for Eid Ul Adha* 2014 was, therefore, fixed at Rs139.50 per kg, based on the costing submitted by

Socovia Ltd at a mark-up of 25% on the CIF value. This was in line with section 4 of the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act.

In addition to this, I am informed that officers of the Consumer Affairs Unit effected checks on the sites where live cattle were sold with a view to controlling any abuse in terms of pricing. The Legal Metrology Services also ensured that the weighing scales being used were properly calibrated in order to avoid any abuse and unfair practices.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b)(i) of the question, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that on 19 September 2014, at a meeting held at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection under the chairmanship of the then Minister and where representatives of Mauritius Meat Authority (MMA) and State Trading Corporation (STC) were present, it was decided that STC should launch a Request for Quotation (RFQ) for the importation of live cattle, sheep and goats for slaughter.

The RFQ was launched on 22 September 2014 with closing date on 30 September 2014. I am informed that four offers were received.

The bidders also informed that livestock carriers serving South Africa and Mauritius are very rare and expensive because the market is small and a vessel has to be repositioned from another port to South Africa in case of need.

Subsequently, on 28 October 2014, the STC invited companies for an Expression of Interest (EoI) for transportation services of livestock by sea from South Africa to Mauritius. The livestock vessel was to accommodate up to 500 cattle of average weight of 450 kg each. On the closing date, 21 November 2014, two companies submitted their offers. Both companies could not find livestock vessels that could accommodate up to 500 cattle. Instead, they proposed bigger vessels which could carry in the range of 800 to 2,625 cattle per trip.

Based on the price proposals received from the potential bidders, it was clear that the retail prices of cattle, goats and sheep were found not to be cost-effective in view of the increase in the freight as a result of the number of cattle that was intended to be transported per trip to Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b)(ii) of the question, in accordance with the objectives set out in section 4 of the State Trading Corporation Act of 1982, the STC sources

and imports selected essential strategic commodities, including petroleum products, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), long grain white rice and wheat flour to meet the needs of the domestic market. The import of live animals for slaughter is not envisaged by the STC.

However, I am now informed by the Mauritius Meat Authority that it intends to import live cattle, goats and sheep to regulate the market to control unfair practices. Moreover, I am also informed that a new company has been granted an import permit by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security for the importation of live cattle. Any other importer willing to import live cattle will be granted import permits. The Government will provide all the necessary facilities to ensure that there are new players in this particular field of activity with a view to bringing more competition for the benefit of the consumers.

Madam Speaker, in anticipation of the forthcoming *Eid Ul Adha* festival which, I understand, will be celebrated at around September 2015, I met the main importers of live cattle, beef, goats and muttons with a view to bringing down the prices of these items.

I have to inform the House that the meeting was very positive and they have given me an assurance that they will work towards bringing down further the prices of live animals for the *Eid Ul Adha* and end of year festivities 2015 compared to 2014.

Mr Ameer Meea: I thank the hon. Minister for his reply, but can I ask him if he is aware that there is a cartel in Mauritius and that this cartel has been on since several years, and that in Mauritius all throughout the year, the prices remained stable for price of live cattle, but when the festivities for *Eid Ul Adha* and end of year festivities approach, we see a sudden rise in the prices? So, despite the hon. Minister saying that he met them...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, come with your question. Don't make a statement, please!

Mr Ameer Meea: ...and he reassured that everything would be done, can I ask him to see to it that these people are taken to task because every year it is the same story and the prices never go down?

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, I am very well aware of the situation that has been prevailing for years. Now that a new Government is here, we are going to take this matter seriously.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: If I heard the hon. Minister clearly, the STC carried out an in-depth enquiry and found that it was not cost-effective. I take it, it was not financially interesting for the State Trading Corporation to go into this, and yet, we are informed that the Mauritius Meat Authority is going to do the same at a loss. Can I ask the two hon. Ministers concerned, but the hon. Minister replying, is the Mauritius Meat Authority really better equipped to import this cattle to regulate the market, then the State Trading Corporation, and what kind of an importing, trading at a loss are we talking about in the case of the Mauritius Meat Authority?

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, I am informed that from the time when the experience of STC and Mauritius Meat Authority decided to carry out these activities and, as at now, there have been changes in transportation facilities for the cattle.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With a view of trying to ensure that - as hon. Ameer Meea explained - just before the festivities, that the price does not take a hike for the reason that there is a festivity and more people would require to buy live cattle, could the hon. Minister consider, once again, for the second time, as was done last year, that the laws be amended, the regulations be once again brought in in order to ensure that there is a control of price during this festivity in order to stop people from making an abuse of the situation specifically during this period?

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, as I said, we are here for less than three months and this matter is going to be given consideration and I am proposing to set up a committee to look into it.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One way of regulating the market is also to encourage local farmers to rear cattle. So, may I know from the hon. Minister - I know it is probably not directly under his Ministry - whether consideration would be given to come up with schemes and to make State lands available for those who want to rear cattle and muttons?

Mr Gungah: All incentives will be given, Madam Speaker, to these people.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: In the answer to the hon. Leader of the Opposition's question, the hon. Minister answered that the STC when they did the quotation, the tender process, did not find it *viable* and then after that, things have changed and now it is the Meat Authority – according to the answer of the hon. Minister – which finds it interesting. So, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the STC could float new tenders? Because things have changed, prices have gone down; prices of freight, prices of whatever. Could the STC do new tenders so that it is STC which does the importation?

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, STC does not have the expertise in this field.

Madam Speaker: Next Question, hon. Ameer Meea!

AGALEGA - - PROJECTS EARMARKED

(No. B/163) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Agalega, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Outer Islands Development Corporation, information as to where matters stand in relation to each of the six projects earmarked in the Programme Based Budget 2012 for implementation.

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, regarding the six projects referred to by the hon. Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East for implementation by the Outer Islands Development Corporation, I am informed by the Outer Islands Development Corporation that the status of the projects is as follows –

(i) **Refugee Centre Project**

This project relates to the construction of a Refugee Centre on South Island at Agalega. Initially, the project value was Rs11 m. and started in October 2012 and the expected date of completion was scheduled by the end of 2015. The project consists of two phases. As per the Engineer report, only 67% of Phase has been completed and Phase II has not yet started. The amount already disbursed for that project represents 48% of the project value, i.e. Rs1.9 m. out of Rs4.1 m.

(ii) **Rehabilitation of Airstrip**

Tenders were launched in December 2011 for the rehabilitation of the airstrip, but the amount tendered was in the range of Rs318-Rs350 m. against Rs120 m. which was the amount earmarked for the project in 2012. The Corporation did not go ahead with the project.

(iii) **Rehabilitation of Coconut Plantation**

Under this project, at the cost of Rs0.6 m., the Corporation purchased two dehusking machines for dehusking of coconuts. In the past, such activities were carried out manually.

(iv) **Fire Fighting Project**

I understand that a fire fighting vehicle was purchased in July 2013 at the cost of Rs15.7 m. I am advised by the Corporation that the vehicle is still awaiting shipment to Agalega. Apparently, the Corporation is having transportation problems as the vehicle cannot be dismantled for shipment. The vehicle is still lying at Coromandel Fire Station and I learnt that the warranty on the vehicle will expire in July 2015.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, allow the hon. Minister to reply, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, I am on my feet!

Mr Koonjoo:

(v) **Construction of Houses**

The houses are meant for the inhabitants of Agalega. The project value is Rs2.9 m. Two duplex type quarters have already been constructed and are currently being occupied by four families comprising of eight members. Each duplex comprises two housing units.

(vi) **Installation of Solar Panel**

The project has never been implemented. The amount of Rs1.5 m. earmarked for the installation of solar panel has been reallocated for the renovation of two houses. The two houses are occupied by the Officer-in-Charge of South

Island and the other one by the daughter of the Officer-in-Charge with her family.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Madam Speaker. All these projects have been announced since several years, but nothing has been done.

(Interruptions)

In every Budget, every year it is announced and nothing has been done. I know the hon. Minister just assumed office, but can I ask him if he can give a time frame for all these projects to be implemented urgently as the situation there is chaotic?

Mr Koonjoo: Madam Speaker, I can't give a time frame when these projects will start and when they will be completed, but I can assure the hon. Member that I have gone through the files of the Outer Islands and I have contacted the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and also the hon. Minister of Good Governance and I have asked to carry out a forensic audit to find out..

(Interruptions)

...what are the situations financially in the outer islands?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Regarding this specific fire service lorry which cannot be transported to Agalega, can the hon. Minister consider to open an inquiry and, if need be, refer this case to the Police?

Mr Koonjoo: I just answered, Madam Speaker.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Minister will agree with me that there is an urgent need of action there. Can I ask the hon. Minister if he is planning to visit Agalega in the meantime?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Koonjoo: Yes, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No cross-talking, please! Allow the hon. Minister to reply!

(Interruptions)

Mr Koonjoo: Yes, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

I will definitely do so after the Budget and I will ask the hon. Member to accompany me.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, did you get the reply of the hon. Minister.

Mr Ameer Meea: Yes. A last question! Concerning the lorry for the Fire Station, since it has now been established that the vehicle won't be able to travel to Agalega, can I ask the hon. Minister it would be simple to redeploy such vehicle to a local station, here, in Mauritius because it is a waste of public funds.

(Interruptions)

Mr Koonjoo: I will look into it, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours for lunch.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.39 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

FOOTBALL ACADEMY – SETTING UP

(No. B/164) Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the project for the setting up of a Football Academy by an English Premier League team, as stated in the Government Programme 2015-2019, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I wish to point out that the Government Programme 2015-2019 makes reference to the setting up of a high level football Academy in collaboration with an English Premier League Soccer Club.

Madam Speaker, since I took office as Minister, I am having consultations with all the stakeholders on the proposed project of the setting-up of a Football Academy. Discussions

are still going on. Once agreement has been reached on the modalities of operation of the proposed Football Academy, the project will be implemented in collaboration with West Ham United or any other football club, as I must add that many foreign football teams have also expressed interest in the project.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, vu que l'honorable ministre a mentionné le nom de West Ham United, peut-on savoir s'il y a eu des correspondances échangées avec le club en question et de bien vouloir, bien sûr, déposer copies sur la Table de l'Assemblée de ces correspondances?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, these are high level meetings and hon. Pravind Jugnauth, on a private visit, went to West Ham himself, and we had discussions there, and definitely, my office is in contact. We are having proposals from other football clubs as well. So, we are looking into all the matters.

Mr Mohamed: Could the hon. Minister inform the House, at some stage, before the elections, there was the issue of Sam Allardyce who was referred to as a very well-known football coach? Could the hon. Minister inform the House whether Sam Allardyce came to Mauritius voluntarily, whether free-of-charge, out of the goodness of his heart or did anyone find it, out of the goodness of their heart, necessary to sponsor such an event, which is important?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Member should agree with me that we were in the Opposition and football teams like West Ham and Sam Allardyce was never forced to come to Mauritius. He came on his own voluntarily to give his help to improve football in Mauritius.

Dr. Joomaye: Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the project will be funded by Government or will it be a private venture?

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, it is at the level of my Ministry, that's why we are discussing with all the stakeholders. The discussion is still going on.

Mr Mohamed: Since I am happy to hear that this gentleman, Sam Allardyce, out of the goodness of his heart, came over voluntarily to Mauritius to help, could the hon. Minister now confirm that his ticket, his hotel, his stay here or consultancy fees were at no point at all charged to any person, be it private or public and it was all free?

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, he came on his own on our invitation. At that time, we were not in Government. So, everything was private.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, si je comprends bien la réponse du ministre, est-ce qu'il est en train de dire à la Chambre que, jusqu'à présent, il n'y a eu aucune discussion approfondie avec la direction de West Ham United, il est clair que pour pouvoir concrétiser ce genre de projet, on ne peut pas discuter avec l'entraîneur. Toute décision doit être prise par la direction du club ou des clubs en question. Alors, ma question est la suivante: est-ce que l'honorable ministre est en train de nous dire que tout ceci ressemble à ce qu'on a vu dans le passé avec le bluff de la venue de Liverpool à Maurice ou bien est-ce que c'est effectivement un projet sérieux qui sera concrétisé?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, I have just answered to the hon. Member that discussions are still going on, but if my colleague has other proposals, I will invite him to do so.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Minister has made mention of other clubs apart from West Ham. Can we have an idea of the names of those clubs which he has contacted?

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, we had a request from Celtic and Bastia.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

BEAU BASSIN & PETITE RIVIÈRE - YOUTH CENTRES – FACILITIES

(No. B/165) **Mr F. Quirin (Fourth Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Youth Centres in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, he will state, in each case, the –

- (a) opening hours thereof;
- (b) staff attached thereto, and
- (c) facilities and equipment available thereat.

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, two youth centres namely Barkly and Mont Roches Youth Centres are operational in Constituency No. 20 - Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière.

Like all other youth centres, these two Youth Centres operate up to 18.00 hours from Monday to Saturday. The centres also are made available to youth organisations on request

for the conduct of activities for the benefit of the youth at any time beyond normal opening hours.

A Youth Officer is posted at each of the two Youth Centres. They work under the supervision of a Senior Youth Officer and a Principal Youth Officer.

The Barkly Youth Centre comprises a committee room, a Computer Room with free internet facilities and a multi-purpose hall for the practice of boxing, table tennis, dance, music, zumba, fitness activities and indoor games. A learning corner with all necessary equipment and materials will be launched shortly at the centre. I would like to stress the fact that the Computer Room has been fully refurbished with the assistance of the National Empowerment Foundation and all IT equipment is new. The facility will soon be inaugurated. The Mont Roches Youth Centre, on the other hand, offers free internet indoor games and committee room facilities, and also outdoor activities like *pétanque*, volleyball, basketball and street football.

Madam Speaker, as regards equipment available at Youth Centres, I am circulating the information.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, je dois demander au ministre s'il est au courant que le centre de Jeunesse de Mont Roches, actuellement, n'a pas d'officier en charge ; qu'il n'y a aucune activité qui est organisée, et que le centre lui-même demande à être rénové ou il serait préférable, je pense, de doter cette région d'un nouveau centre vu la grosse concentration de jeunes qui s'y trouvent.

Mr Sawmynaden: Okay, I will definitely ask my officers to have a look into it. If need be we will do it.

Mr Bhagwan: Concerning the Youth Centres over the years, as far back as 1983-84, it was the policy of all Governments to have these Youth Centres reserved for sports activities and political parties have been debarred from having the use of these Youth Centres. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a new policy or whether the same policy will be maintained as far as the use of Youth Centres exclusively for youth activities and none for political activities are concerned?

Mr Sawmynaden: Yes, the same policy will be involved.

Mr Quirin: Madame la présidente, avec votre permission, je dois attirer l'attention du ministre du fait que les centres de jeunesse actuellement ferment à 18 heures et je suis

persuadé qu'il est bien au courant de cela, et c'est l'heure à laquelle les jeunes sont libres pour pouvoir bénéficier des services qui sont offerts dans les centres. Alors, ma question est la suivante: est-ce que le ministre n'envisage-t-il pas de revoir les heures d'ouverture des centres de jeunesse dans la circonscription No. 20 et dans le pays, en général?

Mr Sawmynaden: Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member has seen it in our Programme, it is clearly written that all youth centres operation hours will be reviewed.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Mohamed!

MAURITIUS/SOUTH AFRICA - DOUBLE TAXATION AGREEMENT

(No. B/166) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to the Non-Double Taxation Agreement signed between the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of South Africa, he will state where matters stand, indicating if he is in presence of information indicating whether other countries having signed similar agreements with the Republic of South Africa have also had theirs reviewed along the same lines as the one existing between our two countries.

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement between Mauritius and South Africa was signed in July 1996 and it came into force in June 1997. This Agreement was revised at the request of South Africa which had expressed concerns about the use of the 1996 Treaty in a manner that was not originally intended.

Following consultations between South Africa and Mauritius, a revised agreement was signed on 17 May 2013 but has not yet entered into force. The revised agreement has been ratified by South Africa but is yet to be ratified by Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that concerns were raised by operators of our global business sector principally on the application of the new Article 4 subparagraph (3) which relates as to how a company having a dual residence status would be dealt with under the proposed mutual agreement process to resolve dual residency issues should both countries not agree.

Under the proposed tax treaty, the effective management criterion is substituted with an administrative discretion. Accordingly, South Africa Revenue Service (SARS) and the Mauritian authorities will endeavour to reach mutual agreement on whether a dual resident company should be taxed only in Mauritius or only in South Africa. If SARS does not reach

an agreement, the dual resident company will then be subject to double Taxation and this is where the issue lies in the absence of clarity.

Madam Speaker, though certainty regarding the application of the proposed Article 4 of the revised agreement is expected to develop over time, to give immediate comfort to our investors and ensure consistency of the revised Article 4, Mauritius firmly believes it would be appropriate to detail the process and both quantitative and qualitative requirements would be followed by our competent authorities to settle reported cases of dual residence issues.

To that effect, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development together with the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Attorney General's Office and in consultation with industry stakeholders have worked out a Memorandum of Understanding detailing the process and requirements to be followed by the competent authorities to resolve cases of dual residence through the mutual agreement mechanism.

Following consultations, a draft MoU detailing the process to be followed by the competent authorities to settle cases where there are issues of dual residence through a mutual agreement process and also a request that Mauritius benefits from the most favoured nation treatment which is not less favourable than the treatment granted to South Africa's other treaty partners was forwarded to the South African authorities on 26 August 2014.

On 22 October 2014, the Department of International Relations and Co-operation of the Republic of South Africa submitted counter proposals on the mutual agreement requirements to settle issues of dual residency. Furthermore, the South African authorities then informed that they do not propose to extend the scope of the Most Favoured Nation clause with respect to the mutual agreement process in settling dual residency issues.

Discussions are currently ongoing on the draft MoU between the Mauritius and South African authorities and we expect to submit our proposals on the revised MoU soon.

Madam Speaker, as regards the second part of the question, according to information published by the South African Revenue Service (SARS), which is South Africa's tax collecting authority, South Africa has renegotiated or is in the process of renegotiating its Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements with Germany, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Singapore, Zambia and Zimbabwe. However, it appears that none of these renegotiated agreements have so far come into force. As such, we do not have any details about the

changes that have been made or proposed to be made to that. South Africa is also negotiating the amendment of Protocols with a number of its other treaty partners.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to add that, since the start of my mandate, my Ministry has already engaged in discussions with various stakeholders of the global business sector with respect to the proposed growth strategy of the financial services sector in Mauritius. Consultations also covered potential threats and also identified opportunities in the light of the Proposed Base Erosion and Profit Sharing (BEPS) initiative which is currently taking place in accordance with the directives of the G20.

This, Madam Speaker, is exactly the subject of debate and discussion with the South African authorities as the proposed Article 4 on the determination of the residency status of a contracting state in the case of dual residence through a mutual agreement process is expected to be in line with the proposed OECD Treaty Model under the BEPS initiative. This is something we need to look into because GAAR seems not to be an issue anymore now after the Indian Government has pronounced itself on that.

Madam Speaker, in the light of the challenges facing the industry, I have decided, as I stated before, to reactivate the Financial Services Consultative Council which will be chaired by myself and will include the Governor of the Central Bank, the Financial Secretary, the Chief Executive of the FSC, the Chairman of the FSC and other representatives of the global business sector with the aim to proactively turning such threats facing our industry into opportunities and act upon the identified opportunities in a timely and proactive manner. The FSCC will be meeting by the end of this month, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Does the hon. Minister still have a long statement?

Mr Bhadain: No.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Minister has a long statement, he better circulates it.

Mr Bhadain: I have got four lines left, Madam Speaker.

Representatives of my Ministry will also be in Johannesburg after April 2015 and we will take the opportunity to take stock of the status of discussions on the treaty between our two countries, in order to conclude on this issue and, of course, establish a clear way forward.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the hon. Minister for his detailed answer.

(Interruptions)

With regard to the Non-Double Taxation Agreement being referred to with the Republic of South Africa, at some stage, this whole process had started out with the hon. Minister Jugnauth and then the hon. Deputy Prime Minister Duval.

According to information there are many other countries, as the hon. Minister has explained, that are in the midst of renegotiating the agreement with the Republic of South Africa. But, they have decided not to proceed with what the Republic of South Africa has proposed and Mauritius happens to be the only country that has signed up to this whole agreement. Does not the hon. Minister believe that there is a danger that Mauritius is placing itself in a situation of uncertainty by having agreed to the new deal as proposed and as negotiated as opposed to other competitors who, in various other jurisdictions, have agreed unanimously - strangely enough - not to themselves deal with the South African authorities and do not want to negotiate? Have we not put ourselves in a situation where our competitors will be at an advantage compared to us?

Mr Bhadain: Yes, of course. I mentioned before, Madam Speaker, that there are issues which have been raised by operators in the global business sector in Mauritius. We are well aware of these issues and this is why the previous Government came up with a draft Memorandum of Understanding which we are now looking into. We are going to take this forward and whatever we will do, of course, will be in the best interest of Mauritius. We will also ensure that the qualms of the operators in the global business sector are well taken into consideration and, at the end of the day, when we go ahead it will be for the interest of our country.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I raised this very same issue in 2013 when the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval was the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance. Would not the hon. Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms agree with me that the problem with all this DTA stems from the fact that the officers of the Income Tax Department went ahead and signed a treaty as far back as in May 2013 without consulting stakeholders and now, after *le fait accompli*, we are having to ask the South Africans to go back on what we ourselves had signed and agreed? Would not the

hon. Minister agree that going forward before his Ministry takes any decision concerning Double Taxation Treaty there should be wide consultations with the stakeholders?

Mr Bhadain: Yes. That is exactly what we are doing, Madam Speaker. We are holding wide consultations with everybody and we want everybody to come up with their opinion so that we can actually take an informed decision which is in the best interest of all the parties and of course, we want our industry to succeed.

Having said that, this is also why I am setting up the Financial Services Consultative Council because this is the Council which will act as the think tank for this sector of the economy so that we can actually identify those growth opportunities. I cannot be responsible for what has been done before. Certainly, we will take this forward and make it work for the interest of Mauritius.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister has given us a lot of details of the consultations and so on taking place here in Mauritius. From what I understand, there are several countries that are refusing to agree to what our South African brothers and sisters - they can be 'tough' to use the diplomatic word. Can I know how many SADC countries we find among those countries that have run into trouble with South Africa on that issue and whether there is any attempt to get those SADC countries together when facing South Africa?

Mr Bhadain: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I don't know whether these countries are actually running into all those problems mentioned by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. They are renegotiating. This is what is stated by SARS in South Africa and they would know the terms and conditions of the renegotiation. We are not aware of whether they do not want to do business with South Africa on this issue. Having said that, the countries I mentioned, apart from Germany and Singapore, in terms of African nations involved we have Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Of course, we can also consult them. We will certainly do that.

Having said that, with regard to the consultations which have taken place in Mauritius, the operators in the sector are well aware of all these issues because they are the ones who are going out there in Africa and doing their business. Government is here to facilitate the process for them and we will certainly use all our endeavours to do that. I am answering this question as Minister of Financial Services and as Minister of Good

Governance like my hon. friend has been telling. On good governance, I am dealing with other matters.

Mr Mohamed: In the light of all the remarks that have been made by the hon. Minister - which I find very interesting - may I humbly suggest that Government considers the possibility of getting in touch with the Government of South Africa and use all diplomatic channels for that purpose in order to ensure that whatever was agreed upon in 2013 or before is halted, pending to what goes on with other countries and other States that are in negotiations with the Republic of South Africa. That would ensure that we do not put ourselves in a situation where our competitors have this competitive edge or that we lose our competitive edge. To put it simply that we approach the Government of South Africa, use all diplomatic channels, use our friendship with the people of South Africa, to ensure that whatever was agreed upon in 2013 is halted until there is more visibility as far as the negotiations that our competitors are making with the people of South Africa are concerned.

Mr Bhadain: Yes, we will certainly do that, Madam Speaker. As I have stated, we have a team from my Ministry who will be visiting South Africa in April 2015. There is a conference which is being held over there and apart from that, we will be meeting the representatives and our counterparts over there. I am a firm believer, Madam Speaker, that in the face of adversity, always lies the opportunity. We are going to take those opportunities forward.

Madam Speaker: Next question hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

ROUTE DES PAMPLEMOUSSES - RAISED JUNCTION PLATFORMS

(No. B/167) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the Route des Pamplemousses, from the junction of Vallée des Prêtres to the Kadhafi Square, he will state if consideration will be given for the introduction of raised junction platforms as a new means to enhance road safety and thereby making its use along the said road as a test case to be replicated elsewhere if it produces results, if so required.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, I am informed that a raised junction is generally restricted to roads with moderate to low traffic and not to those whose primary function is to deliver traffic from motorways to secondary roads. Such high capacity roads are termed as main arterial roads and Route des Pamplemousses falls in that category. In fact, Route des

Pamplemousses is a 900m road which takes traffic from the M2 Dual Carriageway to connect to the city centre at Khadafi Square, through the A2 road, at Abercrombie roundabout.

Construction of raised platforms along Route des Pamplemousses could give rise to a number of problems including reduction in traffic performance, in terms of traffic throughout and travel time and forcing motorists to opt for less appropriate routes. In view thereof, other road safety measures such as pedestrian crossings, traffic lights, parking restrictions and one way schemes have already been implemented in that region.

Madam Speaker, however, as regards raised platform, due consideration can be given to the suggestion and its construction on a trial basis as a pilot basis, on roads with moderate traffic volume. If proven satisfactory it may then be replicated on roads with similar characteristics.

Mr Mohamed: I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. This is a suggestion that I have made some time back with regard to raised platforms. Are they the same experts at the level of his Ministry who have basically kept on saying that raised platforms are not the solutions for Route des Pamplemousses? Because raised platforms as such do not exist in Mauritius. It seems as though because it is a new method of reducing traffic velocity and reducing the number of accidents and risk of road accidents that people are *réfractaires* to this whole novelty. Could the hon. Minister look into the possibility of it being installed in Route des Pamplemousses again or the adjacent roads? There are no traffic lights and traffic humps there and more and more people from that region are complaining because people have no discipline in the way they drive?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, not everything has a ...

(Interruptions)

I think that the hon. Member has made a good suggestion. In fact, in Reunion island, these raised platforms are being used. There are platforms about 10 cm² and cover the whole road and which can lead to lessen the speed. But the problem is where do we put them? So, we can try some on a pilot basis.

Mr Ameer Meea: On the same issue, since the hon. Minister is well aware of the traffic at Route des Pamplemousses and the junction of Vallée des Prêtres which is a very busy one, can I appeal to the hon. Minister whether he can convey to the Commissioner of Police to put policemen in the morning and in the evening especially on Saturday because there is a market fair there and the traffic is a real nightmare?

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, we will certainly do that and we will also consider the possibility of traffic lights there.

MBC – LICENCE FEE

(No. B/168) Dr R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the payment by households of the monthly fee of Rs150 to the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will state if he will consider recommending a revision downwards thereof to Rs100 in the forthcoming budget.

Mr Jugnauth: Madam Speaker, in 2002 when the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) had three (3) analogue TV channels, the TV licence fee was Rs100 per month. Since then, there have been developments and now there are 17 digital TV channels being offered to viewers alongside three analogue TV channels.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Member may recall that licence fee was revised upwards from Rs100 to Rs150 per month in August 2013.

When this Government took over in December 2014, we discovered that the financial situation of the MBC was in the red with overdrafts of Rs235 m. and debts of Rs960 m. The immediate priority of the MBC is to reduce its costs which has already started with a cost reduction of Rs2 m. per month. We are also awaiting the conclusion of the enquiry being conducted by the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, which will also look into the financial aspects of the Corporation.

Therefore, in the given circumstances, I am informed that it will not be wise to reduce the licence fee.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I heard the hon. Minister saying the difficult financial situation as clearly described by him. Now, with a view of trying to alleviate the difficult financial situation which the MBC finds itself in; could the Government consider as a means of raising funds or has the Government consider already the possibility of privatising two of the channels there, and if that is the case, has the Government been informed by interested parties as to who would be interested in such a privatisation process, and if so, who would they be?

Mr Jugnauth: Well, I think the hon. Member is jumping the gun because there is a question on privatisation of the two channels that is coming. So, I'll answer that.

SHORT MESSAGE SERVICES - LEVY

(No. B/169) **Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the Short Message Services, he will state if he will consider recommending a waiver of the levy of the 10 cents tax per message in the forthcoming budget.

The Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr S. Luchmeenaraidoo): Madam Speaker, the issue regarding waiver of the levy applicable on Short Message Services would be considered in the context of the forthcoming Budget exercise.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House, at least, of the amount of money collected by means of this levy in the past years?

Mr Luchmeenaraidoo: Yes, revenue from levy was Rs92 m. in 2012, Rs99 m. in 2013 and Rs85 m. in 2014. This is expecting by the fact that more and more people are using mobile applications like *Skype*, *Viber* and *WhatsApp* for the communication with permits which commit them to send free messages via Internet connection.

Dr. Sorefan: Are we to understand from the hon. Minister that Government intends to remove this 10 cents tax on Short Message in the coming Budget?

Mr Luchmeenaraidoo: Well, I have never said that. But what I am saying is that based on statistics, revenue is decreasing because the public is using more and more free Internet facilities through *Viber* and *WhatsApp*.

PRE-PRIMARY & PRIMARY SCHOOLS - FLUORIDE TABLETS - DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/170) **Dr R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the prevention of tooth decay, he will state if consideration will be given for a reintroduction of the distribution of fluoride tablets in the pre-primary and primary schools of mainland Mauritius, of Rodrigues and of Agalega.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that in order to meet the dental needs of the population, my Ministry provides dental care in 58 dental clinics throughout the island including three mobile dental clinics targeting the school population. There are also three dental clinics in Rodrigues. For Agalega, a dental surgeon visits the island three times a year to provide care to local inhabitants.

With regard to the use of fluoride, my Ministry subscribes to WHO guidelines about the benefits of fluoride in the prevention of dental diseases. However, according to WHO Technical Report of 1994, fluoride tablets have limited application as a public health measure and are recommended only for at-risk children.

My Ministry is also envisaging to seek WHO assistance to conduct a National Oral Health Survey soon in Mauritius, with a view to formulating a National Oral Health Plan of action. The plan will define our future preventive strategies in relation to Oral Health. My Ministry will stand guided with the recommendations of WHO with regard to the use of fluoride tablets for the prevention of tooth decay in school children.

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, may we know from the hon. Minister whether he is aware that we had several researches and documents since 1950, and that fluoride is the best preventive measure? The hon. Minister has mentioned a lot of clinics; those are curative. To reduce the cost in the long run, prevention is better than cure. I take it that this new Government will go mainly on prevention ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sorefan, what is your question?

Dr. Sorefan: Do not go on WHO requirements, go on Mauritian requirements. From a dental point of view, we find fluoride is the best preventive measure.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sorefan, are you making a statement or are you asking a question?

Mr Gayan: I understand the hon. Member to be asking about the introduction of fluoride. May I say, Madam Speaker, that fluoride is used mainly in toothpaste, which is widely available in Mauritius. We will certainly look into whatever the World Health Organisation says, but at least we trust the world body about this matter.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister on what frequency do dentists go to Agaléga?

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: Well, I did say, Madam Speaker. Three times a year.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES - GPS PROJECT

(No. B/171) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)

asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the GPS Project for Local Authorities, he will state -

- (a) who advised the implementation thereof;
- (b) if a prior study was carried out in relation thereto and, if so, indicate

- (i) by whom;
 - (ii) when and,
 - (iii) the cost thereof and;
- (c) if tenders were called for the supply and installation thereof and, if so,

Indicate

- (i) when;
- (ii) the name of the successful bidder thereof, and
- (iii) the cost thereof.

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, I am informed that an analysis of the scavenging services at each local authority was carried out by the Local Authorities Governance Unit of my Ministry in 2012 to assess amongst others, the costs of refuse collection services and the fleet profile, namely the types, conditions, age, capacity utilisation and replacement policy of vehicles. The Local Authorities Governance Unit subsequently recommended, amongst others, the introduction of the Global Positioning System for vehicle tracking with a view to help save on vehicle running cost while making better use of the existing fleet and manpower, with a view to improving quality of service.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that a study of waste collection systems in two local authorities was carried by the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Mauritius in 2012.

As far as part (c) of the question is concerned, I am informed that, following a procurement exercise carried out on 06 August 2014, the contract was awarded to Navigation and Geocoding Technologies Ltd, the lowest evaluated substantially responsive bidder for the amount of Rs22,221,834.00 (inclusive of VAT). This price also includes the supply of a Geographical Information System software.

Mr Bhagwan: May the hon. Minister inform the House whether this system is fully operational?

Dr. Husnoo: Actually, this contract was awarded on 20 January 2015, and now they are in process of training the users how to use the system. This has started on 09 February this year. Now it is in the training phase, and it is going to be fully operational in October or early November 2015.

BAMBOUS - AGRICULTURAL LAND - LEASE

(No. B/172) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the plots of agricultural land leased to individuals at Bambous, he will -

- (a) state the number thereof and,
- (b) table a list of the beneficiaries thereof, indicating in each case, the
 - (i) extent thereof, and
 - (ii) conditions thereof.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Madam Speaker, I shall, with your permission, reply to this Parliamentary Question. I am advised that State agricultural land at La Ferme Land Settlement and Roches Brunes Seed Production Centre near Bambous is leased to planters and breeders for vegetable cultivation and livestock production.

Regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that there are 24 lessees at La Ferme Land Settlement and 13 at Roches Brunes Seed Production Centre; that makes a total of 37 lessees.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am tabling the list of beneficiaries. May I add that, regarding the main conditions attached to the leases, the offer is for a period of seven years, renewable, and the rental payable to Rs1,000 per *arpent* annually. The lease may be cancelled at any time and the land retrieved if the lessee does not comply with the conditions of the lease, that is, neglecting the land, subletting the land, using the land for other purpose or not paying the rental.

Mr Bhagwan: May I know from the hon. Minister whether he has inquired if, in the list, the former Minister of Local Government, Mr Hervé Aimée, benefitted a considerable amount of *arpents* of State land in that region?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, if we go through the list, indeed, we have one former Minister who is the beneficiary of land at Roches Brunes Seed Production Centre. He was awarded that lease in March 2008, and the lease expired in February this year.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister at least inquire from his officers whether there has been a case of sub-renting of that land which was awarded to him?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I must say that my Ministry is undertaking an internal enquiry with regard to land leased to various planters and breeders. Wherever there has been breach of contract with regard to conditions laid out in those lease agreements, lands are going to be retrieved from those beneficiaries.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister has stated that there was a former Minister. Could he please confirm to the House - if my information is correct - that this person referred to as a former Minister was not Minister at the time when he was granted the lease?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, what I can say is that, at the time the lease was awarded to that person, probably he was not a Minister, but since the lease went through to the end of February 2015, at one particular time during that period of the lease, he was Minister.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Minister what extent of land was he granted, and may I know also what was he cultivating there?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, the acres of land awarded to that person amounted to two *arpents*, and the purpose of the lease was for poultry breeding, vegetables and fruit cultivation.

Mr Jhugroo: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he considers taking legal action against those planters who have sublet their land?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, all those who have contravened the conditions of the lease are going to answer to that.

Mr Ameer Meea: The hon. Minister just informed us that the lease has been terminated. May we know whether the lease would be renewed?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I leave it to my Ministry to reconsider if there is request of renewal, and we will deal with that matter as and when the request is made to my Ministry.

Mr Bhagwan: It is a case of double employment. At the time when he was not Minister, he was bargaining with the previous party to stay in that party. He was given that as a bribe.

Mr Mohamed: If the hon. Minister could, maybe, enlighten the House and enlighten myself. Normally, at the end of a lease, if there is no request for a renewal or if it does not come to an end as such, there is no notice sent by the lessee to the lessor or vice versa, there is this operation of renewal by tacit *reconduction*. Isn't this included in the lease, therefore, the issue of renewal does not arise, and it has just been renewed automatically for the same period?

Mr Seeruttun: Madam Speaker, I need notice of that question.

**MAURICE ILE DURABLE COMMISSION/UNITED NATION INDUSTRIAL
DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS - CONTRACT**

(No. B/173) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the contract signed between the former *Maurice Ile Durable* Commission and the United Nation Industrial Development Organisations for the Resource Efficiency and Cleaner Production Programme for the industry, he will state where matters stand as to the -

- (a) implementation thereof, and
- (b) time frame set for the completion thereof.

Mr Dayal: Madam Speaker, following the signature of the contract between the former Maurice Ile Durable Commission and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation in November 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding was to be signed between the *Maurice Ile Durable Fund* and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, to facilitate the implementation of the project.

The Memorandum can only be signed after appropriate amendments would be brought to the Finance and Audit Act to enable the *MID* Fund to operate under the aegis of my Ministry. A time frame can then be set for the completion of the project.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

SOLAR WATER HEATER PROGRAMME - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/174) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management whether, in regard to the Solar Water Heater Programme implemented by the *Maurice Ile Durable* Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fund, information as to -

- (a) the number of schemes implemented to date, indicating in each case, the -
 - (i) date of implementation thereof;
 - (ii) number of beneficiaries thereof;
 - (iii) energy savings in respect thereof to the country;
 - (iv) societal benefit thereof, if any;
 - (v) emission reductions thereof;

- (vi) economic savings thereof to the country, and
 (vii) cost to Government and the payback period of the investment, and
 (b) if any additional scheme is still awaiting implementation and, if so, indicate the expected time frame for implementation set therefor.

Mr Dayal: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) (i) and (ii) of the question, I am informed that three schemes have been implemented in respect of the Solar Water Heater Scheme as follows -

	Date of implementation	Number of beneficiaries
Scheme 1	2008	24,000 households
Scheme 2	2012	14,100 households
Scheme 3	2013	19,757 households

With regard to parts (iii) to (vii) of the question, a study was conducted by Green Energy Solutions Centre based in US with the support of the UN Energy in September 2013 for the scheme implemented in 2012 and the findings were as follows -

1. **Energy savings:** LPG savings of 786 tonnes per year and electricity savings of 3,466 MWh/year;
2. **Economic savings:** Rs54.2 m. per year on a total investment of Rs146 m. for 2012 with a simple payback period of 2.7 years;
3. **Emission reductions:** 5,204 tonnes of CO² per year on emissions from electricity generation and combustion of LPG;
4. **Societal Benefits:** out of all the households who benefitted from the schemes, 47% were without existing water heating.
5. However, it was observed that nearly 40% of the systems in place were not operational since a large number of SWHs were either not functional or not properly installed due to the high cost of connections and fittings.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that no additional scheme is awaiting implementation under the *MID* Fund.

However, allocation of Rs100 m. was made in Budget 2014 for a new Solar Water Heater Scheme in the National Habitat Fund under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the National Habitat Fund has set up a Technical Committee comprising representatives of different Ministries and other agencies, including

my Ministry, Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, Ministry of Housing and Lands, Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, *MID* Fund and DBM to review the scheme in light of the findings of the study undertaken by Green Energy Solutions Centre and to make proposals on the operationalisation of an improved Solar Water Heater Scheme.

A decision on the operationalisation of that improved Solar Water Heater Scheme will be taken in the context of the forthcoming Budget, after discussions with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Mr Bérenger: I am not sure I heard correctly, but if that is the case, will the hon. Minister confirm from what I heard that 40% of the installed solar water heaters are not functional and, if that is not the case, has a calculation been made of all the installed solar water heaters, what percentage thereof indeed is not functioning?

Mr Dayal: This is true, and because it was done before my coming into office, we will be seeing the whole file and come up with whatever remedial action that is required.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister does not have the figures?

Mr Dayal: I don't have the figures as such.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

AIRPORTS OF MAURITIUS LTD - VIP CONSULTANT - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/175) **Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the post of VIP Consultant at Airports of Mauritius Limited, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airports of Mauritius Limited, information as to -

- (a) if it was advertised and, if not, indicate the mode of recruitment thereof, and
- (b) the name of the incumbent thereof, indicating -
 - (i) his qualifications;
 - (ii) his salaries and terms and conditions of appointment, and
 - (iii) the make and model of car put at his disposal, together with the date of purchase and cost thereof, and
 - (iv) the duties assigned thereto.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Madam Speaker, the Airports of Mauritius Ltd, as any Limited Company, is governed by the Companies Act, and its Constitution. Management of the Company is vested in its Board of Directors.

As is the practice, I shall not in future deal in this House with internal or commercial matters of the Company. However, since this question has already been tabled, I shall reply to it.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Officer-in-Charge of Airports of Mauritius Ltd (AML) that on 18 June 2013, AML in consultation with the Prime Minister's Office, the then Prime Minister's Office, decided to retain the services of a VIP Facilitation Officer.

(Interruptions)

The appointment was made by the ex-CEO of AML on the basis of his delegated authority as CEO and without seeking the approval of the AML Board.

This was effected through a letter of offer sent to Ms J. W., on 18 June 2013 and same was renewed after one year by the ex-CEO, again without the approval of the Board.

Madam Speaker, in regard to parts (b)(i) and (ii) of the question, I am informed that AML has no records of the qualifications or C.V. of Ms J. W.

(Interruptions)

'The salary and terms and conditions of appointment were as follows -

- (i) Period of one year starting 17 June 2013, renewed as I mentioned;
- (ii) Rs82,500 per month as salary;
- (iii) Driver's Allowance - Rs8,000 per month;
- (iv) Petrol Allowance - Rs8,470 per month;
- (v) Company car of about 2,000 cc from the car pool of the Company or purchased.
- (vi) A mobile phone for the value not exceeding Rs10,000, and
- (vii) Rs2,000 monthly free calls.

In regard to part (b) (iii) of the question, I am informed that an Audi A4 Auto Petrol 1788 cc was purchased on 23 August 2013 at a price of Rs2,050,000 inclusive of VAT from Allied Motor Company Ltd and put at the disposal of the VIP Facilitation Consultant.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b)(iv) of the question, I am informed that the duties assigned to Ms J.W. were to facilitate the visit of VIP guests and assist in the organisation of official events.

Ms J.W. submitted her resignation on 16 December 2014 just after the General Elections.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister confirm whether this post was on the organisational chart of AML prior to her recruitment?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I don't know, Madam Speaker, but I believe not.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House on what grounds this lady was recruited and can he inform the House who took the decision for her recruitment, and can we know to whom she was reporting with regard to her duties?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: There are no records at AML, Madam Speaker, but it is mentioned in the reply that she was recruited in consultation with the then Prime Minister's Office.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Being given that she is not a Head of Department of AML, can we know who took the decision to grant her a company car?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, the then CEO took it upon himself with the permission of the PMO to arrange for the recruitment of the lady and the conditions too.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Can we know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether the said lady was transferred from AML and, if so, can we know where and in which capacity and when?

(Interruptions)

And why?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: It does not say in the reply, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Next question, Mr Jhugroo!

AML - ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/176) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the post of Administrative Manager at Airports of Mauritius Limited, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Airports of Mauritius Limited, information as to –

- (a) when it was advertised, indicating the criteria laid down therefor, and
- (b) the name of the incumbent thereof, indicating his -
 - (i) qualifications, and
 - (ii) salaries and terms and conditions of employment.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as stated in the reply to PQ B/175, the Airports of Mauritius Ltd as any Limited Company is governed by the Companies Act, and its Constitution. Management of the Company is vested in its Board of Directors.

As is the practice, I shall not deal in future with internal or commercial matters of the Company. However, since this question has already been tabled, I shall reply.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Officer-in-Charge of Airports of Mauritius Limited (AML) that the post of Administrative Manager was advertised in the local press on 18 to 21 February 2014, closing date for submission of applications was 28 February 2014.

The profile of the post as advertised was as follows -

- (i) HSC or GCE A Level with Business Studies and Mathematics;
- (ii) Degree in Business Administration/Human Resources Management or any related field;

- (iii) minimum 5 years' experience at Senior Management Level in a similar position;
- (iv) excellent interpersonal and communication skills, and
- (v) experience in company secretarial and administrative duties would be an advantage.

In regard to part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed that the interviewing panel of the Board has recommended that Mr S. K. be appointed as Administrative Manager at AML. This was approved by the Board on 21 May 2014. He has been nominated with effect from 01 October 2014, with a probation period of 6 months.

The qualifications held by Mr S. K. are as follows -

- (i) BSC (Hons) Management with specialisation in Tourism and Hospitality (1997-2001) – University of Mauritius;
- (ii) Associate Member of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrative, UK 2014;
- (iii) MBA with specialisation in Finance, University of Southern Queensland, Australia, and
- (iv) Affiliate, Association of Certified and Chartered Accountants (ACCA).

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b) (ii) of the question, I am informed that in line with the Scheme of Service for the post, Mr S. K. draws a monthly salary of Rs73,300.- plus Rs945.- as salary compensation. He is also paid -

- (i) travelling allowances of Rs16,500 per month;
- (ii) car allowance in lieu of cash grant Rs8,900 -, and
- (iii) welfare and meal subsidy of Rs1800 - in line with AML Terms and Conditions of Employment.

With regard to part (b) (ii) of the question, I am tabling the terms and conditions of employment of Mr S. K.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House what is the Schedule of Duties of the Administrative Manager?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I mentioned that, I think.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Minister just mentioned that, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware that the Administrative Manager who has got no qualification and experience in Human Resources, has been given the responsibilities of the Human Resources Department?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I would tend to agree. I understand that in his MBA, one of the papers was Human Resources, but when I look at the Schedule of Duties, a lot of it deals with staff, etc. So, I would tend to agree with that.

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware that the Administrative Manager, who was recruited on 01 October 2014, has been appointed Director and Secretary of a newly subsidiary private company of AML known as AML Group Corporate Services Ltd which was incorporated on 17 November 2014?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, indeed. The AML Group Corporate Services is a dormant company and will probably be closed down.

(Interruptions)

AML Corporate Services, I was informed, was created to provide secretarial services to the group. But now it is going to be restructured, it is no longer needed.

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware that this private company which is not governed by PoCA and Public Procurement Act, has as objectives –

- (i) to centralise the company secretarial funding functions of AML, MDFP and ATOL, and
- (ii) to centralise the administrative affairs of AML, MDFP and ATOL?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, Madam Speaker. As I stated, it was, I understand, meant for secretarial services. It is dormant and will probably not be reinstated.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Selvon!

WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY - WASTEWATER BILLS - ARREARS

(No. B/177) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the poorest sections of the community who are heavily in arrears in relation to their waste water

bills, he will state if consideration will be given for them to be allowed to clear the said bills by small instalments with a view to reducing the burden thereon.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that wastewater bills have to be paid within a period of 21 days.

In the case of persons in a hardship situation, the Authority gives consideration, on a case to case basis, to the payment of charges by instalment over a period of 3 to 36 months and waiving of 10% surcharge, depending on the amount owed and the repayment capacity.

Mr Barbier: Is the Vice-Prime Minister aware that in many cases, people have not received their bills for years and now when they have got their bills, they are asked for a huge sum of money which they are unable to pay? This is the situation in so many quarters in our constituency. Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister see to it that these special cases could be seen immediately?

Mr Collendavelloo: Well, in the course of our next conversation, we will raise this case and we will report again.

(Interruptions)

We should deal with this on a case by case basis.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Selvon.

GRNW & PORT LOUIS WEST – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/178) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the inhabitants of Port Louis, particularly of the region of Pailles and of the vicinity thereof, including several other regions of Constituency No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, who are currently deprived of adequate water supply, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to when the target of a 24-hour adequate water supply of potable water will reach thereto?

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Madam Speaker, the irregular supply of water to Port Louis and other regions is a matter of concern to the Government. I am aware that the water supply in Port

Louis is limited to 10 hours daily during normal period and is reduced to about 4 hours daily during and after heavy rainfall, this being due to clogging of filters at the Pailles Treatment Plant.

I am informed that the water supply will increase to up to 15 hours daily during normal period and consumers will not suffer from the drastic water cuts due to clogging, after upgrading of the Pailles Treatment plant from its present capacity of 58,000 m³ daily to 80,000 m³ daily. This upgraded plant will come into operation by end of April 2015.

It is expected that there will be 24-hour supply in Port Louis after completion of the construction of Bagatelle dam and its downstream works hopefully, by end of 2016. The water supply will further improve with the renewal of old pipelines in Port Louis for which provision will be made in the forthcoming budget.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since the question talks about the inhabitants of Port Louis, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether consideration will be given to increasing the number of *camions citernes*, especially in those times of heavy rainfall? Because 4 hours, is creating lots of problems especially for those inhabitants of Port Louis in my constituency, the more so as we are supposed to have reservoirs which are not being filled like in Vallée Pitot.

Mr Collendavelloo: Provision is going to be made in the next budget for the purchase of additional water tankers and this will alleviate hopefully the supply of water for a certain time.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Ameer Meea.

Mr Ameer Meea: Madam Speaker, each time that there is heavy rainfall, it is the same reason that is given by the CWA, that is, filters are blocked. This has been happening since a long time. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he can commission an inquiry of experts to find means and ways so that these things be prevented in the future? Because we know that when there will be heavy rainfall, filters will be blocked. What can he do specifically on this issue?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, put up your question!

Mr Collendavelloo: From reports that I have, it is the upgrading of the water treatment which will alleviate the clogging. I am afraid, I am not an expert. They tell me this and I have no reason not to believe them.

POINTE-AUX-SABLES – WASTEWATER DISCHARGE

(No. B/179) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether he will state if he is aware of the nuisances caused by the wastewater discharge into the sea at Pointe-aux-Sables, namely an uncovered outlet from which emanates a strong unpleasant smell of which the local residents keep complaining of and that the infrastructure for the discharge of effluents suffers from a structural problem that prevents it to be properly covered where the wastewater reaches its outlet into the sea and, if so, indicate if urgent remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): The Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) has a pumping station at Holly Hook Avenue, Pointe aux Sables, where an electro-mechanical screening system at the cost of Rs10 million has been installed in December 2014. This year, the Authority will implement the next phase of the project which includes the covering of all existing infrastructure associated with the pumping station and the installation of deodorizing units.

Secondly, there is a deep ocean outfall, 800 m off the coastline, at a depth of about 35 m beneath the sea level for the discharge of treated effluents from Montagne Jacquot Wastewater Treatment Plant located at Petit Verger, near Pointe aux Sables. There is no odour emanation at the discharge point, and

Thirdly, further to complaints received in the region of Montagne Jacquot, odour mitigating measures have been implemented at the Treatment Plant in April 2014. All treatment units have been covered and deodorising units installed to capture the gas emanating from these units.

However, I have taken note of the concern raised by the hon. Member and have requested the Authority to investigate further into the matter and take immediate remedial measures.

Mr Baloomoody: In a written reply to a PQ which I put B/142, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister informed us that for Kensington the project is Rs80 m. and will last for 18 months. May we know when the work will start?

Mr Collendavelloo: The hon. Member is talking of Kensington, I do not know off hand - I had it last week.

BOLLARAM LANE, PAILLES – INHABITANTS – RELOCATION

(No. B/180) Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if he is aware that the inhabitants of Bollaram Lane, in Pailles, are currently living in sub-humane conditions and in constant danger of flooding and, if so, indicate if, as a matter of urgency, consideration will be given for the relocation thereof, as already decided by the former Government.

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr P. Roopun): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I shall reply to this Parliamentary Question.

I wish to inform the House that on the 05 February 2015, the hon. Member made representations to me with regard to the poor living conditions of the inhabitants of Bollaram Lane, Pailles. I thank her for that initiative.

I wish to add that this issue was dealt with at the level of my Ministry since August 2014.

On 12 February, I effected a site visit at Bollaram Lane with the hon. Member together with my colleague, the Minister of Civil Service Affairs; hon. Armanee and hon. Abbas Mamode, Parliament Private Secretary as well as representatives of the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the National Development Unit and the City Council of Port Louis.

Madam Speaker, during the site visit, it was noted those twelve families, lessees of corrugated iron sheets housing units situated on a private property were living in deplorable and overcrowded conditions. They were without individual electricity and water connections, and without any proper sanitation. In addition, there were four families owners of land whose housing units were located near the riverbank. In the absence of drains, all the residents of the said lane are prone to flooding during heavy rainfall.

The representatives of the National Development Unit had recommended the construction of drains to mitigate the impact of flooding. However, in view of the fact that one of the privately owned housing unit was encroaching on the access road leading to the river bank, the construction of drains could not be considered unless the housing unit is relocated.

The owner of that housing unit was informed of this predicament and he was agreeable to be part of the solution. He was, therefore, advised to arrange for his surveyor to liaise with the surveyor of the City Council of Port Louis with regard to the determination of the exact extent of land that would be required to enable the National Development Unit to proceed with the construction of the drains.

Madam Speaker, I am informed by the City Council of Port Louis that to date, the surveyor of the owner has not contacted the Council.

It is worth mentioning that, out of the twelve families, ten of them are eligible to receive support from the National Empowerment Foundation. However, they cannot be provided with housing units under the existing Schemes since they are not owners of a plot of land.

On the other hand, Madam Speaker, the City Council of Port Louis has been requested to ensure that the lessor abides to all prevailing sanitary regulations insofar as these families are concerned.

I wish to inform the House that insofar as the relocation of those families is concerned, the former Government was agreeable to relocate them subject to the site being listed as a flood prone area. Since the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre had established that Bollaram Lane is not listed as a flood prone area, this option cannot be pursued further.

Mrs Selvon: Madam Speaker, would the hon. Minister agree that, on a humanitarian ground, those families need to be relocated?

Mr Roopun: Madam Speaker, I concede that the families are living in a very difficult situation, but relocation is possible only if those persons are either owners of land or they are given a lease on a State land which by the way the NEF will be ready and willing to help and support them for another housing unit.

Mr Baloomoody: I heard the hon. Minister mentioning that these people can only be relocated if this area is declared a flood prone area. It is a fact that it is a flood prone area and it is a fact that even if we move these people, other people will come here.

(Interruptions)

Yes, because the owner of these premises is interested in only renting these houses. So, may I invite the hon. Minister, together with the Minister of Environment, to declare this area a flood prone area so that the owner is not tempted to re-rent these premises to other people, especially people coming from Rodrigues?

Mr Roopun: We will consider the option but, according to what the NDU states, if one of the houses could be relocated, a drain could be provided.

CARS (SECOND HAND) – IMPORTATION

(No. B/181) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to second-hand cars, he will state if consideration will be given for the regulations in relation to the importation thereof to be revisited in order to remove the mandatory element therein, namely, for the proposed imported second hand cars to have been first registered at least 18 months prior to the importation thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry regulates the importation of second-hand motor vehicles in compliance with the Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) Regulations 1999.

According to these Regulations, there are several conditions to be satisfied for the importation of second-hand cars. One of them is that a second-hand car must be between 18 months and 4 years from the date of first registration, at the date of shipment. This condition is, however, not applicable to a certain category of importers who are exempted from such condition. Some of them are: Government bodies, Embassies, religious and educational institutions.

Madam Speaker, the present regulations date back as far as 1999, that is, more than 15 years. In the meantime, the landscape of the motorcar business has changed drastically.

In this context, I propose to set up a Technical Committee to look into the whole matter relating to the importation of second-hand motor vehicles and to make recommendations as appropriate.

Mr Mohamed: I thank the hon. Minister for his very straightforward answer. The issue therein, if I may be allowed, Madam Speaker, is the following: it is the fact that when someone wants to bring in a car and they have to wait that the car is 18 months old. That very fact - could the hon. Minister look into it that it is coupled with the fact that other bodies are entitled to bring in cars that are less than 18 months old? It is, therefore, discriminatory in the fact that some bodies are allowed, others are not and the fact that 18 months is discriminatory for those who cannot afford to buy a new car, they have to wait for the car to be old enough to 18 months and that is the discriminatory element that I ask the hon. Minister to be able to remove from the regulations.

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, this issue will be taken into consideration by the Technical Committee.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: May I ask the hon. Minister, in relation to this Technical Committee, to give consideration to the fact that anyone who import cars should make sure that there is a stock of spareparts available because the number of cars that are imported in Mauritius are outdated and consumers are left without recourse whenever there is a sparepart missing?

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker, the Technical Committee will look into it.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Mohamed!

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – VISA REQUIREMENT

(No. B/182) Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the visa requirement for Mauritian nationals to enter the United Arab Emirates, he will state if he will consider taking up the matter with the Government of the United Arab Emirates to exempt the Mauritian nationals from such a requirement.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that Mauritius is one of the few countries in the world whose nationals do not require visa to enter 106 countries.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to inform the House that I have, in fact, taken up the issue raised by the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East not later than yesterday afternoon with His Excellency Essa Abdullah Al Basha Al Nuaimi,

Ambassador for the United Arab Emirates to Mauritius. He is currently here in the context for the National Day celebrations and I met him yesterday in my office.

Mr Mohamed: Once again, I thank this hon. Minister as well for having taken this up with the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates because those are matters that have been taken up with the Ambassador many times before. May I humbly suggest that the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs is directly contacted by the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and that the representation be made for one good reason - there are many - the number of flights that have increased from Emirates, the landing rights that this Government has allowed Emirates into Mauritius warrants the fact that we be given the special consideration that our nationals should no longer require a visa application, waiting for a passport for them to enter the United Arab Emirates? Since we have given them so much in terms of landing rights, I believe that it would be fit and proper, if not long awaited, that the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs - not this one but the Government - contacts his counterpart so that this matter be taken up not at the level of an Ambassador - who is a very nice gentleman and I know him personally - but taken up at high level, at the level of Government and, if need be, even the hon. Prime Minister could be asked to take it up with the Prime Minister, Al Maktoum, of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, as far back as 05 February 2014, a draft visa exemption agreement was submitted to the United Arab Emirates for their consideration. But I do understand that there is a labour problem. There is an apprehension on the part of the authorities there that there might be labour implications. They fear that if no visa is required from citizens from this country that labour problems might arise if people go there and stay and they might not be in a position to trace them and send them back. So, that is why things have delayed but the Ambassador has promised that he will look into the matter.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister if the nationals from the United Arab Emirates require visa to enter Mauritius, and if no, can this be used as an argument to reciprocate visa requirements?

Mr Sinatambou: Well, I don't have the answer to this question. The hon. Member can come with a substantive question and I will certainly answer.

Madam Speaker: Next question!

PLAINE VERTE MEDI-CLINIC - AYURVEDIC HEALTH SERVICES

(No. B/183) Mr O. Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the provision made in the 2012 budget for the dispensing of ayurvedic health services at the Plaine Verte Medi-clinic, he will state when the said services will be provided thereat.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, my Ministry is already providing Ayurvedic services at five health institutions and it is proposing to start these services at Plaine Verte Mediclinic as from May this year.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Baloomoody!

AIR MAURITIUS LTD. – STAFF - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/184) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether he will state if he has received representations from the staff of Air Mauritius Ltd. regarding their conditions of employment and, if so, indicate the actions he proposes to take in relation thereto, if any.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I have not received representations from the staff of Air Mauritius Ltd. However, my office has received a request for a meeting with me from the three unions of Air Mauritius Ltd. commonly known as the Air Mauritius *Intersyndicale*.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he is aware that there is a sort of an industrial unrest there due to the fact that the 14th month has not been paid and the role played by the new consultant is, in fact, a more nuisance than somebody who is assisting the casino?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am not aware but, this is a matter for the Board and the management of Air Mauritius Ltd. I am not aware, but people should also be concerned, Madam Speaker, with the competitive situation faced by Air Mauritius Ltd. with the need to maintain cost at a lower level. Of course, we are also concerned with the condition of employment of the employees but, we must safeguard the employment and at the same time, give the employees a good remuneration.

Mr Bérenger: Recently there was a very tough strike in France because Air France had created another company with less favourable conditions and so on and, I understand that Air Mauritius did that in the recent past. As a policy decision, it created another company Airmate Ltd. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether Government had the opportunity to look at that issue?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, we have a new Board of Directors, I will leave it to them for the moment to try and deal with the issue of Airmate Ltd. and the 700 or so employees who work for Airmate Ltd compared to the 2000 or so employees who work for Air Mauritius Ltd. But, we are talking about a lot of livelihoods, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Rughoobur!

GRAND'BAIE - SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE - RENT

(No. B/185) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the social security office at Grand Bay, she will state the amount of monthly rental fee payable for the building housing same, indicating the –

- (a) name of the owner thereof;
- (b) duration of the contract therefor, and
- (c) date on which bids were issued in relation thereto, indicating the –
 - (i) name of the bidders therefor;
 - (ii) prices quoted, and
- (d) if copy of the evaluation reports in relation thereto will be tabled.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: I wish to inform the House that the previous Grand Bay social security office which was rented from November 2003 to November 2014 was located at Sottise Road, Grand Bay. It occupied an overall space of 1165 square feet at a monthly rent of Rs25,000. However, the officers of the Ministry complained of inadequate office space, non-proper aeration and lack of parking facilities.

The management took the decision of relocating the building. As such, tenders were launched for the renting of office space of an area between 2,700 to 3,000 square feet within Grand Bay area.

With regard to parts (a) and (c) of the said question, I am informed of the following –

- bids were invited from owners for the renting of a building of approximately 2700 to 3000 square feet to cater for the Grand Bay social security office located within the boundaries of Grand Bay giving on a main road;
- tender was launched on 05 July 2012 through open advertised bidding;
- as at the closing date, only one bid was received from Mr I. T. The quoted price for renting of the office space was Rs90,000 per month;
- the Bid Evaluation Committee met to evaluate the only bid and found that the bid was responsive and compliant;
- on 27 November 2012 the Departmental Tender Committee met and agreed to award the contract to Mr I. T. subject to completion of some works and the necessary clearances being obtained from all relevant authorities;
- to that end, a letter of award was issued to Mr I. T. on 05 December 2012 informing him that the Ministry has approved his offer for the renting of the said office for a period of one year renewable thereafter;
- all clearances applied for were obtained. The clearance from Valuation Department had to be reassessed inasmuch as it had found that the area of the building of Mr I. T. to be less than 2000 square feet and that the monthly rent should be Rs76,000 and not Rs90,000.

As such, the Permanent Secretary did not approve the tender. Meanwhile, following the protest of the owner maintaining that the space area amounts to 3000 square feet, a second valuation was carried out and the Valuation Department maintained that the net

usable office space has been measured as per the RIC code of measuring practices and was found to be less than 2000.

Subsequently, a site visit including the valuation officer, the civil engineer and the owner was effected and the Valuation Department concluded then that an additional space of 131.88 square metres has been provided and that the rent of Rs90,000 was fair and reasonable for the said area of 3000 square feet.

On 01 September 2014, a letter of approval for renting of office space for a period of one year was issued to Mr I. T. renewable thereafter at a monthly rent of Rs90,000.

In respect to part (ii) of the question, I am informed that a lease agreement for a period of two years was signed.

As regards part (e) of the question, Madam Speaker, a copy of the valuation report is being tabled.

In respect to part(ii) of the question, I am informed that a lease agreement for a period of two years was signed. As regards part (e) of the question, Madam Speaker, a copy of the evaluation report is being tabled.

Mr Rughoobur: Can I know from the hon. Minister if at the very outset when the tender was launched there was an estimate for the project?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, it seems that the cost estimate is not mandatory in those cases as the final rental fee is determined by the valuation office.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon Rughoobur!

HOTEL INDUSTRY – EXPATRIATES – WORK PERMIT

(No. B/186) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the hotel industry, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of expatriates
 - (i) currently employed therein;
 - (ii) eligible for a work permit issued by the Board of Investment, and
 - (iii) a local hotel can appoint, and
- (b) state if his Ministry has record/statistics on the list of local professionals thereof currently appointed in the same industry abroad.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that permits for the recruitment of expatriates in the hotel industry are delivered by two institutions namely -

- (i) The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training which is responsible for the issue of work permits in areas where local expertise is scarce, and
- (ii) The Board of Investment (BOI) which issues occupation permits to professionals satisfying a set of established criteria including professional qualifications and previous experience in specific fields.

With regard to parts (a) (i) and a (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training that it has issued 222 work permits to expatriates to take up employment in the hotel industry whereas the BOI has delivered 312 Occupation Permits as professionals, as at 05 March 2015.

As regards part (a) (iii) of the question, I am informed that according to current policy, there is no formal limit on the number of expatriates that a hotel may employ provided the applications fall within the approved list of scarcity areas and are subsequently approved by the relevant authorities and the criteria set for an Occupation Permit issued by the BOI.

However, this policy is not applicable to Club Med hotels which fall in the category of Club hotels and where traditionally a quota of 100 has been set on the maximum number of expatriates they can employ, being given that it is the policy for such hotels to send local recruits to work abroad in its different Clubs around the world.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that such information is not available at the level of my Ministry.

Mr Rughoobur: I just wanted to know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he would consider restricting the number of years that an expatriate can be appointed at the senior managerial position in hotels.

The Deputy Prime Minister: What I can say, Madam Speaker, is that some hotels are employing very large number of expatriates. I thank the hon. Member for putting up the question. We will look at the whole matter with my colleague the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training and with the BOI.

Madam Speaker, I would like to say for instance, that in relation to these hotels, some people have been abusing and we need to look at it. In fact, one hotel, for instance, Attitude Hotel, which has five or six very successful resort hotels, is working completely with

Mauritian personnel, proving that it is possible if you make the effort to have a successful operation without too many expatriates.

Mr Rughoobur: If the hon. Deputy Prime Minister can consider the possibility of having, at least, among the top positions - I am made to understand that you have got the General Manager and the Resident Manager - one local professional appointed among one of these two positions.

The Deputy Prime Minister: In fact, Madam Speaker, we will look at the whole question. At the same time, we must remember that hotel promoters have invested billions of rupees in these hotels. In a way, they are entitled to have the Manager, as they choose, because they have put their money where, maybe, we have not put ours.

At the same time, we must find an appropriate balance and I promise I will look into it.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Last year, there were several meetings that were held at the Ministry of Tourism and the specific purpose of those meetings were precisely to address those issues raised by the hon. Member and spoken of by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

The issue was about identifying scarcity areas, that is, areas where Mauritians are qualified in order to do those jobs; areas where the Board of Investment also present at the meeting would collaborate with all the Ministries and all the parties concerned in order to draw out a common list with the Ministry of Labour to ensure that Mauritian graduates are given the opportunity of occupying such positions. Could the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, therefore, consider tabling that list and report that was carried out by the Ministry of Tourism in a committee where I, myself, at the time was present in order to ensure that all those graduates from Mauritius obtain jobs that they deserve?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, if it was such a good report perhaps the hon. Member himself should have put it into effect. But I will look at it.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT - INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL BOARD - COMPOSITION

(No. B/187) Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Independent Review Panel Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) number of challenges allowed by the Panel over the past five years, and
- (b) composition thereof, indicating in respect of each Board member thereof

- (i) his qualifications
- (ii) his experience, and
- (iii) the duration of his contract.

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that over the past five years the Independent Review Panel received 193 applications out of which 53 cases have been allowed by the institution and nine are still under consideration.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that action has been initiated under section 4 of the Public Procurement Act, to reconstitute the Independent Review Panel for a period of three years.

Mr Rughoobur: I would like to know from the hon. Minister if he is considering - based on the number of appeals allowed by IRP as well as the number of judicial review that you have following the decision of the IRP - the possibility of having a review of the Public Procurement Act of 2006. Is he considering a revision of the Act?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Yes, Madam Speaker. In fact, the Finance Bill would provide for certain amendments to the Act itself.

Mr Uteem: I heard the hon. Minister of Finance mention that he will be reconstituting the Board after three years. Does that mean that the existing incumbent will be kept into office until that time?

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Well, yes, until the new Board is reconstituted, the old one continues to exist. This means probably one more week.

Madam Speaker: Next question, Hon Uteem!

(EIILM) MAURITIAN BRANCH CAMPUS – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEES

(No. B/188) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Science Research whether, in regard to the Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning Management (EIILM) Mauritian Branch Campus, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as to –

- (a) the outcome of the Fact-Finding Committees set up to inquire into alleged irregularities in relation to the operation thereof;
- (b) if it has been allowed to enroll new students and offer new courses for academic year 2015, and
- (c) if the qualifications awarded thereby will be recognised and accredited.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) that there has not been any Fact-Finding Committee set up to enquire on the allegation of irregularities in relation to the operations of the Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning and Management (EILM) University (Mauritius Branch Campus).

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that EILM has, on 03 December 2013, been instructed in writing by the Commission, not to enroll any students and not to offer new courses for the academic years 2014 and 2015.

I am also informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that EILM has not enrolled any students though currently it has on its roll 68 students, out of whom 20 are following Year 2 programmes and 48 are following Year 3 programmes. These two groups of students will complete their courses in the year 2015 and 2016 respectively.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (c) of the question, I am informed by the TEC that a communiqué was issued on 11 June 2014 stating that and I quote –

“As per TEC Board decision taken at its meeting held on 21 May 2014, all academic qualifications awarded by overseas universities relating to courses accredited by the TEC and offered by post-secondary educational institutions duly registered by TEC are fully recognised”.

However, Madam Speaker, strictly speaking, it would appear that this decision should not apply to EILM. This institution cannot be recognised as an overseas university, as it has not been authorised to operate as an off-campus or offshore branch by the UGC.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, answering to a PQ last year, No. B/152, the hon. Prime Minister stated, and I quote –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, let me add that the Tertiary Education Commission has already instituted two Fact-Finding Committees to inquire into, one, the allegations regarding the clinical training of its students at D. Y. Patil Medical College, and also into the alleged irregularities in relation to the operation of EILM University, that is, the Mauritius Branch Campus.”

So, is the hon. Minister telling us that when the Prime Minister answered the PQ, that was not correct?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The information I have, Madam Speaker, is that no such enquiry has been carried out, no Fact-Finding Committee was set up.

Madam Speaker: Yes hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: I am asking the same question to the hon. Minister. Perhaps it is not a Fact-Finding Commission. But, has there been any body set up at that time by the previous Government with the help of British universities? This also we were told at that time. We have heard of certain British universities to make an investigation and to report on the workings of the Commission.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, no Fact-Finding Committee was set up to go into the irregularities of EIILM. However, at a point later in time, the Prime Minister did ask the UK audit agency for higher education to look into all our Mauritian institutions, and to come up with an audit of the standards of the institutions. But this has nothing to do with the Fact-Finding Committee.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, I am very disturbed by the comment made by the hon. Minister who said that, according to her, the degree awarded by EIILM is not to be recognised and, at the same time, the hon. Minister said that there are existing students doing a course - second year, first year - to be completed in 2015-2016. So, is the hon. Minister saying that EIILM is allowed to operate and charge students for a degree that is not going to be recognised?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, this is sadly the case. But this has not been our doing; it has been the doing of the past Government. Yet, our Ministry is right now working out a way to help these students and safeguard their interests. We have been working with the institutions in Mauritius, our public institutions, to see how we can help them. By virtue of the fact that the University of Mauritius had refused to admit the students from EIILM to its postgraduate courses, due to programmatic gaps, as they stated, alternative means will have to be identified. And what we are thinking of, is that we are trying to work out with our public institutions to see how the programmatic gaps can be tackled and compensated to help the students get a degree which would eventually get recognition.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I have taken note of what the hon. Minister has said regarding the flaws that were allowed at some stage, in the years before, with regard to EIILM. However, since students, as pointed out correctly by hon. Uteem, are still in second

year and third year, the flaw and the wrong is continuing. Therefore, if the wrong is allowed to continue by the TEC vis-à-vis those students, could the hon. Minister consider ways and means of, as soon as possible, one, giving a guarantee to those students, right now, that everything will be done and without any doubt, to ensure that their degrees are recognised?

(Interruptions)

The second option being if that cannot be given, then measures be taken immediately for the courses that they are following to halt immediately, because we cannot continue to allow the courses go on if we cannot ensure that the wrong does not continue.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Madam Speaker, I would like to stress on the point that this flaw has occurred in the previous Government, and I do agree, by no fault of the students. I have already met the students and their parents, and we are trying to see what we can do. I have no guarantee to give in this House, but I am already working out certain ways to help them out. And it is by no means our doing. What we are trying to do, is that we are trying to safeguard the interests of the students, taking into consideration certain humane factors. As far as EIILM Institution is concerned, we have ensured that they are not enrolling new students. Those who are at present in the Institution were allowed by the former Government, and now we are having to come up with measures to help them out.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask one question? Has Government, the hon. Minister, the Attorney General looked at the possibility of claiming damages from those who have been guilty in that whole affair?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We are trying, Madam Speaker, to see whether this can be done.

Mr Ramful: I have heard the hon. Minister stating to the House that there was an Audit Committee that was set up by the previous Government. Can we know from the hon. Minister whether the Committee has completed its work, and if so, will she be tabling a copy of the report to the Assembly?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, we are awaiting their final report by the end of March.

Mr Jhugroo: Madam Speaker, being given that all the students of EIILM University had been misguided by the administration of the university, would she refer this case to the Police and legal action be taken against the Directors of this university?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We are seriously considering this, Madam Speaker.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister mentioned that she has met the parents of the students. In fact, there is a lot of concern because she has not communicated to them since January. So, may I ask the hon. Minister whether she has a timeline as to when she is going to come with a solution to propose to them?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: In fact, Madam Speaker, I met the parents and they were telling me that there are students still going for the courses and yet to sit for exams. We are waiting for these students to pass, and then, with their certificate in hand, whatever the worth of that certificate, we can then refer the case to our public institutions and try to see how we can make do with the gaps that exist in their programmes.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me one minute for this last question. Can the hon. Minister inform this House why is it the case that when we were in Opposition, be it MMM or MSM, we questioned even the legality of the promoters of this University - including Minister Bodha and the Minister herself - to set up these universities, and we even quoted from Indian authorities? If the House will bear with me, this is a public notice issued by the UGC on territorial jurisdiction of universities, and I am just going to quote –

“The UGC has not granted any permission to Sikkim Manipal University and EIILM University to set up off- campus centre(s), study centre(s) or off-shore campus centre(s). As such, both, these universities cannot run courses in Mauritius through their own campuses or through franchisee agreement”.

This is very clear. Why is it now that the new Government - because this is what are all expecting: put an end to this illegal situation once for all.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I, Madam Speaker, clear out something right away. We have not allowed EIILM to pursue its recruitment of students, however, because of decision taken by the former Government the students were allowed to carry on with their courses so that they end up with a certificate that we can afterwards try to upgrade by seeking

equivalence or by trying to make do for any shortcomings in the course. However, we could not just stop straightaway, because the students would be left with nothing in hand. With the certificate in hand, we can always upgrade and compensate for anything that is missing or lacking.

Madam Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ. No. B/192 has been withdrawn. Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(4.23 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

STATE LANDS - ALLOCATION

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, in December 2014, as soon as the new Government took Office, we tasked ourselves to finding out what was the extent of the problem. As Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands, I made it a priority to investigate into the cases which were in the limelight. I caused my Ministry to draw up an inventory of the cases where State lands have been allocated in allegedly dubious circumstances.

Madam Speaker, my attention has been drawn to several cases where, blatantly, procedures have not been followed and the more so in many of these cases the conditions of the letter of reservation or the letter of intent or the Lease Agreement have been flouted, and yet, the proponents were not sanctioned.

In the face of what the in-house investigation has unveiled, I immediately initiated action to address the issues. I have, therefore, referred those cases to either the Police or to ICAC or to the State Law Office depending on the nature of the irregularity observed. So far,

my Ministry has reported 12 cases to Police for investigation with a view to establishing whether irregularities have been committed, which would constitute an offence punishable by Law and for action as may be deemed appropriate. Besides, 11 cases where letters of reservation had been issued, 12 cases where lease agreements have been concluded and two cases where Letters of Intent had been issued are currently the subject of further action. For that purpose, the advice of the State Law Office has been solicited with a view to taking back the State land, where this is legally in order. Moreover, two cases have been referred to ICAC for investigation.

All these cases referred to, involve State land of an extent of more than 150 Arpents. My Ministry is pursuing the audit exercise and necessary remedial action will be taken.

Madam Speaker, the circumstances call for immediate and drastic corrective action. I am personally chairing a Committee comprising officers from the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms and officers of my Ministry, to review the policy framework for the allocation of State land to ensure transparency and accountability in the system. In due course, the new system will be approved and disseminated to the general public.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(4.26 p.m.)

FLOODING & WATER ACCUMULATION

The Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management (Mr R. Dayal): Madam Speaker, the country has witnessed the flash floods caused by active clouds associated with a convergence zone over the Mascarene coupled with the effects of Haliba, causing water accumulation and flooding throughout the island. On average, we have had some 206 mm of rain from Saturday until this morning, weather bulletins were issued and advice given to the public in general at regular intervals.

The National Emergency Operation Command of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre was activated. The Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services jointly with the SMF and the Police carried out some 218 interventions relating to water pumping in houses and yards and attending to road accidents and rescue operations.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of reasons to explain such occurrences. These include -

(i) Climate Change.

Extreme climatic events are becoming a huge challenge for Small Island Developing Countries such as Mauritius. Observations made over decades in the region of Indian Ocean as well as in Mauritius are clear. The frequency and the intensity of extreme climatic events such as flash floods, coral bleaching, prolonged water scarcity and beach erosion are all worsening. The latest fifth Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, commonly referred to as IPCC Assessment Synthesis Report, released in November 2014, projects that extreme climatic events will worsen. A number of serious risks such as risk of deaths, breakdown of infrastructure networks and critical services such as electricity, water supply and health and emergency services and risk of food insecurity have been identified.

(ii) Poor Land Planning.

Over the last decade, it has been observed that developments have been authorised in areas without proper planning and due consideration given to ecosystem functioning. Flic en Flac is one such area which is facing inundation frequently. Port Louis is another critical area due to the fact that there is a high concentration of human settlements, which make it vulnerable. Water catchment basins are quite small and they can result in flash floods that could have high destructive potential and do not allow enough time to alert the population. Also, some of the human expansions are in flood-prone areas. For a country like Mauritius with limited land and natural resources, promoting an efficient land use planning in an environmentally-friendly manner is of paramount importance.

(iii) Inadequate Development Control.

Poor conception as well as inadequate provision of appropriate land drainage in certain areas, including recent IRS and other developments is serious issues which need to be addressed urgently. Developments in high-risk areas such as in river reserves and riverbanks have remained unchecked. In addition, very often drain exits are not connected.

(iv) Climate change considerations to be incorporated in the EIA mechanism EIA is a tool to facilitate successful climate proofing of projects or to avoid maladaptation to climate change. Consideration of climate change issues through EIA will in turn

improve the resilience of the project being assessed. This aspect will be duly addressed in the forthcoming amendments to the Environment Protection Act 2008.

Madam Speaker, a number of actions are being undertaken to address these issues as follows –

- (i) The National Disaster Scheme (NDS) 2014 is being updated. This scheme defines the roles and responsibilities of Ministries, Departments, Response Agencies, Local Authorities, Parastatal Organisations concerned, Non-Governmental Organisations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders before, during and in the aftermath of different types of disasters. In the proposed NDS 2015, the list of disasters has been extended to include heavy rain falls/floods and flash floods conditions. Wide consultation is being done on the proposed NDS 2015 with all the stakeholders concerned;
- (ii) mapping of risks and hazards at national level is being effected with a view to developing specific contingency plans for identified risks;
- (iii) a draft National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Bill has been prepared. This Bill provides for an integrated and efficient mechanism for disaster preparedness, response and post disaster recovery and rehabilitation;
- (iv) a Landslide Management Unit has been set up at the level of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport which is working in close collaboration with the JICA and the NDRRMC. The main objective of this Unit is to closely monitor and manage landslide prone areas in consultation with my Ministry;
- (v) a Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy and Action Plan, including Risk Maps in relation to inland flooding, landslide and coastal inundation for the Republic of Mauritius has been developed. These will contribute to designing robust disaster risk reduction and policies and management practices for the decades to come. Climate risk analysis, which is a central component of this project, is one of the first comprehensive climate modelling studies conducted for the Republic of Mauritius. It is imperative for the Mauritian community to build disaster-resilient architecture and has an up-to-date early warning system so as to enhance the country's preparedness in the face of disasters;

- (vi) a study on land drainage and watershed management has been carried out under the aegis of the NDU. This study comprises a feasibility study and preliminary design of the land drainage system in 12 flood prone regions. The study report has been circulated to all the stakeholders, and
- (vii) upgrading of topographic survey of high resolution GIS maps will be carried out. This will enable authorities concerned to implement risk reduction strategies and also facilitate post disaster impact assessment.

Madam Speaker, whilst a number of actions have been taken in the recent past by various authorities, there is a need to look at these problems in a holistic manner, Government is coming up with a Land Drainage Agency with the broad objectives to –

- (i) execute, monitor and maintain land drainage system in flood-prone areas, and
- (ii) control development taking into consideration land drainage and watershed Management.

In this perspective, Local Authorities and the Road Development Authority will be called to play a critical role.

Furthermore, an Early Warning System for incoming surge in the Republic of Mauritius is being worked out. This will involve development and implementation of an early warning system for incoming surges such that coastal communities in the Republic of Mauritius have at least 3 hours warning of possible incoming surges to evacuate safely.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhadain!

(4.36 p.m.)

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

MINISTER OF FINANCIAL SERVICES/DUFREY AG REPRESENTATIVES – MEETING

The Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms (Mr S. Bhadain): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I wish to make a note of personal explanation to the House with regard to the issue raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition

on 05 March 2015 during the Private Notice Question, to the effect that I had supposedly stated the day before, that I was not present at the meeting with representatives of Dufry AG on 16 February 2015.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition stated, *inter alia*, the following -

- (i) “(...) *en direct à la television* - the hon. Minister for Good Governance said he was not present, because he was not in Mauritius, he was with the Queen in London (...);”
- (ii) “(...) It is recorded. It is on ION News. Shame!”, and
- (iii) “(...) he said that he was not in Mauritius when the dinner took place on 16 February.”

Madam Speaker, in fact, I had never stated that I was not present at the meeting held on 16 February 2015 with the representatives of Dufry AG. I answered a specific question from a journalist the day before, during a press conference with regard to the ‘objection to departure’ against them by stating the following –

“Ou trouv mwa kapav blok dimounn dan Maurice sirtou kan mwa mo pa dan Maurice. Zot inn trouv monn al zwen La Reine ek sa inn publie dan zournal”.

And I had also precisely stated during that press conference that, and I quote –

“Mo pa ti dan Maurice huit dernie zour ni Attorney General.”

The meeting took place on 16 February 2015 and I left Mauritius on 21 February 2015. Following my mission in the UK, I came back to Mauritius on 02 March 2015. I was clearly not in Mauritius for eight full days, (i.e. from 22 February 2015 to 01 March 2015).

The affidavit dated 26 February 2015 which has been referred to by the hon. Leader of the Opposition cannot be rebutted as I do not even have the possibility of rebutting this affidavit by swearing a counter affidavit as would have been the case if the affidavit had been filed in proper Court proceedings.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(4.38 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger): If I can be allowed after the point of personal explanation, why I said what I said is for the following reasons –

On one day - I don't have the exact date - there was a press conference. When the press put questions about a meeting which allegedly had been held, the hon. Minister threatened the journalist concerned. The innuendo...

(Interruptions)

Yes! Yes! He threatened the journalist concerned and said: "This is defamatory." And so on and so on. If the innuendo – I listened carefully to what he said. I think I should be entitled to a point of personal explanation. I base myself on that first. The innuendo was clear that there was no such meeting, that it is defamatory to say so, and so on, and then on ION News, the way the reply came: "I was not in Mauritius", and so on, clearly the intention was to cover the whole period. It is after I put questions on what dates the Minister was outside and on what date the dinner took place, it is then that we were provided with the dates, Madam Speaker. It is clear!

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

At 4.37 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.24 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

MOTION

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS – MOTION OF THANKS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following motion of the hon. Second Member for Grand River North West & Port Louis West (Mrs D. Selvon).

"That an Address be presented to the President of the Republic of Mauritius in the following terms -

We, the Members of the Mauritius National Assembly, here assembled, beg leave to offer our thanks to the President of the Republic of Mauritius for the Speech which he has addressed to us on the occasion of the Opening of the First Session of the Sixth National Assembly."

Question again proposed.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, firstly, let me, I think like probably every Member of the House, congratulate yourself on your election and also the Deputy Speaker. Also, if I may say, I particularly appreciate the way that both of you are presiding the House. May I also, on this occasion, say how impressed I have been with the quality of the maiden speeches by Members of the House on both sides. I really have been impressed. It is wonderful for our democracy to see that such young people, the new Members are interested in our House and in serving in Parliament.

Three months, Madam Speaker, to this day since the election, I must say it has been a pleasure to work with our friends - old friends, new friends now - hon. Pravind Jugnauth, leader of the MSM, I worked before with him.

It is a pleasure to work with professionals, Madam Speaker, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo, leader of the ML; VPM Soodhun is an old friend; hon. Bodha, an old friend also, and hon. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo is even an older friend. So, it is very good, and then, Madam Speaker, the able and wise leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth. No doubt, there are tremendous expectations out there in the public, and similarly, no doubt, Madam Speaker, that we would be up to the job in Government. My feeling is that we have an excellent Council of Ministers made up of very able people. I have not seen such excellent Members for a long time and I am sure that we will deliver what the nation wants which is *vrai changement*, and no doubt, Madam Speaker, it will be so.

I returned yesterday from my first trip abroad in Berlin - ITB (International Tourism Bourse) - and I must say quite sincerely that we had an excellent fair; we had an excellent reception at Berlin, something that Mauritius has not seen recently. There has been a lot of optimism, not only on the part of Government, but also on the part of the private sector which attended the fair. There is, as I had the occasion to mention publicly, a feel good factor which is very promising for Mauritius. So much so, Madam Speaker, that Lufthansa Airways which had left Mauritius, deserted Mauritius for the last 26 years, is now coming back to Mauritius at the end of this year, not with one, but with two flights per week. This is something which is fantastic...

(Interruptions)

Lufthansa being a quality airline and Mauritius is all about quality; this is wonderful that Luftansa is coming. But we did not stop there; we had the pleasure also to meet again

Austrian Airlines, Lufthansa Group also. Lufthansa is coming from Frankfurt and I am pleased to say, Madam Speaker, that Austrian Airlines will as from October provide a twice weekly service to Mauritius this time from Vienna. So, not to end there, because the Germanic world seems to have a *côte d'amour* at the moment with Mauritius. Condor, already operating in Mauritius, will provide a fifth flight and Edelweiss from Zurich is thinking of buying new planes and of coming from Zurich as from next year.

So, we can see the change, the turnaround as far as the Germanic world is concerned *vis-à-vis* Mauritius and we know that Germans, Austrians are some of the best friendly tourists, best friendly visitors that we have, and this augurs well for the destination.

On this same subject of airlift because tourists and visitors need to get here, they have to get here somehow and we are happy to say that Air Mauritius has helped, is helping with additional flights in low season. We are talking about nine additional flights in low season from Paris, four additional flights from London, and importantly, they will be providing this flight with Emirates because there have been two complaints - both have some basis to them. The first is that there are insufficient flights sometimes; the hotels are empty and airplanes are full sometimes because there are also ethnic travellers who come. In the low season they come from everywhere and they fill up the plane seats, but they do not fill our hotel rooms. So, we need to provide for these at some point of time. The second thing also - I made a study of that - is sometimes excessive air fares are being charged because we have two or three airlines that control the routes to Mauritius and like everyone they could be tempted to overcharge. I am happy to say that we have talked to Air Mauritius and to Emirates Airline and both are going to act and react and provide a fairer deal to our visitors and to Mauritians alike.

We have greater air capacity coming for this year, which has been one of the major complaints of the tourism sector. On top of that, we have TUI coming from London and Stockholm already which will come at the end of the year from Copenhagen and Poland, not to forget, of course, India where Air Mauritius will be providing a fifth flight in the low season.

There is good news also from emerging markets so far as air connectivity is concerned. We are having one flight as from July from Mauritius to Chengdu which is a Municipal province in Central China and we are looking forward to a second weekly flight by Air Mauritius to Chengdu. We must say, Madam Speaker, that it is welcome. For some

reasons, the Municipal Government of Chengdu is substantially helping Air Mauritius to provide this air capacity. So, in fact, it is the other way round, instead of us helping it is the Chinese Municipal Government which is helping to have these flights become a reality.

Madam Speaker, another issue that we have concerns Reunion Island which is next door to us. Reunion Island has the capacity to help us with tourists by providing visitors in many of the low season months. I will finish with that section to say that Air Mauritius has agreed to provide, at a very reasonable cost, some 14,000 seats in the low season towards Mauritius.

I am saying all this, Madam Speaker, because, as I mentioned, there were two main issues that arise with the tourism industry in Mauritius. There are many other issues, but two issues which everybody is raising all the time. I wanted to show that although L'Express is saying we have been keeping quiet, in fact, I have been working and we have been addressing some of the main issues dealing with connectivity. In a moment, I will mention some other issues.

Madam Speaker, you may have seen recently in January that Mauritius had an expansive growth of about 7.4% in tourist arrivals. I am not saying we are just running after numbers - because we are not - but I am just saying that this has happened in January. There is a general feeling in Europe, with the economies improving, that most of the economies will be performing better than last year. I am sure the hon. Minister of Finance - who is not here - will be happy to know that. So, Germany will be doing better, UK is doing very well, France as well will be doing better, Italy is going to do better and these are some of the core markets that provide tourists to Mauritius. So, there is a general feeling which we saw in London, very upbeat about Mauritius. We are hoping to do at least 10% increase from UK. There is the same feeling in Germany and my colleague tells me that in France also there is a good feeling. So, there is a general feeling in Europe about the economy getting better and that is also helping to generate tourism.

Most importantly, Madam Speaker, Mauritius is now a mature tourist destination. What does that mean? In my view, it means that we have achieved diversity and we have matured well. I will talk about diversity in a moment to show how the destination has matured very well. What is changing, in our view, about the tourism industry? Can I take a few minutes to show what is the new vision of the new Government concerning tourism? Perhaps I would like to say it in two words: we need to have a customer-centric approach,

that is, the customer comes first. The customer, that is, the visitor's experience in Mauritius must be as perfect as possible. As a patriot, I see that as my major role to make sure that from the moment the visitor lands at the airport to the moment he takes back his flight, he enjoys a perfect holiday experience.

Now, we have one million tourists in Mauritius, a little bit more. If I had one million perfectly satisfied customers, I could close down the MTPA and not need to do any promotion because they would promote the country themselves. That is the importance, in my mind, of having a customer-centric experience and make sure that everything is perfect. This is why, Madam Speaker, we need to adopt a whole Government approach because the experience, in fact, cuts across many Ministries and many Government agencies.

In fact, it is important also to have a multi-stakeholder approach where every citizen is concerned. I will tell you why in a moment but, for me, above all, *le tourisme c'est l'affaire de tous*. Everybody ought to be concerned with tourism. We have 28,000 people working directly in tourism, another 70,000 people earn their living indirectly in restaurants, boat houses, agriculture etc. and that is a lot of people, maybe 100,000 families or a little less. My message to the Mauritian nation must be that we need to be concerned about the prosperity of tourism, the welcome that people get, the cleanliness of the island, the state of our tourist sites and everything concerned because if we take out tourism, we take out one billion Euro of revenue and we are taking out 100,000 jobs nearly. So, that is important, Madam Speaker.

Concerning the feel good factor, as I said, there was a 7.4% increase in January and I am pleased to tell you, Madam Speaker, that in February we have achieved 15.4% increase in tourist arrivals. That is almost a record and that is extremely good. The main markets like France, Germany and China also. The Chinese had reduced coming to Mauritius because, I think, they associated Mauritius with Ebola. But, that seems to be over and we had, I think, 76% increase in Chinese arrivals in February this year compared to February of last year.

Madam Speaker, the tourism industry will be happy to know that we are now providing very detailed statistics. In fact, we are covering 60 countries now in our statistics because our markets are open, are diversified and as at December, we were only providing statistics for the arrivals of about 30 countries.

Si le tourisme va bien, tout va bien, that is also something I used to say. Madam Speaker, it is a big mistake to think that tourism is only 120 hotel owners around the island.

That is not tourism! I explained before how many people work in tourism. The planters are concerned with tourism because they sell their produce to hotels and restaurants; fishermen certainly are concerned because fish is consumed; taxis: how many taxis are there around Mauritius? Tour operators, restaurants, shops, including duty free shops, essential products, the airlines, the airport, of course, beach-hawkers, pleasure-craft owners, bungalow owners and everyone is concerned with tourism. That is perhaps the first major point that I wanted to make.

In Mauritius, Madam Speaker, for every one thousand jobs created directly in tourism - say in a hotel - 2500 jobs are created outside. It is a very significant figure. It is more than the work average which is 1:1.4; here it is 1:2.5. So, when the hon. Minister of Finance wishes to increase employment – we have an unemployment problem – an obvious area to look at is an increase in the tourism sector. So, we have a very high job creation rate in tourism.

But, of course, Madam Speaker, there is a need today to relook at our tourism industry. In the last few years, I had lots of occasions to talk to my ex-colleague, Mr Yeung Sik Yuen. The tourism has been a little bit in the doldrums, the feeling was not good. It was becoming a sunset industry. It was slowly dying like twenty years ago we saw that the textile industry had started to become a sunset industry. Now - I don't know if it is the MSM - we want it to become a sunrise industry, Madam Speaker.

That is the change that we want to make; from a sunset industry to a sunrise industry. Because to survive, the tourism industry must attract the best human resources and the best brains in Mauritius. This is how an industry survives. If you believe that there is no future in an industry, you will not go there. You will join politics or something else. There is probably a future here. That is what you will do. So, Madam Speaker, let us make it once again a sunrise industry. I am happy to say that at the ITB, we had six important awards from different persons and what most people appreciated and what most people are talking about is the diversity, so many hotels, so many centres North, South, East and West, so much culture, so much cuisine, music, so many activities. You can dive from a plane, sky-dive, you can dive in the sea, you can swim with the dolphins or you can walk with a lion. You can hunt deer and you can go deep sea fishing and so on, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

You can fish for sharks and catch them!

(Interruptions)

And bring them on board! But this is another issue. I do not want to get into that.

Madam Speaker, we need to rebalance our priorities and look at the customer-centric approach. The more or less thing that I want to do, Madam Speaker, is a hotel grading system, so that we are able to give our own official rating to hotels. Why do we want to do that? Two reasons. Firstly, because 30%-40% of people book directly on Internet. When you book directly on the Internet, there is no idea what the website of the particular hotel will tell you. So, there is a need to achieve value for money and the person knows exactly where he is going and what is being charged. So, hotel grading system, star rating, we will do that with the minimum rate that the hotel will be charged per its category. We will also ensure that it is an obligation to display their rating so that there is no doubt at all to what type of hotel we are going. In the hotel rating system, Seychelles also is going to do exactly the same thing. We will be collaborating with my friend, hon. St. Ange, to do the same thing with Mauritius and Seychelles. It is a good way to start collaboration with Seychelles and we will do even more.

Next, Madam Speaker, there is something that has not been well understood. I want to introduce a moratorium on the opening of new hotels. That is not the same thing as a moratorium on the construction of new hotels. We all know that a hotel is not constructed overnight. It would take some time, minimum two or three years to get all the permits, the EIA etc. We start building and we will finish, in fact, in two or three years' time. So, what we are saying, Madam Speaker, is more about the qualitative statement rather than the quantitative statement. We do not think that it is going to affect the FDI because, in fact, if we were to start in a few months' time, we would finish after the end of the moratorium and it will not affect the FDI. Instead it might positively act on the FDI by encouraging FDI by purchasing of hotels which are lagging and which have not had enough money to invest because of the low returns in recent years and which need to be revamped. So, we think there is a positive effect on FDI and, as I have said, there will be no particular effect on construction, but we are making a very strong quantitative statement to people. We are not just looking after for numbers. We are not just looking at them. We want quality.

Mauritius has always been a quality destination. It has never been in the numbers game. That is why we did not have charters, right from the beginning and till now. We called them

special flights, but not charter flights. The feeling has been in recent years that we have just tried to add on hotels, we can say there is such and such growth. This year, Madam Speaker, we will get the growth without new hotels and I will explain why. To give you an idea why we need to do something dramatic, is to tell you what is the tourism revenue per tourist. That is the point. The point is not quantity, but the point is to get them to spend money here. Now, in 2014, according to official statistics, tourists spent Rs42,600 in Mauritius on average. Would you believe that in 2012, they spent Rs46,000? So, where are we going? We are bringing more tourists, but less money per tourist. This is not the way and it has to stop and that is why the moratorium which will make a qualitative statement of the intention of Mauritius to keep its hotel and the tourism sector as a quality destination. This is why it is so important.

Now, what are the other initiatives? I have to thank my colleague, the hon. Minister of Environment. We want a zero *défaut* on cleanliness. I, myself, have toured the beaches on Monday morning, I am sure my colleague is doing the same. We want everywhere to be spotlessly clean because that is a *sine qua non* and that is the basic condition for a tourist destination. Nobody goes to a *poubelle*, to a junkyard for holiday. Nobody does that and we do not want people to do that in Mauritius. In fact, I have to thank my colleague, the hon. Minister of environment, who is very active - action man - and for doing that.

We are also working with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Pamplemousses Garden which is our major tourist destination. Can you imagine going to London without going to Trafalgar Square! What happen if you go to Trafalgar Square and you see that it is a dump...

(Interruptions)

Or Piccadilly Circus! This is where the Prime Minister goes! You would not imagine doing that! So, why do we force our tourists to go to Pamplemousses Garden when it was much nicer before and is not as nice today. How can we expect that? Again, it is basic common sense and we are working with the Ministry of Agriculture to get Pamplemousses Garden back to what it was before.

(Interruptions)

Replenishing our beaches, Madam Speaker, if you go to many beaches you must be surprised, Cap Malheureux, for instance. Who cares! The beach has disappeared. Nobody has mentioned it. I am mentioning it. The Ministry of Environment is on board. We put

Rs100 m. in the last year's Budget and I don't know how much has been spent to replenish that. It is essential. What else do we have! If we do not have beaches, we will not have any hotels. So, we didn't need just to look at the beaches, we need to look at the safety and security. There are too many thefts in our hotels that must be addressed and must be given special attention. A fast track system so that thieves who attack tourists are brought to court quickly because they are an easy target. You steal something and by the time you go to Court, in a year's time, the tourist does not want to come back anyway. So, you are scot-free. This is why tourists have become in a way, a bit of a soft target and we need to reverse that to make it specially tough if you try and steal a tourist.

Something which is very close to my wishes, Madam Speaker, hotels in Mauritius very rarely give us a sense of place. It could be, let's say, in a luxury hotel in Mauritius, to take the building and put it elsewhere, it could be there also. You don't know that you are in Mauritius. That is a mistake that people are picking up now. Just now, I have just mentioned Attitude Resort. Let me mention Zilwa Hotel in Calodyne. It's a model for the rest of the island because there it develops the Mauritian culture. If you sit there for a drink you will hear the sound of drums - Africa I presume. But, you believe that you are in Mauritius and that is the sense of place that is missing. We have such a wonderful culture. So, few countries in the world can display as many cultures as Mauritius. There are so many religious festivities and there are a few countries that can do that. And yet, that is not taken advantage of by most of the hotels and that is a mistake. Because it was a long time ago when you know big hotels like Saint Geran etc, all the people wanted to do was lying on the beach. We have developed that. But, people have changed. The visitor has changed now. He wants an activity. He wants to eat well and be able to spend it. That is all about diversity.

Madam Speaker, sense of place, our music, our culture, our history, our cuisine, all these are attractions that we must use more dynamically in the tourism industry. Our nature wildlife is obviously a major part now, whether it is Casela - it is not so Mauritius, but still it is nature wildlife and all the other wonderful attractions that Mauritius has and that people love.

So, in a nutshell, Madam Speaker, tourists are looking for an experience when they travel, be it jumping from the plane, diving with dolphins, culture, learning history, these are experiences that the tourists want and that Mauritius will need to provide. Of course, you can't have all that without a pristine environment, and when you sometimes look at some of

our lagoons - and we will be cleaning; we need to clean the lagoons - people are throwing things etcetera. Without environment, there is no tourism. So, we will look at the environment again and certainly make sure that the 1.3 million Mauritians that we have - Seychelles has an advantage as it has 70,000; there is less pollution. We have 1.3 million people on a small island, and we need them to be conscious of the need for a proper and a clean, pristine environment.

That is, Madam Speaker, what I mean by customer-centric approach. We will leave no stone unturned to ensure that when a visitor lands in Mauritius, *c'est un plaisir* right through to the taxi, to his hotel, to his entertainment, to his restaurant, whether he goes to a culture, whether he goes to a family for dinner, whatever happens, that it is all perfect. And that is where the sustainability of the tourism industry lies in my humble view, Madam Speaker.

But there is an important aspect which we touched on this morning, that is, the employees. Mauritius is known throughout the world. Not so much for our beaches, but for the quality of the hospitality. Right down from Ministers to the taxi driver, to the persons in the street, we are all smiling. Some people don't like it when I smile. I keep on smiling; I like to smile. Most Mauritians like to smile. You are smiling, Madam Speaker, and there is nothing wrong with it. Please continue to smile. It is important to smile. And so, this is a major plus point. But how can you smile if the employee does not get satisfaction? If you have to work 48 hours - and I know my ex-colleague did something about it in the last Government - and sometimes even more, without overtime - overtime comes on top of that - imagine what social life you have! If you are a mum with children at home, imagine what happens; imagine what happens to your spouse. It's many long hours. In fact, there was a Remuneration Order issued by the last Government after I left, which reduced it from 48 to I think 45 hours, if I am not wrong. But that Remuneration Order had also some issues which were objected to by the tourism industry. It is a shame, because I think they could have sat around a table and gotten rid of these few issues that remained.

The result is that the Remuneration Order has been challenged in Court. It is not law and, therefore, it is still *status quo*. They are still working 48 hours *patati patata*, etcetera. Apparently, it is not law. So, nobody is applying it. So, what to do? I am proposing, Madam Speaker, to meet the hotel industry, because all this effort is being done for some reason. What is the purpose of all this? Not at all to help the hotel owners! That is not the point!

The point is that this should benefit the whole of the nation. So, I will speak to them, I want that Remuneration Order to be applied. I will consult my colleague, the Minister of Labour, and maybe we might round off some of the edges. But it is important that the Court case be removed and that the hours be reduced in the tourism industry. We need to get the smile back on the faces of the employees. They need to be treated well. There have been - and it upsets me - some reports of foreigners in the hotels; managers abusing because they are only here a year or two. They don't care; they don't have to stay a whole life here. So, they can afford maybe to be rude, to be abusive, to be rough with the Mauritian staff concerned. It has to stop! Obviously, there is always a staff role, but there must be respect. We must *réclame le respect pour les travailleurs mauriciens*. That is important also, and again I know that my colleague, the Minister of Labour, has dealt with some of these issues. That is important for me that they should be well paid. Then, the hotel needs to be profitable - we understand that; we are not crazy. They have to be respected in all areas and at all times. That does not depend on profitability. They need also - as my hon. friend just asked this morning or this afternoon - to be given the chance to rise, to take over the positions. But that is a tricky issue because obviously if you are investing Rs5 billion in a structure, you may want to have maybe someone from your group to manage it, or maybe have someone with wide experience. So, there has to be a mixture because we need people with experience overseas. But we need to give the Mauritian guy the chance. Attitude Resorts is a hotel chain that has a 100% Mauritian workforce and that is doing extremely well. So, there is a way out of the tunnel, there is light at the end of the tunnel, and we need to keep on talking and convincing people to give a chance to Mauritius. Of course, there is always the limitation that could come on work permit etcetera. So, employees is central to our tourism policy, Madam Speaker, to give everyone a chance to participate. Each region, everywhere should see the benefits of tourism because it is *l'affaire de tous*. I must mention Madam Speaker, on this aspect of tourism that, when I was there from 2005 to 2010, we had built a cruise terminal. Costa Croisière, the big chain of cruise lines, had come to Mauritius and had stopped. I am happy that they started again. They are doing seven rotations, and the Mauritius Ports Authority tells me that they estimate that each of these seven rotations of these ships take about 2,000 people, take all the *ravitaillement* or fuel etcetera from Mauritius, and it goes off on a two-week cruise around the Indian Ocean. That ship has started again in Mauritius, it is calling seven times this year, and the seven times will bring Rs500 m. of business to the Mauritian economy. It is fantastic. We have people going this week to the Miami Cruise Ship Fair in collaboration again with Seychelles - because Seychelles is sending someone -

we want to see whether we cannot have more of these ships. Imagine ten; that is Rs5 billion. That is a lot of money. So, let's get more cruise lines to Mauritius, especially since the piracy issue - that was also an issue - has now virtually disappeared, we can start to look again at the cruise ships. Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean, is one of the last oceans where we don't have enough cruise activity. We could have, and we should have, and we will have. Madam Speaker, I hope that the delegation will come back - we have sent one person - with interesting news from the Miami Cruise show.

Madam Speaker, just quickly on this issue before I end on that score concerns the low season. What is the low season? The low season is for instance in June, where you get 50% less people than you get in December. So, in December - say you get 120,000 tourists in June - you get 60,000. It is a bit better in the other months, but you could say May, June, July, August, September, these are the euro months, the shoulder months, and we need to do something there because there is a *manque à gagner*. Everyone is there, the staff is there, everyone is sitting in the hotels; we only need the tourists. From now on, we are going to promote Mauritius as an all-year-round destination where you don't just need sun.

In fact, if you have seen the Chinese around, Madam Speaker, they cover themselves completely, because they don't like to be exposed to the sun. I am sure that most people from Asia would not need to have the sun on their holiday. Same thing from Africa and the Middle East. So, we have a potential for the low season that we need to sell without the sun. But, without the sun, what do you do? You need to have all these activities that are now available in Mauritius. Why? Because we will need to become an all-year-round destination.

Madam Speaker, an all-year-round destination; that is the word. Activities in diversity! We will do it and we will get this done, as that is the way we can increase dramatically the number of tourists coming to Mauritius without having a huge number of additional hotels. I am confident, Madam Speaker, that we will do it, and we have started, as I mentioned just now. You will see a big promotion in Reunion Island, and all around you will start seeing lots of people, even in June to September, etc.

Let me come to the marketing side. Each country had its own way of marketing Mauritius. Each had a different picture, each had a different logo. In India, it was 'Marvellous Mauritius', in France *c'est 'Un Monde Loin du Monde'*, etc. So, you are talking about a global village but, in fact, everywhere it is different. In Belgium, it would be different from France, etc. We are trying to harmonise the approach, but it would not be the case for

everything. We want to, at least, have a Blueprint where you see something and you would know it is Mauritius, whether you are in Australia, in New Zealand or elsewhere. We are trying to harmonise the way that we portray Mauritius, the visuals, the messages. In fact, over the last two weeks, we had meetings with all our PR agents throughout the world, some in Mauritius, some in Berlin, to be able to achieve that.

Of course, we need to have a much greater use of the digital media. The MTPA Facebook page was closed for the last two years - probably not a good thing, you will agree, Madam Speaker. So, again, the digital era is with us, iPads and that sort of thing, and we need to get really strong on digital marketing and social media.

Finally, we will be restructuring both the MTPA and the Tourism Authority. Both, to my mind, are not today equal to the task that is ahead of them and both need to have the appropriate human resources to do the job. For me, there are no problems in Government, there are no problems in business; there are only human resource issues. That is the only real issue that anybody has. If you have the right person in the right place, you don't need to worry so much because the job will get done. And so, we will need to get the right people and the right structure at the MTPA and the Tourism Authority.

Obviously, tourists come. First thing they come to is our airport, our big new airport, which - I must say this because I have to be fair - has just won a prize from the Airport Council. This is the second most preferred airport of this type, a medium-sized airport - small to medium. But, it has cost a fortune. In fact, it cost some Rs10 billion for the terminal and a further Rs2 billion for the additional taxiway. That's Rs12 billion. I don't want to get into the Airway Coffee issue and all that. Obviously, we are finding a way - you have seen in the papers, etc.; I don't need to go into that; we are going to get our money back and increase competition so far as provision of food services is concerned at the airport.

Madam Speaker, each passenger who comes to Mauritius pays about Rs3,000 to the MRA and to the airport when he lands in Mauritius. That is a lot on a ticket; you have to pay Rs3,000. We had a report when I was Minister of Finance, complaining about the cost of the airport. But, nevertheless, the baby is there, you have to feed it. It costs what it costs, and now, we have to pay for the airport. We need to increase the numbers coming through, the captive passengers coming through as tourists, as Mauritians, who are going to pay this fee, and also, obviously, the transit passengers because the airlines land, they pay landing charges etc., and the transit passengers also are in the airport. The airport is big, it has lots of space

and it is very comfortable. It has now to be paid for, it is expensive and it can be paid for only by increasing captive passengers and increasing transit passengers. We will be making some small improvements to make it more homely and more pleasant.

Madam Speaker, I just need to say that the Airway Coffee - Airway Coffee saga - will be replaced by other operators that we are looking for. There will be a variety of suppliers, and everything will happen through public tender; not like what happened before.

We are building up a cargo hub, Madam Speaker. Phase 1 of the cargo hub, the cargo terminal; Phase 2, Freeport, Express Courier, etc., which cost around Rs500 m. each, but the important thing is that it would provide 4,000 new jobs in the south of the island, Madam Speaker. That is the important thing about the cargo hub, and we are talking about finishing it in a year's time. I hope that it will be a big success and that we can find work for all the hon. Members and, in fact, *méritocratie*, everyone who deserves...

(Interruptions)

Why not? It is part-time job! Jobs for everyone! 4,000 jobs are expected in the cargo hub that is under construction and which will be ready in a year's time.

Madam Speaker, I must say that Air Mauritius has done well to survive the hedging saga. If my memory serves me right, it lost about 200 million euros; Rs8 billion at that rate. It wasn't under my Ministry but under the Prime Minister's Office. It came under my Ministry after it had lost that money. But it has done well to survive because no additional funds were put into Air Mauritius. We must say that it has done well to survive, but it was facing challenging issues, Madam Speaker. The weakness of the euro! It will be good if we travel to Paris on holiday, but for Air Mauritius there was not only the weakness of the euro but the weakness of the cross rate between the euro and the US dollar. The cross rate, that is, the value of the two when you exchange them, was selling at 136 a few months ago; it is now 110. So, it has lost 25%. What does that mean? It means that Air Mauritius, which receives something like 40% of its income in Euros, and another 45% of the expenses in dollars. What does that mean? Less euros, more dollars to pay, Madam Speaker! That is why at the moment - I also answered a question about that - we have to be careful; it is not *bonhomme noel*. We have to be careful with the airline. It is serving the country and it needs to continue to face the competition because the country also needs new airlift. The real issue is the weakness of the euro vis-à-vis the dollar, which will impact - and the public opinion needs to know that - on

the financial performance of Air Mauritius. So, it is going to face very challenging times, Madam Speaker, in particular as it pays its fuel in dollars. And also, we have the issue of these inefficient planes that will be replaced; two in 2017, two in 2019, and two in 2020.

(Interruptions)

It's a good thing, Madam Speaker, we did not have the *métro léger*. We nearly had the *métro léger*, but it's a good thing it did not come.

These airplanes which are fuel efficient, about 25% using less fuel than the present airplanes in use at the moment, whatever the other issues are...

(Interruptions)

Yes, it's a good thing. We nearly had the *métro léger*; it was a question of weeks, I think. Anyway, it did not happen.

(Interruptions)

Blié. Blié!

So, that is, Madam Speaker the situation at Air Mauritius. It would inevitably be exposed to more competition because the new flights that we are having; it does not require any further extension of agreements we have with other countries. We already have a large number of agreements; they are called BASAs, Bilateral Air Services Agreements. We have a large number and people from these places are entitled to come to Mauritius from Australia, from everywhere. So, Air Mauritius will face competition. It is inevitable and it needs to be prepared for that.

Madam Speaker, I will now come quickly to the port, Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd. 1,300 employees, Madam Speaker, generally well paid but often unsatisfied. We are going to spend over the next two years Rs1.5 billion in capital expenditure buying two ship-to-shore cranes. We shall take it, I think, 2506 ship-to-shore cranes. They are called super post-Panamax. We are buying 6 huge machines that transport containers and stack them five storeys high for additional efficiency, etc. That is the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd. However, let me say one thing, efficiency is an issue. We need to move from about 19 to 20 container moves per hour to come at 25. We hope to reach that with the equipment

being installed in one year's time so that we reach, as I mentioned, 25, which will be great for the region because we have competitors.

Again, the port, Madam Speaker, is a bit like the airport. You want to buy chocolate, it has to be imported. It comes from the port probably, but the transshipment, the containers that are moved from a ship to shore and then put back on another ship, that anybody can do that. We have competitors. Believe it or not, Reunion Island is a competitor, now, for our port. Durban remains a competitor. Madagascar could come along. Seychelles is trying to compete with us. So, we have competitors and the employees need to understand that. We need efficiency and we need profitability to be able to reinvest in the port and that is important. Labour relations are important. Efficiency is important in the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd.

Madam Speaker, I am not blaming anyone, but if you compare 2012 to 2014, we have an increase of more than 30% in labour cost. 30% in labour cost and hon. Shakeel Mohamed knows this fully well. We have 30% increase in labour cost. Can you imagine! Business is virtually the same, revenues are virtually the same, but labour cost - God knows, who had a bright spark! Perhaps you would tell us one day who had a bright spark! Overnight, they increased the salaries, huge amount, in the Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd. So, now people have to understand that the labour ...

(Interruptions)

Yes, negotiations, good negotiations!

Now, this happened and employees need to understand that we are happy to pay, but we need efficiency in return otherwise transshipment, *blier transshipment, bye-bye transshipment!* We have already lost one major client; we could lose more and if that happens, it is going to put the whole port's future in question and I am saying we are investing Rs1.5 billion in Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd, but in the Mauritius Ports Authority, we will put nearly Rs9 billion over the next five years, in the future of the Port's employees, their future, the future of Port Louis. Everything depends on the port. The port has the potential to make Port Louis even more prosperous. Even if we move to Highlands, Port Louis will continue because of bunkering; because of *avitaillement*; because of ship repairs; because of the ocean economy; because everywhere around people are finding petrol and they need maybe storage, maybe they need expertise. All these can be provided out of the port of Port Louis if we play our

cards right. So, we need to play our cards right. Government is going to put a lot of money. We need to have in return the efficiency and responsible labour force that will make this happen for themselves, for their families and for the country, Madam Speaker.

We also have a management issue at Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd. that we need to resolve. Insufficient, in my view, I mentioned, human resources in tourism; human resources also at Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd and we need to deal with to ensure the future of the company.

Madam Speaker, I mentioned a little bit about the MPA, what we are doing. We are extending the quays. That is going to cost us Rs4.3 billion. Dredging – not Boskalis, this time – another Rs1.2 billion and a big tug Rs300 m. So, planning the port; making sure that the land is used correctly. Thank God, we are getting the land back from Neotown. We will see whether Jin Fei also can collaborate on this and how we can have the whole area at the port to serve the interest of the nation. Some of the most valuable lands in Mauritius are around the port.

Madam Speaker, we would move from about 500,000 equivalent containers capacity at the moment to 750,000 in two years' time and we hope – like I mentioned the Airport and the tourism – that the port also will contribute substantially to job creation. That is the most important thing I can do for someone, Madam Speaker. It is to give him a job. Who wants a son or a daughter at home who is not working? That is a disaster! So, let's try and concentrate and agree on job creation. Let the tourism, the airport and the port altogether contribute to job creation in a major way, Madam Speaker. When it will happen, then we will put back again, Madam Speaker, the slogan of l'Alliance Lepep, '*résultat lor résultat*' because this is what it is all about. It is to give value for money to the people who have elected us and who have trusted us and I must say for the PMSD, it is the third time and we are humble about this. We are obviously pleased about it, but it does also translate into our responsibility with our brothers from the MSM and from the ML also to provide the sort of response to the needs of the nation, that the nation expects, Madam Speaker; meritocracy, equal opportunity, giving everyone a chance whatever his community. This is what we are doing and we must admit it. If we look at the appointments, this is what is happening. Hard work! Nothing comes without hard work. Honesty, Madam Speaker, it is very important that people of integrity and honesty are in Government because we are dealing with public money. It is not my money. We are talking about billions in the port, it is not my money. I

have never thought it would be my money. If I have some money, it is mine; I don't want someone to steal it, but that is not my money and I would not ever think of taking it. So, honesty and integrity is an important issue, Madam Speaker, for all those who wish to lead the nation; make a difference between our private assets and State assets.

As far as efficiency is concerned, so many of our institutions exist, but are not efficient. So many! My ex-colleague, hon. Mohamed has complained as to why the Youth Employment Programme was under the Ministry of Finance, not under another Ministry. Because it was not efficient when it was there! Hardly anyone started to have a job and when we did it, 8000 people! I am not complaining. It is not his fault. It is just that so many institutions are just not efficient. Is the National Productivity Council - which was under my Ministry - productive? Probably not! That is the crux of it. Many institutions are not efficient. We need to act with dynamism, sense of purpose. We have a vision. I commend all those people – coming from the PMSD, obviously the MSM and ML who wrote the Government Programme. It is rare that you see a programme so down to earth and addressing directly the needs of the nation. I am happy that this is a Blueprint. It is not a difficult Blueprint because there are no big words and you don't know what action lies under that. No!

To my mind, it is a simple document that provides a sense of purpose, a sense of direction to this Government's action, Madam Speaker. And obviously, everything has to be done in patriotism. We all love our beautiful country. Some of us, who have lived overseas, would come back here. Because of our love for the country that we are doing all this.

Madam Speaker, I have taken enough time of the House to say that all the issues concerning my Ministry, but the list of the issues that I mentioned are the core values that guide this Government's action and will continue, with God's help, Madam Speaker, to guide this Government's action for the next five years.

Thank you very much.

(6.23 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr Bérenger): Madam Speaker, as tradition has it, we start by congratulating you for your election as the first lady Speaker in our Parliamentary history and also by congratulating the young Deputy Speaker, the youngest Deputy Speaker

we had in our history also. Let me also welcome all the new elected Members of this Parliament.

Madam Speaker, the Government Programme 2015-2019 constitutes un shopping list de mesures presque complet, un shopping list with which we have no major quarrel, une liste de déclaration d'intentions qui ne nous pose pas de problème.

Mais, Madame la présidente, cela n'est guère étonnant, puisque ce *Government Programme* reprend largement ce que l'Alliance du *Remake 2000* avait adopté comme programme et que l'Alliance MMM-Parti Travailleiste avait, à son tour, adopté plus récemment. Je parle de programme, Madame la présidente. Mais ceci dit, il est fort à craindre que deux mesures fondamentales contenues dans ce programme gouvernemental restent lettres mortes, comme elles le restèrent en 2000-2005, malgré deux *Select Committees*. La réforme électorale d'abord, Madame la présidente, certes, on nous a promis « une dose de proportionnelle », mais on nous a aussi dit dans le manifeste électorale de l'Alliance MSM-PMSD-ML que, je cite –

« Le système de Best Loser sera maintenu. »

Et mardi le 05 mars dernier, ici même, le Premier ministre nous a dit qu'il est de l'intention de son gouvernement de réintroduire le recensement communal...

(Interruptions)

Well, it is good ! You will have plenty of opportunities to correct that because this has been reported in the press and I checked as best as I could...

(Interruptions)

Well, it is a good thing!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: Because as I said, I waited for a response and this is why I am mentioning it.

(Interruptions)

Yes, I know that it is hon. Mohamed who said it, but I also learnt about the reaction of the hon. Prime Minister. If it is not so, I will be the happiest man!

(Interruptions)

Good, very good! Because I was going to remind the House that we took that progressive step more than thirty years ago.

(Interruptions)

Well, let us leave the affidavit for later on.

(Interruptions)

I will deal with the affidavit later on, but now it is about electoral reform and I am sure that the Rt. hon. Prime Minister is perfectly aware that putting into practice such an issue, with which I disagree fundamentally, would, in fact, open a dangerous pandora's box. We must all be aware of that and it is in the interest of the population that the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, after his reaction a few minutes ago, clears the air completely on that because, opening that pandora's box, the first victim would be any serious electoral reform. That was the first issue I was very worried about, especially after what was reported last Tuesday, Madam Speaker, first point, electoral reform. But I am still in very strong doubt. I hope that time proves me wrong, but I am worried that, as in 2000-2005, electoral reform *demeurera une lettre morte*. I hope, I repeat, that time proves me wrong.

And also the same thing, second point on which I hope time proves me wrong, but I am worried because of the past, that is, une loi pour contrôler le financement des partis politiques et des élections. Certes, Madam Speaker, on nous a promis dans le Government Programme 2015-2019 un Financing of Political Parties Act. Mais là encore, c'est ce que le manifeste électoral puis le programme du gouvernement de l'Alliance MMM-MSM promettait en 2000-2005 et on connaît malheureusement la suite.

Therefore, on these two issues - electoral reform and a law to control party finances and elections, I am worried that, like 2000-2005, ces deux mesures fondamentales risquent fort de demeurer lettres mortes. Je note, par ailleurs, Madame la présidente, que deux mesures, là encore fondamentales, me semblent avoir changé de nature – mais là encore - I will listen carefully to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister entre le programme électoral présenté par l'Alliance MSM-PMSD-ML et le Government Programme qui est devant nous.

D'abord l'ICAC, Madame la présidente - dans le manifeste électoral, on nous avait promis à la page 44 un nouveau *Financial Crime Commission* qui enquêterait elle-même - a

new one spelt out; it is in the programme - sur les différents types de fraude. *I am quoting the electoral programme* et qui engloberait – *the expression used in French* – l’ICAC.

Par contre, je note à la page 35 du *Government Programme, Madam Speaker*, on nous promet cette fois un *Financial Crime Commission* qui va seulement *oversee* l’ICAC.

This is what is spelt out in both the electoral programme and in the Government Programme. So, we have every right to request clarification, Madam Speaker, et surtout que dans l’interval l’ICAC, post-élection, a pris un très mauvais départ et la FIU aussi. Premier point où je souhaite clarification entre ce qui est dit dans le programme électoral et ce qui est dit dans le *Government Programme*.

Le deuxième point concerne la police. Tout au long de la récente campagne électorale, Madame la présidente, l’alliance MSM/PMSD/ML avait promis que les policiers auraient dorénavant le droit de se syndiquer, c’est-à-dire, de former des *trade unions*. Mais dans le *Government Programme* - j’espère qu’encore une fois les clarifications viendront - il est dit à la page 21 que, *I quote* –

« *Police officers will be allowed to syndicate to safeguard their interests.* »

“To syndicate”, whatever that means! Not to form full-fledged trade unions. It would be therefore very much to the advantage of everybody concerned that it is clarified, as promised, that the Police officers will be allowed to organise full-fledged trade unions and not simply to syndicate – whatever that means – to safeguard their interests because there are many countries where Police officers are not allowed to form full-fledged trade unions but they are allowed to syndicate to defend their common interests. There is a fundamental difference and I hope there also that the hon. Prime Minister clarifies that point.

(Interruptions)

Well, I am listening to you because if you promised the Police officers the right to form a full-fledged trade union, well, you must think through! We are entitled to ask you. Yes! I hope you do reply to that question because promising the Police officers a full-fledged trade union means what it means. I must say that the reaction of the hon. Prime Minister I feel proves me right that what we are talking about is not a full-fledged trade union but a syndicate, whatever that means, without - as I think from a sitting position the hon. Prime Minister has said - the right to strike! So, let us clarify that point! What was said during the electoral campaign and what is said in the *Government Programme*, it is in the interest of one

and all and not just the Police officers but, it is in the interest of everybody that the point be fully clarified, Madam Speaker.

I would wish, now, to speak on what I find missing from the Government Programme. First of all, as a patriot, I find it unacceptable *qu'on ait complètement oublié Tromelin dans le Government Programme* - later on, I will come to the Chagos Archipelago - *pas une mention, pas un mot sur Tromelin*.

Il y a aussi l'affaire MedPoint, pas un mot là aussi. Certes, Madame la présidente, il y a une affaire en cour mais la population a le droit de savoir enfin toute la vérité sur cette affaire MedPoint. Surtout que l'on sait maintenant que tout avait commencé avec le Dr. Jeetah au ministère de la Santé mais aussi qu'il y a eu un long communiqué du DPP pour expliquer pourquoi, de son point de vue, il fallait poursuivre au criminel l'honorable ministre Pravind Jugnauth. De mon point de vue, *whatever happens in Court, whatever way ICAC conducts the case in Court*, de mon point de vue, une vraie commission d'enquête sur toute l'affaire MedPoint aurait été à l'avantage et serait à l'avantage non seulement du pays tout entier mais aussi des personnalités concernées qui n'ont rien à se reprocher, Madame la présidente.

Il n'y a pas eu non plus un mot dans le *Government Programme* sur l'affaire Jin Fei ni sur l'affaire Neotown. Pas un mot, aucune référence à ces deux affaires, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

These are facts! We are entitled to want to know, when we look at the Government Programme, what is going to happen in the case of Jin Fei and in the case of Neotown. Pas un mot non plus, Madame la présidente, sur la commission d'enquête sur la MTC, la Gaming Authority et la Police des jeux. And yet, we know la Police des jeux for example, who was at the Head of la Police des jeux until recently. No mention at all on this issue was made in the Government Programme, Madam Speaker. Pas un mot non plus sur l'abolition des special funds créés et utilisés abusively par l'ancien régime et qui viennent d'être abusively used à nouveau depuis les élections dans le cas du diesel et de l'essence. Alors que ceux qui sont au gouvernement aujourd'hui, avec raison, n'avait pas fini de critiquer l'utilisation abusive de ces special funds.

On ne nous a pas dit non plus ce qui va arriver exactement à la Banque de développement et à la Banque des petits copains, *the Mauritius Post and Cooperative Bank Ltd*. Au contraire, rien n'est dit dans le *Government Programme* et nous voyons des zigzags sans fin de la part du ministre des Finances depuis les élections. Nous avons droit de chercher dans le *Government Programme 2015-2019*, qu'on nous dise qu'est-ce qui va se passer. Dans les deux cas on nous promet une nouvelle banque pour les petites et moyennes entreprises, une semaine après on nous dit non la banque de développement va continuer mais ceci, cela. On n'y voit plus clair. Et nous sommes en droit de vouloir savoir qu'est-ce qui va arriver exactement dans le cas du *Mauritius Post and Cooperative Bank Ltd* qui est une vraie pandora's box explosif et la Banque de développement.

Il n'y a aussi pas un mot sur le scandale de *hedging* à la State Trading Corporation et à *Air Mauritius* ! Dans un passé pas tellement lointain, passé aux oubliettes, Madame la présidente, alors que cela a coûté des milliards aux consommateurs et au pays et nous avons tout simplement laissé ça passer aux oubliettes. Je donne là quelques exemples, *Madam Speaker, from what I find missing and we are most interested to have answers on these issues.*

A few other remarks, Madam Speaker, sur la question là aussi fondamentale de notre souveraineté sur les Chagos. Certes à la page 44 *we read, Madam Speaker* –

“Government is much concerned at the lack of progress made to date to resolve the long-standing dispute over the Chagos Archipelago. Every effort will be made to speed up diplomatic talks with the UK and US Governments and actively seek the support of the international community in this respect.”

Très bien! *But, I must say*, il est de mon devoir de dire que ce que j'ai obtenu du Premier ministre comme réponse et réaction quand j'ai soulevé la question de notre souveraineté sur le Chagos par voie d'une *Private Notice Question (PNQ)* le 26 février dernier, *disturbs and deeply worries me* ! Nous avons perdu beaucoup de temps - je veux dire Ile Maurice a perdu beaucoup de temps - a raté beaucoup d'occasions depuis que le président Obama a succédé au président Bush, depuis que Gordon Brown a succédé à Tony Blair. Nous nous sommes engagés dans cette contestation à La Haye en passant par le tribunal sur les droits de la mer, *I must say I repeat* que ce que j'ai obtenu du Premier ministre *deeply disturbs and worries me and I hope that we will find a way forward on that issue.*

Also on Africa, Madam Speaker, et l'importance capitale de l'Afrique pour notre avenir économique, on that we all agree, all of us. But, I join with those who have criticized the fact that we are supposed to give Africa toute sa place dans notre stratégie, Madam Speaker, alors qu'en fait nous ne sommes tout simplement pas sérieux, nous je dis le gouvernement précédent et so far this present Government also. Nous ne sommes tout simplement pas sérieux. J'avais critiqué le former Prime Minister parce qu'il ne s'était pas rendu personnellement à l'investiture au swearing in ceremony du nouveau président Malgache et moi, à l'invitation du nouveau président, j'étais là-bas. What a wrong signal to send! Madagascar, un pays voisin, un pays frère, un pays de peuplement pour l'île Maurice est notre avenir, est dans une large mesure lié à l'avenir économique de Madagascar. He did not turn up !

Mais si je le critiquais pour cela, le mois dernier ce nouveau gouvernement a brillé par son absence à l'investiture d'un nouveau président du Mozambique. Alors que le Mozambique encore une fois, un pays voisin, un pays de frère, un pays de peuplement et un pays avec un avenir économique immense. Le précédent gouvernement avait raté l'occasion malgache, le nouveau gouvernement rate l'occasion mozambicaine.

Nous devrions commencer à être sérieux en ce qui concerne l'Afrique et son importance pour nous. Et ce qui m'inquiète additionnellement, c'est que non seulement le nouveau gouvernement rate cette occasion au Mozambique mais quelques jours avant, avait aussi raté un sommet crucial de l'Union Africaine. *No one was there! No Minister! Personne!*

Let us stop talking about Africa. Its importance for our economic future and yet nous ne traitons pas l'Afrique au sérieux malheureusement, Madame la présidente.

A la page 20 du *Government Programme*, on nous confirme qu'une commission d'enquête sur la drogue sera nommée. Mais, encore une fois, ce sont des éclaircissements avant tout que je cherche. Mais on ne nous dit pas quels seront ces *terms of reference*. Sinon dans le *Government Programme*, ce sera *on drug trafficking only*. Bien sûr, le combat contre les trafiquants de drogue est crucial et prioritaire. Bien sûr! Mais nous devrions donner à cette commission d'enquête *the right people in the right place*. Nous devrions donner à cette commission d'enquête la possibilité de faire des recommandations sur tous les aspects de ce problème extrêmement important, Madame la présidente.

Dans le cas des marchands ambulants de Port Louis, surtout, on nous promet à la page 18 and *I quote* –

“Government will address the longstanding problem of *marchands ambulants* and provide alternative attractive locations to enable them to continue their trade.”

Mais, Madame la présidente, ce que nous avons reçu comme réponse ici même du ministre concerné et du gouvernement en général manque – de mon point de vue – totalement d’ambition et d’imagination et ne revient pas sur ce que nous avons fait en 2000 et 2005. Ce que nous avons entendu comme réponse, c’est qu’il y a deux sites – en fait il y a trois – qui vont être réaménagés etc. mais cela ne va pas très loin. Nous devrions reprendre le projet de *hawkers palace*. Bien sûr, beaucoup d’eau a coulé sous les ponts depuis, mais nous devrions revoir le projet de *hawkers palace* et il y a d’autres possibilités à Port Louis. Je trouve que ce qui est proposé jusqu’à présent manque d’imagination et d’ambition.

This is an area where we must work together: Government and the Municipality. Otherwise, we won’t move forward and we will not solve this issue.

Dans le cas de la démocratie régionale, Madame la présidente, en 2000 et 2005 toujours, nous - je veux dire le gouvernement MMM/MSM - avons garanti une vraie autonomie régionale à Rodrigues. En inscrivant cette autonomie régionale dans la constitution elle-même, nous avons voté une loi superbe et vraiment démocratique sur les municipalités et les *district councils* mis sur un pied d’égalité. Le régime précédent malheureusement a tout ruiné avec la loi Aimée, une loi rétrograde et scélérate. Mais ce qui me déçoit, Madame la présidente, c’est qu’au lieu de révoquer la loi Aimée - toute la loi - pour la remplacer par une loi reprenant les avancées de 2000 et 2005; reprenant l’essentiel de la loi que nous avons adoptée en 2000 et 2005, et traduisant cela dans les faits, au lieu de cela, Madame la présidente, on nous promet seulement à la page 39 du *Government Programme* que, *I quote* –

« *The Government will amend the Local Government Act* »

C’est *unamendable* ce monstre que le ministre Aimée a produit ou *we could throw it in the basket and come with the then new law* reprenant l’essentiel de la loi que nous avons votée en 2000 et 2005. Enfin, Madame la présidente, à la même page, le *Government Programme* nous dit que and *I quote* –

« *Private Television will be permitted* »

Le choix du mot. 'Permitted' pas 'facilitator' ou même encourager la télévision privée. Alors qu'on se souvient que l'ancien régime était, lui aussi favorable à la télévision privée, pour ensuite s'assurer dans la pratique que cela ne se ferait pas.

Mais, en fait, we all know. If Government does not have the political will to help the birth of private television, that birth will not occur. This is what the previous Prime Minister was doing, pretending to be in favour and then keeping the MBC as it is and seeing to it ...

(*Interruptions*)

...that private television will not take off. Therefore, I urge Government not just to permit private television, but to facilitate and even encourage private television in Mauritius, Madam Speaker.

Having said what I have said on the Government Programme and sought clarification on a good number of points, Madam Speaker, après certaines choses qui ont été dites ici à l'occasion des débats sur le *Government Programme*, vous me permettrez de revenir sur ces choses-là – le passé récent.

Le MMM, Madame la présidente, était en alliance avec le MSM dans le cadre du *Remake 2000*. Mais à un moment, nous avons estimé pour des raisons sur lesquelles je ne m'étendrai pas ici, le MMM a décidé de mettre fin au *Remake 2000*. Le Remake dernière nous, Madame la présidente, le MMM a eu à choisir entre aller seul aux élections générales ou aller aux élections avec le Parti Travailleiste. Nous avons beaucoup hésité - tout le monde le sait ...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bérenger: Nous avons beaucoup hésité, Madame la présidente, à cause de tout ce qui s'est passé entre 2005 et 2010. C'est cette hésitation de notre part qui explique les *on and off*. Mais le Parti Travailleiste a accepté notre programme et une épuration sévère de ses rangs. Quant à nous, Madame la présidente, nous n'avons jamais défendu quoi que ce soit, ce qui s'est passé de 2005 à 2010 quand le Parti Travailleiste et le PMSD ont gouverné ensemble

ni après 2010. Nous n'avons jamais défendu quoi que ce soit ni ce qui s'est passé après 2010, après que le MSM ait porté à nouveau le Parti Travailleiste au pouvoir avec le PMSD.

As far as the MMM is concerned, Madam Speaker - you will allow me to say that - the aim was to kick the former Prime Minister upstairs to the Réduit and to *nettoyer et redresser le pays* with a new ...

(Interruptions)

Shut up!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please don't interrupt!

Mr Bérenger: He is supposed to be a Whip!

...and to *nettoyer et redresser le pays* with a new Prime Minister who would have kept his prerogatives as Prime Minister. Madam Speaker, a lot of hysteria then, and here in this House, was whipped up around *la deuxième république*, and I must say that the former Prime Minister himself went on and on to give the impression that he would indeed keep *l'essentiel du pouvoir*. As per the written agreement signed on 20 September 2014 between ...

(Interruptions)

Of course the Rt. hon. Prime Minister can! I have one with me, and with great pleasure I'll let him have it! But I'll quote from it before, because it seems that he has not read it. I would wish him to read it because I am serious about that.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No cross-talking please! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, proceed with your speech please! No cross-talking!

Mr Bérenger: But I have to respond positively when the Rt. hon Prime Minister asks for a copy! I am not being negative; not at all! I was saying, Madam Speaker, that as per the written agreement signed on 20 September 2014 between the MMM and the Labour Party, and which was made public, which was circulated and put on Internet and so on, this was not to be, that is, the former Prime Minister was not to keep *l'essentiel du pouvoir*. This was not to be. In particular, I would advise the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to have a careful look at - I'll give him a copy - sections 4(a) 'Powers of The President' and 4(b) 'Powers of The Prime

Minister' of that written agreement, which clearly spells out in writing, Madam Speaker, and I quote –

“The powers, responsibilities and prerogatives of the Prime Minister would remain as current...”

Madam Speaker, at least someone who did not fall into this hysteria that was whipped up - somebody like Maître Raouf Gulbul - took the trouble to read carefully that written agreement and gave his opinion. I quote Maître Raouf Gulbul -

« le Premier ministre détiendra tous les pouvoirs. C'est le Premier ministre qui détiendra le vrai pouvoir sous la Deuxième République, comme préconisée par l'alliance PTr/MMM. »

(Interruptions)

I am being objective, Madam Speaker! *C'est ce qu'a affirmé le légiste Raouf Gulbul dans Le Grand Journal, animé par Nawaz Noorbux, et repris par Le Défi Quotidien du 06 November 2014.* And it is indeed with great pleasure that I'll provide the Rt. hon. Prime Minister with a copy of that written agreement, which was made public and circulated on Internet and otherwise. But it happens *dans l'histoire* that hysteria takes over at a given point, and this is indeed what took place, helped along, as I said, by the former Prime Minister himself, because for his electoral purposes he thought fit to give the wrong perception of what was provided and what we meant to do, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, without playing as being wise after the event, I am prepared to say *que le MMM a eu tort et aurait dû aller seul aux dernières élections, malgré le risque qui existait de voir le Parti travailliste et le MSM, si nous avions décidé d'y aller seul ...*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please ! Order, please !

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: They can say that now!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can we have some order in the House, please?

(Interruptions)

I am asking hon. Members to have some order in the House!

Mr Bérenger: Now they can say that! But I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, when he was humiliated, insulted in front of Government House in 2005, somebody would have told me that the same gentleman would help bring Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam to power in 2010, we would have had the same kind of reaction, Madam Speaker!

(Interruptions)

I explained! I think he has heard what I have said, and I'll provide him with a copy of the agreement.

(Interruptions)

As I said, without playing at being wise after the event, I am prepared to say that we should have gone alone, *malgré le danger qui existait*. Madam Speaker, let's be fair ! *Le fait est que si le Parti travailliste avait fait alliance en 2014, comme en 2010, reconnaissons-le, tout aurait continué à aller très bien!*

(Interruptions)

Tout aurait continué ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please ! Can we have some order? All hon. Members had the opportunity to talk. Now, allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition to talk!

Mr Bérenger: *Tout aurait continué, Madam Speaker, à aller très bien pour madame la sirène, et tous ...*

(Interruptions)

... les coffres-forts et comptes bancaires auraient soigneusement gardé leurs secrets !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker : Can we have some order !

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Good luck, Madam!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I am on my feet! Would you, please, allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition to pursue with his speech? Each one of you had the opportunity to talk! Now, we need some order in the House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: One can understand, Madam Speaker! It is not difficult to understand! So, Madam Speaker, after all this ...

(Interruptions)

Is this parliamentary? The gentleman who uttered these words ...

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member knows what he said!

Madam Speaker: Can I know what words were uttered and by whom?

Mr Bérenger: Well, if you did not hear 'bullshit', what can I say!

(Interruptions)

Ki non sa ! Mo pena zoreille !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Who said that ?

Dr. Husnoo: I have never said it!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, sit down! I am on my feet! Please, sit down when I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: You can't even express yourself. I am not saying you said that!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please proceed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. *Alors*, as I said, Madam Speaker...

(/Interruptions)

Bann lâches! From a sitting position, they don't even have the guts to say he said it.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry! Please!

Mr Bérenger: Therefore, Madam Speaker, all this said, *finalement, tant mieux pour ce qui est arrivé. Le peuple a kicked the former Prime Minister, non pas upstairs, mais out.*

(Interruptions)

Not even downstairs, out! Même si nous, au MMM, avons pris un *collateral kick*.

Madam Speaker, je terminerai en disant quelques mots sur ce qui se passe déjà dans le pays depuis les élections générales de décembre dernier. Soixante jours de cela à peine, et à la lumière de ce qui se passe déjà dans le pays, nous devons déjà relire le *Government Programme 2015-2019*. Car déjà, *Madam Speaker*, les masques tombent, la désillusion s'installe. *These are facts, Madam Speaker*. Je ne dis pas cela pour m'en réjouir ou pour jouer au prophète de malheur, mais les faits sont là déjà. Il y a eu les nominations que l'on sait, et l'affaire Gayan/Sumputh. Il y a eu le très mauvais départ postélectoral pris par l'ICAC et la FIU. Il y a eu l'abus des *Special Funds* dénoncés dans un passé récent. Il y a la perception que la bavure policière continue de plus belle. Il y a eu l'affaire *DPP* où certains font preuve d'une mauvaise foi révoltante, alors que d'autres se laissent emporter par leur *dislike* bien justifié du *DPP* actuel, au point de confondre la personne du *DPP* actuel avec le poste fondamental et constitutionnel du *DPP*.

Plus récemment, il y a eu toute l'affaire, trois VVIPS, Gooljaury, Dufry ; la liste est longue. Et dans l'intervalle, Madame la présidente, rien n'a changé du côté de la MBC/TV. C'est pourquoi 100 jours après les élections de décembre déjà les masques tombent, la désillusion s'installe, malheureusement.

Madame la présidente, ce qui a toujours compté et qui compte avant tout pour le MMM, c'est son programme. Seuls...

(Interruptions)

Stupidity !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

Mr Bérenger: Madame la présidente, ce qui a toujours compté, ...

(Interruptions)

You know how even these days you are talking in favour of an MMM/MSM Alliance! You know that!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please, sit down! Can I ask hon. Members not to have any cross-talking so that we can finish with these debates!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: *Kan dir kitsoz gagn kourage!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, would you continue? Would you continue?

Mr Bérenger: I plead for him, Madam Speaker. *Pitié!*

Madam Speaker: Don't push me to act!

Mr Bérenger: *Therefore, Madam Speaker, I will conclude by saying, ce qui a toujours compté et qui compte avant tout pour le MMM, c'est son programme. Seuls, Madame la présidente, ou avec le MSM ou avec le Parti Travailleiste, nous avons voulu, et voulons toujours faire de notre pays un pays phare, un modèle d'unité dans la diversité, de démocratie, de combat contre la fraude et la corruption et de développement dans la justice sociale, et le respect de l'environnement. Madam Speaker, whatever in the Government Programme 2015-2019 goes in that direction, we, the MMM, will support; whatever the*

MSM/PMSD/ML Government does that goes in the opposite direction, Madam Speaker, we will oppose and denounce.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

(7.09 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I join all the preceding orators to congratulate you for your election as Madam Speaker of this august Assembly, and also the Deputy Speaker. I am not going to waste my time to answer the hon. Leader of the Opposition...

(Interruptions)

...because I do not believe at all in many of the criticisms that he has made. There is not a little bit of sincerity; I don't believe in that.

(Interruptions)

I will only answer the allegation that he made when hon. Mohamed spoke about new census that I agreed with it; it is all a lie. I never agreed with that. There are some newspapers, people who have got twisted minds and I know they purposely twist things. They have their own agenda. I am not blaming all the media people, but there are some who must be knowing what they are after, what they are gaining, why they are behaving the way in which they are behaving. Everybody knows here, in this House, when an affidavit was mentioned, I was being questioned; on so many times I replied, I am not aware of the affidavit, I have not received the affidavit, and the hon. Member who was questioning me told me: 'if they send you the affidavit, will you accept it?' I even said: 'Yes, if they send it to me, I will take it; I will accept it'. But then, in the newspaper, it was stated that I agreed I had the affidavit. Well, if I had the affidavit, why should I accept another one that was going to be sent to me?

Similarly, the other day, when hon. Mohamed spoke about new Census and he said: "How are we going to satisfy the request of the United Nations?" I said it is simple. I said we will adopt the law that made the option for candidates not to declare their community. They made it for one election; we are going to make it permanent. That will satisfy the United Nations.

(Interruptions)

I am certain that will satisfy the United Nations.

And insofar as MedPoint is concerned, I am not going to argue on that. There is a case in Court. We wait for the result, but I'll remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, at one time when Remake was not on, how viciously he spoke about MedPoint. Later on, when he was in Remake, he said, now he has got relevant papers; he knows facts; he knows who are the culprits in the MedPoint affair.

Let me tell today that the MedPoint matter is completely over. The sale has taken place. The whole amount of money has been paid to the company and when somebody, who declares his interest, walks out of Cabinet when decision is being taken, and behind his back, decision is taken to buy MedPoint, and when the sale is going to be effected, the Ministry needed money to pay for it, under the item there was not enough money; they asked for reallocation from another item, on the principle of collective responsibility, the decision that was taken behind his back, it is binding on everyone. After he declares his interest, it becomes his own decision. And could he have refused as Minister of Finance, the reallocation, when all through the procedures, everybody approved it? Ultimately the Financial Secretary made a Minute asking the Minister that everything was correct, that he should approve it! Well, I don't know. I have been a Barrister myself. I have practised for a number of years and I can't see how Pravind Jugnauth could have been blamed and how could they have seen there is conflict of interest in this thing. I really cannot, by any stretch of imagination, come to that conclusion. Anyway, we will see the result. We will wait for it!

Now, insofar as all the other matters that have been raised are concerned, all these are scandals denounced when he was not in alliance with the Labour Party; when he was in Remake, vicious attacks were made against the Labour Party and particularly against Ramgoolam. *Pourriture! Pourri pays!*

(Interruptions)

And then when the alliance was born, he told his own people, when some of them wanted to raise certain matters: "*Non, s'il vous plaît, blié, nous guet divan, nou pas guet en arrière*".

(Interruptions)

Well, if he had won the election today, would he have questioned all this?

(Interruptions)

Of course, not!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *Ramgoolam ti oulé lapêche requin et requin ek moustache!*
Enfin!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

The Prime Minister: Well, anyway, I think I have finished with him.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, it is with humility that I stand up to address the House on the Government Programme 2015-2019. First and foremost, I bow down to the Almighty who blessed our country and saved it from chaos and anarchy.

(Interruptions)

I humbly acknowledge that there are God's hands in the course of events that led to the last General Elections and the victory achieved by *l'Alliance Lepep*. With the blessings of God, there is also the godly wisdom of the people of Mauritius that proved once more that real power lies in the hands of the electorate and that no electoral conspiracy can change the will of the people.

Let me add that I feel honoured by the trust that our people has placed in my team and myself. And let me hurry to say that they will not be disappointed and in the situation I find myself today, I must say to the hon. Leader of the Opposition a great 'thank you'.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, when I left the State House on 30 March 2012, I engaged myself upon the mission to prevent my country to go to rack and ruin after I dedicated myself during my

previous years of prime ministership to build a proud and prosperous Mauritius for the benefit of one and all.

I recall the day and the time the hon. Leader of the Opposition – he is still Leader of the Opposition by the way – came to see me at the State House and told me: “Sir Anerood, we must join our hands to clean up our country and prevent it from being destroyed by *pourriture* Premier ministre Navin Ramgoolam. Well, that *pourriture* - anyway, after listening to him, I told the Leader of the MMM that I am all with him in our common mission to save our country and build a better future for our people, the nation.

From March 2012 to March 2014, we worked together within the Remake 2000 alliance which gathered momentum months after months and was heading towards a massive victory at the much awaited General Elections. Then, suddenly, the Leader of the Opposition decided in April 2014 to break the Remake 2000 – I am sure he must be regretting it profoundly now.

(Interruptions)

He would have been Deputy Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

Probably he had already eaten the appetising bait, stuffed with blood of the former Prime Minister and got caught like a shark.

He forgot the mission he shared with me; he did not listen to his own militants and contracted an alliance with the same Navin Ramgoolam he vilified and treated as a true evil since 2005. For me, it was the biggest treason I witnessed in my whole political career.

It was a treason against the people of Mauritius that had placed hope in the Remake 2000; it was a treason against those militants who believed in the ideals of the MMM and of their leader. Hon. Paul Bérenger decided to join hands with the evil. Parliament was deliberately closed for almost eight months while an alliance was being discussed between the MMM and the Labour Party. They came up with their Second Republic proposal that confirmed their greed for power and the ploy to make of Mauritius worse than a banana republic. For the Leader of the Opposition, the priority was no longer cleaning out the country; he, in fact, drowned himself in the ‘*pourriture*’ of the Labour Government.

He was lured by the five-year Prime Minister dubious deal; he forgot all his ideals and principles; he even accepted that the former Prime Minister becomes President of the proposed Second Republic for seven years and be vested with major decision-making powers, but without any accountability and assorted with absolute immunity against any prosecution for reasons that have become clear now.

Madam Speaker, the danger for democracy was too high and I thank the population for having understood that someone described as the personification of filth was trying to avail himself of powers to become a dangerous, vindictive and lethal dictator. I was convinced during the electoral campaign that the Mauritian electorate would reject arrogance, corruption, incompetence and lust for absolute power and would choose the path of sincerity, modesty and proven competence in managing our economy.

The biggest favour that the other side did us was in providing the nation with a new branch of mathematics that made $40\%+40\%=80\%$ sound like the arrogant science of experts rather than a simple addition. My 84 years had convinced me that $40+40$ never equals 80 in politics, especially when it is supported only by cheap insults, abrasive arrogance, and a pathological compulsion to take the people for granted.

Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition did not have the same wisdom as the vast majority of the population.

I hope he understands today what sort of monster he was about to create when we take cognizance day after day of the infernal machinery the former Prime Minister put in place to loot this country. I noted during the debates that even the main 'agwa' of the Labour Party–MMM alliance (hon. Ganoo) and the only survivor of the former Government, on the other side of the House, (hon. Mohamed) have realised the harm that the former Prime Minister inflicted on this country.

Madam Speaker, the Mauritian people has placed its faith in my Government, and it is our solemn, sacred duty to live up to their expectations. I have lived a long life, and some people's reminders that I will soon be 85 have made me even more determined that my legacy to this nation will be one that shows that change is possible and that real change is not only desirable, but absolutely imperative after the ravages of the last 9 years.

By the way, I will happily accept any birthday cake from hon. Members in three weeks' time. But I must warn them that this time, I will bite any finger that tries to feed me a slice.

(Applause)

Madam Speaker, coming back to my Government's pledge to the nation, I forcefully say that we will have no stone unturned in our fight against corruption, and those who have plundered the national wealth will have to explain the source of the incredible wealth they have amassed since 2005. We were elected primarily on the basis of one slogan: *Bizin Vrai Sanzman*.

That necessarily means a complete clean-up of our institutions riddled with corruption and absence of accountability.

My Government intends to do precisely that, Madam Speaker. And, if we have to burn the midnight oil every day, we will do so not only to clean the filth of the previous Government, but also to achieve the meaningful change the country badly needs.

In this respect, I strongly condemn the attempts made in this House and outside to cast doubts on the meeting of three Ministers with two foreigners regarding the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise and Dufry AG scam where the mistress of the former Prime Minister has cashed commissions to the tune of almost Rs100 m. as at January 2015. The aim of that meeting was to gather as much evidence, documents as possible so as to help the Police in their enquiry in order to bring the culprits to answer for their ill doings. I personally feel that we must be thankful to the three Ministers.

There was no other agenda, Madam Speaker, and I can state that I will be ruthless against all those who have conspired against the State for their own personal benefit.

Madam Speaker, once again as in the eighties, I am devoting the last few years of my life to turn this country into one where every component of the population will feel proud to be part of the nation-building process. And I say to these thugs and *marrons* causing havoc with their blatant abuses and conspiracies: Stop it now! It is never too late.

I, as Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, will keep a very close eye on their activities, and the forces of law and order will come down like a ton of bricks on these people who have had it their own way for far too long and who think they will continue to do as before. I will make this a priority of the Government to tackle homelessness in a decisive manner. State lands will be used not to turn friends into multimillionaires overnight but to provide space for new houses to be built for those without shelter.

(Interruptions)

I want to die happy with the knowledge that no one in my country will sleep on an empty stomach and in a miserable hovel. We owe it to our people to ensure that when our political careers are over, we leave the country in a much better state than it was when we took power. We have to make politics the noble profession that it was and that it can be again.

Madam Speaker, through that strong vote of confidence in favour of *l'Alliance Lepep*, people have clearly expressed their hope for a political and an economic rebirth that will turn this country around so that all Mauritian families, without distinction, may work together for a brighter future and for a mutual sharing of the wealth generated by collective hard work.

Our people have a legitimate right to expect that the Government they voted in must govern and administer for the social, economic and inclusive advancement of the people. Therefore, following my personal pledge to apply my energy to work for the people, with the people and in the sole interest of our people's welfare, my Government has presented a programme that does justice to the trust that the people placed in us.

As the Head of this Government, I give all my fellow countrymen the assurance that they have put in this august Assembly the right team (on this side of the House, Madam Speaker), at the right time, for the right reason.

Madam Speaker, an accountable and responsible Government is one that is dedicated to bring about change that durably impacts the quality of life of the whole nation. And 'achieving meaningful change' is what the 2015-2019 Government Programme is all about.

Since the day I embarked on the electoral campaign, my objective has been to give a new hope to every Mauritian, be it man, woman, youth, children or senior citizens. Few days only after we took office, we increased Basic Retirement Pension, Basic Widow's Pension and Basic Invalidity Pension. We stood by our word. *Parole donnée parole sacrée!* The population has witnessed that we mean business and we have been demonstrating that we are determined in our mission to clean, reform and reconstruct.

Madam Speaker, I have a vision for my country, a vision that will propel Mauritius to new heights, a vision that sees the current generation passing the torch to the next generation, a vision that is holistic enough to include inter-generational equity as well as happiness as an integral measure of well-being. Through this vision, the destiny of our country, of a nation, of a new generation of Mauritians will be forged.

Madam Speaker, that vision is unveiled in the Government Programme which rolls out ways and means to achieve social inclusiveness based on sustainable economic development and an equitable distribution of the national wealth.

As we join forces to recreate history through a second economic miracle, emphasis is on boosting GDP growth and job creation.

The focus of this Government is to nurture a stable, secure, innovative, inclusive and progressive Mauritius, based on a culture of hard work, good governance, transparency, ethical dealings and a no wastage policy.

Madam Speaker, our programme is based on fundamentals for a better life and it is geared to meet the needs of all categories and of all walks of life. I am, therefore, more than ever determined to be the driver of a new economic model that inspires trust and creates the feel-good factor so essential for investment and sound business.

Our strategy focuses on the consolidation of traditional sectors as well as the development of new fields of activities and the promotion of a healthy and ethical business climate that encourages a culture of entrepreneurship and investment across all sectors of the national economy.

We live in an era where innovation is the key that unlocks the future. Should we decide to be complacent and choose not to create and innovate, our aim to boost national productivity and growth will remain but a pious wish. But this Government thinks and acts differently.

Madam Speaker, the stage is being set for progress through the development of strong economic pillars with high potential in the short, medium and long term.

We are investing considerable efforts in consolidating vital sectors like manufacturing, agro industry, tourism and financial services. Our services industry is at an interesting cross-road in its life cycle.

A strategy of product and market diversification is being implemented for the progress of both our financial services and tourism sectors. While the manufacturing sector remains a key employer in our economy, we are henceforth focusing on a promotion campaign that targets investment in high value-added and high-tech manufacturing. Our

export development plan is equally being re-looked into. There will be more emphasis on an Africa-gearred export strategy.

Madam Speaker, Information Technology and Connectivity occupy the driver's seat in the life of every Mauritian citizen today. This Government sees the immense potential of ICT as an accelerator for national growth. This is why I have put a special stress on technology, communication and innovation-linked activities. We are doing the needful to increase broadband penetration to 50% by the end of this year.

Investments will also be made in Techno parks and Cyber cities so as to attract global players to set up businesses in view of promoting Mauritius as the 'Virtual Office' of Africa. Our outsourcing industry will be geared to offer new services such as Knowledge Process Outsourcing and Legal Process Outsourcing. The current shortage of skills in the sector will be addressed through a reviewed skills matching strategy. Free WiFi in selected places and a revision of the cost of telecommunications are also part of enhancing connectivity.

Madam Speaker, this will not be enough to achieve a 'second economic miracle'. We will need to set up new economic poles to drive and attain the desired level of growth. The launch of regional bunkering, the expansion of transshipment and cruise-linked activities, the development of the ocean economy, the implementation of the duty-free shopping concept and the promotion of other ICT enabled services sectors are all integral components to graduate Mauritius to the next level of development.

The transformation of Mauritius into a regional aviation hub and an international maritime port are important factors in our economic equation for success.

Madam Speaker, for the first time in our history, Government is setting up a bank fully dedicated to support and service entrepreneurship and SMEs. I cannot help stressing the urgency to encourage a culture of entrepreneurship in our country. My vision is to create a whole nation of entrepreneurs that will be partners in the economic success of our country.

Madam Speaker, our Civil Service is of utmost importance in the structure and smooth functioning of our economy and its administrative system. This is why I am focusing on its human capital development, the streamlining of processes and the optimisation of technology with the objective of boosting efficiency.

The development of our Civil Service and Judiciary along with an in-depth reform of our public sector institutions as well as economic growth and diversification will help to generate employment at all levels in the country.

A minimum of 15,000 jobs will be made available annually as a result of our strategy. I hope so.

Hon. Mohamed said it is not enough, but he failed to say that under the previous Government, jobs were given only to selected people close to the Labour Party and selection was being made even on Sundays to favour such people even if they did not make an application. We all know what former PPS Khamajeet revealed as regards recruitment by the former Government.

Therefore, I tell hon. Mohamed that he better looks himself in the mirror before trying to give us lessons. This Government will definitely deliver on its promise as far as job creation is concerned. A fair chance will be given to all eligible candidates to apply for jobs as they become available. To this end, this Government will ensure that a transparent and merit-based recruitment process is implemented, with a zero tolerance policy regarding fraudulent practices or corruption.

Madam Speaker, the provision of decent living conditions to the vulnerable segments of our nation is one of my heart's desires. To ensure effective social inclusion for all, the Marshall Plan to combat poverty is being worked on and the Government is planning the construction of some 10,000 social housing units during its present mandate.

In the same vein, my Government will develop a new strategic land use planning framework to meet the social objectives we have set.

Madam Speaker, a healthy society does not just appear from nowhere, but it is created and it emerges as a result of dedicated effort, planning and the availability of resources.

Women play a crucial role in its emergence. This Government will ensure that the role and potential of the Mauritian woman will never again be undermined. Your appointment Madam, as Speaker of this august Assembly, is a sign of better things to come for the 50% of the population.

With you as our first Madam Speaker, and with Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim as our future first woman President, the signs are clear that this Government will not simply talk about gender equality, but will actually make gender equality a reality in our island.

We will provide necessary support to women wishing to take up employment, launch their enterprises and be free to resume gainful employment to participate in their household budget and family upkeep.

Madam Speaker, a happy people is one that has a balanced lifestyle. Our beaches in Mauritius are part and parcel of our Mauritian heritage. Depriving our people access to some of the most beautiful beaches would be at cross purposes with this Government's strategy. Necessary steps are being taken to ensure that beach-fronts, beaches and access to the sea remain public. All developments around these areas will be carefully assessed in the light of our people's needs for their recreational activities.

Strengthening security in these areas and paving the way for a cleaner, greener and safer Mauritius are equally on this Government's agenda.

Madam Speaker, no society can progress without access to a good educational system.

Sadly, Mauritius has been subject to a number of ill-doings, especially in the private tertiary education sector under the previous Government. This Government is determined to reposition Mauritius as a trusted and leading knowledge hub. All relevant bodies are already on call and are being closely scrutinised to this end.

Madam Speaker, no Mauritian student should be deprived of the right to sit for SC or HSC examinations because of lack of funds. This Government has restated full subsidy for SC and HSC examination fees for all students. We are equally working on the introduction of nine-year basic continuous schooling to circumvent the ill-effects of the CPE on our young children.

Madam Speaker, our plan will not materialise without the necessary infrastructure.

Investments will, therefore, be made in new and innovative transport systems including a new Road Decongestion Programme.

With respect to public utilities, this Government will also bring in considerable reforms to address water supply problems as well as electricity production through a Power Sector

Expansion Plan. In line with my vision to develop a green and eco-friendly Mauritius, we are focusing on encouraging energy production from renewable sources.

Madam Speaker, as a Government that is working for the progress and well-being of our fellow countrymen, the elimination of wastage and irresponsible expenditure is a top item on our agenda. I am personally seeing to it that there is full rationalisation in the use of our resources. This applies to all infrastructural development, global connectivity, procurement, as well as skills and technology transfers across all ministries, parastatal bodies and public institutions. Madam Speaker, all Mauritians desire a peaceful and successful life.

Addressing the problem related to law and order in the country is high on my agenda. Government will provide the Police Force with all the necessary support and funding so that it is capable of delivering a world class service and response of the highest order thereby meeting public needs and expectations.

Over the next three years, a number of new Police Stations will be constructed in different parts of the country wherever it is found to be necessary.

The existing infrastructure and facilities at the Beau Bassin Training School no longer meet the increasing requirements of the Force in terms of capacity-building. Therefore, we will set up a Police Academy to ensure continuous training and development for all ranks in the Police. Necessary financial provision will be made in the coming budget.

Moreover, Government will soon implement the historic measure to allow Police Officers to unionise like other employees in the public service. This has been allowed in many other countries and, as far as I know, strike is not allowed insofar as the Police Force is concerned.

Government will put in place an independent Police Complaints Commission, which will be presided by a former Judge of the Supreme Court, to investigate complaints against members of the Police Force, to ensure that there is no abuse of power and that the fundamental human rights of citizens are respected.

Madam Speaker, drug trafficking in the country has become a cause for serious concern. Government is determined to launch a merciless fight against drugs dealers and traffickers.

This requires a multi-pronged approach since actions must be geared towards demand, supply, consumption, rehabilitation and prevention. The Police are primarily concerned with repression and prevention.

The Police alone cannot fight the drug scourge. Other Ministries, departments, NGOs and the community must join hands together to successfully root out this scourge from our society.

The port and airport will be closely monitored for a better control of the supply of drugs. We will ensure that our seaport and airport are equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and technology to counter any attempt to introduce drugs in Mauritius. With a view to addressing the problem in a more holistic manner, Government will very soon set up a Commission of Enquiry on drug trafficking. Consultations to that effect have already been carried out in order to find the best competences to undertake the enquiry.

Madam Speaker, what we have achieved in less than 100 days since the new Government assumed office is unprecedented.

(Interruptions)

Together with my entire team, we shall deliver on all our promises during our five-year mandate. I shall live up to the expectations of the population. The population has shown faith in me, and I assure my fellow citizens that I will not let them down.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude with this quote –

“Darkness flees when the sun rises.”

Like my fellow citizens, I feel so relieved that a new sun has risen, and that we are on track towards meaningful change through hard work, accountability, transparency, social justice, a consolidated democracy and innovation.

Madam Speaker, three months ago, we were all powerless spectators of a drama auguring the worst. But, today, the wise vote of the people has unleashed a new era for a new common destiny. It has changed our fear into a nation-wide hope. The challenge we have taken is, unfortunately, compounded by a string of unpleasant surprises acting like hurdles in our way.

However, gradually, we are being delivered from the grip of evil and its malpractices.

Madam Speaker, the crushing legacy that we have inherited shall not dampen our resolve to fulfil all the promises made to the people. The more daunting the challenges, the more fired up my team becomes. The trust and patience of the people energize us to tackle the affairs of this country boldly, with an obligation to give results.

Together, with God's blessings, let us pursue this journey to create a new future.

Together, let us build a prosperous country for all our citizens, for the nation.

I thank all hon. Members for their participation in the debates.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for your kind attention.

(Applause)

Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Madam Speaker, as I have already done when presenting the motion of thanks for the Presidential Address, I will speak out my mind in a very independent and detached manner with primarily in mind the common good of the nation.

In this context, I will address some crucial issues raised since the Government Programme was read by His Excellency the President of the Republic, and I have decided also to warn the nation of the rapidly changing circumstances that could jeopardise the Government's rightful claim of sovereignty for Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, as vigorously expressed in the Presidential Address.

Overall, the reactions of the public, as well as in this House, even among the Opposition, have been favourable to the Government Programme with, of course, a certain amount of scepticism and criticism, as should be normally expected.

Madame la présidente, l'année 2015 pourrait être pour Maurice une très mauvaise année, parce que durant toute l'année 2014, alors que le Parlement avait été fermé, en violation de notre démocratie et de notre constitution, la Grande-Bretagne adoptait des positions nouvelles pour nous arracher notre Archipel des Chagos. Ce que je vais expliquer est extrêmement grave, et le peuple mauricien n'a pas été informé de ce qui se passait, ni mobilisé pour une action non partisane de grande envergure pour exprimer son opposition à la volte-face des Britanniques. Je voudrais que les Mauriciens sachent que, pour la première fois, depuis la soi-disant cession des Chagos, il y a 50 ans, les Anglais ont affirmé officiellement dans un document présenté à l'*International Tribunal for The Law of the Sea*, un organisme de la *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, je cite ici les articles écrits durant toute l'année 2014 dans *The Vanilla Islands Newsletter*, codirigé par Sydney Selvon et moi-même –

« ...que les Chagos n'ont jamais, d'après Londres, fait partie du territoire mauricien ».

La même publication spécialisée a aussi suivi pas à pas la démarche britannique, approuvée par les Etats-Unis, de promouvoir le retour du groupe de Chagossiens aux Chagos, et leur réinstallation aux frais du gouvernement britannique avec, je souligne -

‘Un niveau et une qualité de vie semblable à ce qui existe en Grande- Bretagne, dont le passeport est détenu comme on le sait par les Chagossiens ».

Un rapport intérimaire favorable dans ce sens a déjà été rédigé dans le dos de Maurice avec la finalisation prévue pour cette année.

Dans cette même publication, le 02 février 2014, Allen Vincatassin, *Leader* Chagossien qui s'est fait proclamer Président des Chagos en exil en Angleterre, a expliqué au rédacteur en chef qu'il est en contact étroit avec le gouvernement britannique et que son plan à lui, c'est de débarquer aux Chagos avec la communauté Chagossienne pour y constituer un Conseil élu qui remettrait alors la souveraineté de l'île officiellement à la Grande-Bretagne. Rien ne dit que ce plan ne serait mis à exécution comme tel, mais ces trois développements intervenus en 2014 vont dans le même sens. Entre-temps, Allen Vincatassin a commencé avec le soutien du Parlementaire britannique Henry Smith, à partir de ce mois-ci, l'enregistrement des Chagossiens qui veulent faire partie du groupe qui sera en principe réinstallé dans leurs îles. Une assemblée fut tenue à cet effet le samedi 07 mars 2015 et le nouveau communiqué comme suit officiellement, je cite -

« The BIOT people resettlement committee met with the Chagossian community today. The aim was to inform people about the BIOT feasibility report and to register those people who would like to be resettled. President Allen Vincatassin and Mr Henry Smith have addressed the community. »

Je vais citer maintenant le document anglais niant tout droit de souveraineté de Maurice sur les Chagos. Il est un des nombreux documents échangés par Maurice et Londres durant le procès que Maurice a porté devant le Tribunal de la mer. Il s'intitule '*Arbitration Under Annex 7 of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea, Mauritius versus United Kingdom, rejoinder submitted by the United Kingdom 17 March 2014*'.

La partie, où Londres change radicalement de position par rapport aux accords de 1965, est intitulée '*The islands that now form the BIOT were never part of the territory of Mauritius*'. C'est une position extrêmement choquante lorsqu'on sait que Londres a plusieurs fois reconnu à Maurice une souveraineté alternative sur les Chagos si jamais la base militaire n'était plus nécessaire. Certes, Maurice a répondu par une contre-argumentation légale devant le Tribunal. Mais si Maurice perd l'affaire, nous aurons totalement perdu les Chagos qui était au départ une revendication politique qui n'aurait peut-être pas dû être portée devant le Tribunal International de la mer.

J'espère, et je prie même pour que Maurice gagne son affaire, sinon on aurait d'une certaine manière perdu les Chagos pour la deuxième fois, et cette fois de manière définitive en droit international.

Madame la présidente, ce que je veux dire en résumé, c'est qu'avec la nouvelle position légale de la Grande Bretagne sur les Chagos, avec en complément le projet de réinstallation des Chagossiens aux Chagos, avec la citoyenneté britannique en poche, ont complètement changé la donne. Les deux démarches indiquent une position anglaise comparable à celle adoptée aux îles Falklands, ce qui pour Londres veut dire les Chagos et les Chagossiens sont britanniques et le resteront pour toujours.

En fait, des dizaines de Chagossiens sont déjà en train d'être formés en Grande-Bretagne pour travailler aux Chagos. Les Américains ont été priés de les employer également sur la base de Diego Garcia. On prévoit que tout cela figurera dans le rapport final.

Madame la présidente, je tiens à vous remercier et à remercier cette auguste Assemblée pour leur discours et aussi de m'avoir écouté avec attention et je recommande, encore une fois, que ma motion de remerciement pour le discours-programme soit approuvée.

Merci.

(Applause)

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Resolved:

"That an Address be presented to the President of the Republic of Mauritius in the following terms -

"We, the Members of the Mauritius National Assembly, here assembled, beg leave to offer our thanks to the President of the Republic of Mauritius for the Speech which he has addressed to us on the occasion of the Opening of the First Session of the Sixth National Assembly."

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 13 March 2015 at 2.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 8.05 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 13 March 2015 at 2.00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SALE BY LEVY – COMMISSION OF INQUIRY – REPORT

(No. B/155) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Commission of Inquiry on Sale by Levy, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) if it has now completed its works and submitted its report thereto, and
 - (i) if so, indicate the main recommendations thereof, and
 - (ii) if not, indicate the reasons, and
- (b) cost incurred for the inquiry.

Reply: I am informed that the Commission of Inquiry on Sale by Levy has already completed its work and submitted its report to the President of the Republic on 20 August 2014.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the Office of the President has informed that on 20 August 2014 the President of the Republic forwarded two copies of the report of the Commission to the former Prime Minister. However, the report is untraceable in my office. I

am, therefore, neither aware of the contents of the report nor about any action taken thereupon by the former Prime Minister.

Following a request made to the Office of the President, a fresh copy of the report has been made available to my office on 07 March 2015.

The recommendations contained in the report will be examined and appropriate action taken thereafter.

In regard to part (b)(ii) of the question, I am informed that the total amount incurred so far for the Commission of Inquiry is Rs1,725,000 representing fees paid to the Commissioners and the Secretary.

POLICE DES JEUX – ILLEGAL BETTING - MONITORING

(No. B/156) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the *Police des Jeux*, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the –

- (a) number of Police Officers attached thereto, and
- (b) name of the officer at the head thereof, indicating if additional human resources will be attached thereto to monitor illegal betting, especially regarding horseracing.

Reply: The House would recall that in my reply to PQ B/59, I did mention that information in regard to posting of officers is considered to be of a sensitive nature as it relates to security in the country. Accordingly, it would not be appropriate to divulge the information requested at part (a) of the question.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the *Police des Jeux* operates under the overall command of a Deputy Commissioner of Police.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that the *Police des Jeux*, by virtue of its functions in enforcing the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act 2007 is also involved in addressing offences relating to horse racing, namely in combating illegal bookmaking and betting at Champ de Mars and throughout the island.

At present, whenever there is the need for reinforcement of Police personnel for specific operations of the *Police des Jeux*, additional officers are deployed.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that a general survey of the authorised and actual strength of Police as well as the operational requirements of all Police Divisions and Branches, including that of the *Police des Jeux*, is being carried out with a view to the resizing and restructuring thereof.

As announced in the Government Programme, combating the growing illicit gambling activities is high on the agenda of Government. In order to achieve this, the legal and institutional framework will be strengthened for increased effectiveness so as to protect society from the ill-effects of such nefarious activities.

POLICE ACT – AMENDMENTS

(No. B/157) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Police Act, he will state if consideration will be given for the advisability of introducing amendments thereto to make provisions for Police Officers to be members of any trade union of employees.

Reply: As the hon. Member is aware, one of the measures announced in the Government Programme 2015-2019 is indeed to allow Police Officers to syndicate to safeguard their interests.

Section 17 of the Police Act stipulates that no Police Officer shall be a member of any trade union of employees, or of any association having for its objects the control or influence of the pay, pension, or conditions of service of the Police Force. Furthermore, the Employment Relations Act, which *inter-alia* sets out extensively the powers of trade unions covering the bargaining powers of member employees, the reporting of industrial dispute and the institution of industrial actions including strikes, is not applicable to a member of a Disciplined Force other than the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service and the Mauritian Prison Service.

Preliminary consultations with Ministries and Departments concerned on the unionization of Police Officers have already started with a view to formulating a proper

framework within which the Police Officers will be allowed to syndicate and which will be in the interest of Police Officers as well as the public at large.

Appropriate amendments will have to be brought to the Police Act, the Employment Relations Act and any other relevant statute to enable the Police Officers to syndicate.

I wish to draw the attention of the House that Police Officers Tuyau and Boojhawon have on 21 September 2012, lodged a Complaint with Summons before the Supreme Court averring that the current prohibition under section 17 of the Police Act on their forming part of a Trade Union or Association, is unconstitutional and in breach of their Constitutional Rights under section 13 of the Constitution. The matter is still at the stage of pleadings before the Supreme Court.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY – IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES – RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/158) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Commission of Inquiry on the prescription of immovable properties, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if it has completed its works and, if so, indicate the recommendations thereof and the measures that will be taken for the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am informed that the Commission of Inquiry on the System of Acquisitive Prescription has already completed its work and the Commissioners have submitted their final report to the President of the Republic on 23 October 2013.

I am further informed that on 05 November 2013 the President forwarded two copies of the report to the former Prime Minister personally.

However, as the report is untraceable in my Office, I am neither aware of the contents of the report nor of any action taken thereupon by the former Prime Minister.

Following a request made to the Office of the President, a copy of the report has been made available to my Office on 07 March 2015. The recommendations contained in the report will be examined and appropriate action will be taken in the light thereof.

MELROSE PRISON – MOBILE PHONES, DRUGS & COMPLAINTS

(No. B/159) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Melrose Prison, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the –

- (a) Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of entry of mobile phones and drugs thereat, and
- (b) Human Rights Commission, information as to if complaints of the prevalence of inhumane conditions of detention thereat have been reported thereto.

(Withdrawn)

**MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT -
AMENDMENT**

(No. B/160) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the municipal council elections, he will state when same will be held, indicating if Government is proposing to introduce amendments to the Local Government Act before same will be held and, if so, indicate the sections of the Act which will be concerned therewith.

Reply (Minister of Local Government): The Local Government Act 2011 provides that elections shall be held in 2012 and thereafter every 6 years on such date as the President shall appoint.

As it was announced in the Government Programme 2015-2019, the Local Government Act will be amended to consolidate democracy at local level and promote better participation of local councillors in the management of community affairs.

In this context, my Ministry has consulted the 12 local authorities and the Electoral Commissioner with a view to inviting proposals for amendments. The proposals received have been examined and the Government has set up a Ministerial Committee under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications to oversee amendments to be brought to the Local Government Act 2011.

The Ministerial Committee has met and made recommendations for the review of the Local Government Act 2011 with a view to consolidating democracy at local level and Government has agreed to the recommendations.

The Attorney-General's Office has already been instructed to work out the draft Local Government (Amendment) Bill for introduction in the National Assembly. At this stage, it is premature to indicate which specific sections of the Local Government Act 2011 will be amended.

NDU – CONTRACTORS – APPOINTMENT

(No. B/161) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the registered contractors resorted to by the National Development Unit since 2006 to 2014, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the NDU, a list thereof, indicating in each case the –

- (a) procedure followed for the selection and appointment thereof, and
- (b) contracts allocated thereto indicating in each case the-
 - (i) contract value thereof;
 - (ii) procedures followed for the allocation thereof, and
 - (iii) payments effected thereto;
 - (iv) claims made by the contractors indicating the outcome thereof in each case, and
 - (v) total cumulative amounts paid to each contractor during the period 2006-2010.

Reply: I am informed that the first time that the NDU had recourse to Registered contractors was in August 2009. An invitation was made through the press calling for contractors dealing with –

- (i) Building/Civil Engineering/electrical and other related works;
- (ii) Road works;
- (iii) Drain works, and
- (iv) landscaping/embellishment works to register themselves.

A similar exercise was carried in July 2010, June 2011, January 2012 and January 2013. I am made to understand that the Registered list of contractors emanating from the 2012 exercise still prevails given that the exercise effected in 2013 has, at date, not been scrutinised and completed.

I am tabling the list of registered contractors from 2009 onwards.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that the criteria followed for appointment and selection were that the potential contractors should provide information pertaining to –

- (i) past experience in nature of works performed during;
 - (a) the last two years for 2009 exercise,
 - (b) the last five years for 2010 exercise;
 - (c) the last two years for 2011, and
 - (d) the last three years for 2012
- (ii) average annual financial amount of constructions executed over the last five years, and
- (iii) company profile including list of equipment available and technical personnel.

As regards part (b) subsection (i), I am tabling the list as requested.

NDU also resorts to Zonal contractors. In that respect, Mauritius was divided into eight zones and as from 2009 into four zones with distinct constituencies. Zonal contractors are appointed through a national bidding exercise. The duration of their contract was originally for one year and subsequently 18 months. However, some contracts have a longer duration given that they were administratively extended on several occasions. The latest one being in December 2014 up to March 2015.

The above extension has resulted in Zonal Contractors' initial contract value being exceeded significantly. In one such case, it has even increased six times.

I am tabling a summary of the Zonal Contracts awarded during period 2006-2014 as well as the list of projects for each Zonal Contractor. The cumulative amounts paid to each Contractor during the period 2006-2014 is being compiled and will be laid in the National Assembly Library at the earliest.

STC - LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS - CONTRACT

(No. B/189) Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the contract for the supply of Liquefied Petroleum Gas for each of the years 2013, 2014 and 2015, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, in each case, information as to the –

- (a) name of the successful bidder thereof;
- (b) contract value thereof, and
- (c) procurement method use for the award thereof.

Reply: The House may be aware that the State Trading Corporation (STC) is exempted from the provisions of the Public Procurement Act, by virtue of the Public Procurement (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2009, in respect of goods purchased for resale, including services incidental to the purchase or the distribution of goods. However, the STC generally has recourse to international open bidding exercise for the procurement of LPG.

I am informed by the STC that for the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013, four offers had been received as follows -

	Bidder	Premium/MTon (USD)
	Vitol SA	298.00
	Petreddec (Bermuda) Ltd	118.50 (lowest bidder)
	Geogas Trading SA	180.00
	Tonimas Nigeria Ltd	140.00

The successful bidder was Petreddec (Bermuda) Ltd and the supply contract was awarded at the premium rate of USD 118.5 per ton. The value of the contract was USD 67,074,565 for 68,006 tons.

In March 2013, the STC proceeded with its annual tender exercise which was launched to cover supply for the period 01 July 2013 to 30 June 2014. At the closing date, four offers were received.

	Bidder	Premium/MTon (USD)

	Aqualine General Trading LLC (UAE)	98
	A-Z Petroleum Products Ltd (Nigeria)	112
	Petreddec (Bermuda) Ltd	125
	Geogas Trading SA (Switzerland)	155

The successful bidder was again Petreddec (Bermuda) Ltd with a premium of USD 125 per ton which represented an increase in premium compared to the previous year, that is, USD 118.50 per ton.

The STC decided not to award the supply contract for the full period, that is, 01 July 2013 to 30 June 2014, because of the increase in premium. However, in order to avoid any disruption in the supply of LPG an interim contract covering period 01 July 2013 to 30 September 2013 was awarded to Petreddec (Bermuda) Ltd. The value of the contract was USD 17,750,709 for 18,676 tons.

Concurrently, the STC held discussions with Petreddec (Bermuda) Ltd to review their premium and to come up with a guarantee to supply LPG at lower premium. Subsequently, Petreddec (Bermuda) Ltd agreed to supply STC at a reduced premium of USD 112 per ton, subject to the STC entering a contract over a period of two years. I am informed that, thereafter, the STC signed a supply contract with Petreddec (Bermuda) Ltd for the period covering 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2015. Estimated value of the contract is USD 113,474,314 for estimated quantity 135,814 tons.

I am informed that the STC is presently in the process of preparing a tender document, which it will launch, through international open bidding, in due course, for the procurement of LPG after 30 September 2015.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS – RATES & CHARGES

(No. B/190) Mr R. Utem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the financial institutions, he will state if consideration will be given for –

- (a) measures to be taken for the regulation of the rates and charges imposed by these institutions, and
- (b) the establishment of an Ombudsperson for the protection of the customers thereof.

Reply: With regards to part (a) of the question, I am informed that following complaints from various stakeholders against the high fees and charges imposed by the financial institutions, Section 6(1)(w) of the Bank of Mauritius Act was amended in 2012 so that the Bank of Mauritius could impose limitation on the quantum of those fees and charges as it would consider appropriate.

I am also informed that the Bank of Mauritius commissioned a Task Force in 2012 to look, *inter alia*, into the fees and commissions imposed by commercial banks. One of the objectives of the Task Force was to assess the reasonableness of the fees, charges and commissions of banks with respect to banking services that are frequently used by their customers. The Report of the Task Force was released in June 2014. Subsequently, the Bank of Mauritius invited comments on the Report from the public at large to enable it take informed decisions on the recommendations made in the Report.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry is working on an Ombudsperson (Financial Services) Bill for the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Financial Services to better protect consumers of financial services and provide them with a free and independent service to help settle disputes with the Banks and other financial institutions.

DREAM BRIDGE – COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

(No. B/191) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the new defunct project known as Dream Bridge, he will state when the plots of land compulsorily acquired in relation to the implementation thereof will be reverted back to the owners thereof.

Reply: The Project being referred to by the hon. Member is, in fact, the Harbour Bridge Project, which was put on hold by the then Government sometime last year. I am informed that the project involved the compulsory acquisition of 64 plots of private land.

With the shelving of the project, the sale back of these plots ought to be made. However, as the Harbour Bridge Project forms part of the whole Road Decongestion Programme and the Light Rapid Transit System, all the plots of land which have been acquired will be considered in the light of different options and projects to be elaborated by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport. Therefore, at this stage, the plots of land acquired will not be reverted to the owners.

MBC – TELEVISION CHANNELS -PRIVATISATION

(No. B/192) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation whether, in regard to the two television channels of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if the privatization thereof is being contemplated and, if so, indicate if –

- (a) a prior study has been carried out in relation thereto and, if so, give details thereof, and
- (b) any time frame for the implementation thereof has been fixed.

(Withdrawn)

REGATTA COMPETITIONS - NATIONAL SPORTS FEDERATION

(No. B/193) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Sports Act, he will state if he will consider the advisability of introducing amendments to the schedule thereof to make provisions for the recognition and registration of Regatta Competitions, commonly known as Regatte, as a National Sports Federation.

Reply: I have to inform the House that there is already a National Sports Federation namely, the Mauritius Yachting Association which caters for the promotion and development of sailing in Mauritius. The need, therefore, to register and recognise another federation for the promotion of Regatte does not arise.

The organisers of Regatta competition have to enlist the support of the Mauritius Yachting Association for their activities.

CITES PAUL LANGLOIS, BURRENCHOBBEY & BALANCE - SALE

(No. B/194) Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the ex-CHA and Cité EDC houses located in Cité Paul Langlois, Cité Burrenchobbeey and Cité Balance, located in the region of Plaine Magnien, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number –

- (a) thereof sold to the occupiers thereof, as at to date, and
- (b) of owners thereof who have not received their respective title deed as at to date, indicating in each case the reasons therefor.

Reply: In the region of Plaine Magnien, there are 3 ex-CHA housing estates consisting of 287 housing units, as follows:

(a) Cité Balance	138
(b) Cité Langlois	50
(c) Cité Burrenchobay	99

With regard to part (a) of the question, I have to inform that all these housing units have by now been sold to their owners. However, out of these 287 cases, only 282 owners have already finalised their deed of sale.

Regarding part (b) of the question, 5 owners, that is 2 from Cité Burrenchobay and 3 from Cité Balance, have not received their title deeds because they have not yet submitted the relevant documents to enable the drawing up of the deeds.

CASTING OF SLABS SCHEME - GRANT

(No. B/195) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Casting of Slabs Scheme, he will state if Government proposes to increase the threshold of Rs 8,500 as monthly earnings in order to allow more beneficiaries to benefit from the grant of the allowances provided thereunder.

Reply (The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands): I wish to inform the House that, currently, under the Roof Slab Grant Scheme, families with a household income of less than Rs8,500 monthly are granted financial assistance to enable them to arrange for the casting of a slab to a house which they construct at their own cost on land owned either privately or through leasehold rights. The quantum of such a grant is up to Rs65,000 for a slab of 100m², with a proportionate reduction according to area below 100m².

In consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the threshold of monthly household income of Rs8,500 is being examined for review, as appropriate, to make it more responsive to emerging needs.

PORT LOUIS - WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/196) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities

whether, in regard to the construction of a new rapid gravity plant of 800,000 m³ capacity per day to provide uninterrupted water supply to the Port Louis region, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand, indicating -

- (a) the expected completion date thereof, and
- (b) if consumers from the Priest Peak Service Reservoir will benefit from water on a 24-hour basis after the completion thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: The works at Pailles Water Treatment Plant consist of the upgrading of the existing 30,000m³/day slow sand filters and the construction of a new Rapid Gravity Filter of capacity 80,000 m³/day. Works started in July 2013 and the contractual completion date is 14 March 2015.

I am, however, informed by the Central Water Authority that the plant will now be commissioned by end April 2015.

I am further informed that according to the contractor, the delay is due to -

- (i) the late delivery of the Mechanical and Electrical equipment as a result of cyclone Bansi, and
- (ii) the procurement of the filtration sand, following a ban on the export of sand by the Saudi Authorities. The sand is now being procured from India and will be delivered by end March 2015.

With regard to the second part of the question, I am informed by the Central Water Authority that after the works, the new plant, which will treat water at a higher turbidity condition of 400 NTU (Nephelometric Turbidity Units) as compared to 15 NTU presently, will ensure an uninterrupted water supply in the region of Port Louis, including Priest Peak Reservoir.

However, as mentioned in my reply to PQ B/178, a 24-hour supply in Port Louis can only be achieved after the completion of the Bagatelle dam scheduled for end 2016 and the renewal of the old pipelines in Port Louis.

PORT AREA - PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - LAND LEASE

(No. B/197) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications whether, in regard to the port area, he will state -

- (a) the allocation of prime land thereat reserved for the storage of petroleum products as per the approved master plans prior to 2005, and
- (b) the beneficiaries of land thereat allocated for the storage of petroleum products since 2006 indicating -
 - (i) if the leases were granted to established players and were in line with established policies;
 - (ii) the procedures followed in each case;
 - (iii) extent of land allocated to each beneficiary;
 - (iv) the respective purpose and other terms and conditions thereof, and
 - (v) rental charged in each case, and whether they were in line with the commercial valuation of the respective plots of land allocated.

Reply: The information requested is being compiled and will be tabled in the National Assembly.

SUGAR INDUSTRY – VRS – LAND ALLOCATION

(No. B/198) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Voluntary Retirement Scheme pursuant to the provisions of the Sugar Industry Efficiency Act 2001, he will state the number of former employees of the sugar estates who agreed therewith but who are still awaiting the allocation thereto of their respective plot of land, indicating the

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- (a) number of sugar estates not complying with the agreement in relation thereto, and
- (b) measures his Ministry is proposing to take against the said non-complying sugar estates to enforce compliance with the agreement.

Reply (Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): As the House is aware, the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) was introduced in 2001 under the prime-ministership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth to initiate the much needed reforms in the sugar industry. 15,550 employees have retired under the VRS and of these 11,958 have obtained their title deeds for a plot of land of 7 perches. There are, therefore, 3,592 employees who are still awaiting for the allocation of their respective plot of land.

With regard to part (a) of the question, there are a number of procedures that need to be followed for the allocation of land to the beneficiaries.

These include -

- (i) the selection of a suitable site which should be acceptable to the employees and approved by the authorities;
- (ii) application for a development permit and the issue of a letter of Intent by the Morcellement Board to be able to start the development of the site;
- (iii) seeking all clearances as specified in the Letter of Intent, namely clearances, among others, from the Central Electricity Board, the Central Water Authority, the Road Development Authority, the Waste Water Management Authority, the Traffic Management Road Safety Unit the Municipal or District Council;
- (iv) implementation of all infrastructural works for the Morcellement;
- (v) drawing of lots for the plots to be allocated;
- (vi) application to the Morcellement Board for the Morcellement Permit;
- (vii) preparation of title deeds by notaries appointed by the sugar estate, and
- (viii) handing over of title deeds to the beneficiaries.

The sugar estates, once in possession of the Letter of Intent from the Morcellement Board, have to complete all infrastructural works within a period of 15 months in accordance with the provisions of the Morcellement Act.

I am informed that the situation with regard to land allocation to 2,566 out of the 3,592 beneficiaries is as follows -

- (i) 467 are awaiting the title deeds to be transcribed;
- (ii) 530 are expected to sign the title deeds shortly;
- (iii) 130 title deeds will be prepared once the Morcellement Permit is issued, and
- (iv) A number of sites involving 1,439 beneficiaries are awaiting different clearances before applying for the Morcellement Permit and same be issued.

The above processes are expected to be completed within the next three months.

As regards the remaining 1,026 beneficiaries, the sites are either under different stages of development or awaiting letter of intent to proceed with development of the sites.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I have set up a Monitoring Committee under my own Chairmanship to follow closely on the implementation of the remaining projects so that all obstacles are removed and bottlenecks are urgently addressed for the timely

completion of these projects to ensure that the beneficiaries obtain their title deeds within the shortest delay.

**D. Y. PATIL MEDICAL COLLEGE - FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE
- REPORT**

(No. B/199) Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Science Research whether, in regard to the D. Y. Patil Medical College, he will state if Former Chief Justice Arringa Pillay presided over a fact-finding committee in relation thereto during the tenure of office of the last Government, indicating if it has submitted its report and, if so, indicate the remarks, if any, made by the said committee on the International Monitoring Report on Accreditation.

Reply: Following numerous allegations made by two former students of D. Y. Patil Medical College that were widely echoed in the press, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Board decided on 25 February 2014 to set up a Fact Finding Committee (FFC) with regard to the D.Y. Patil Medical College.

The composition of the FFC was as follows -

Hon. Ariranga G Pillay, G.O.S.K, former Chief Justice

(Chairperson);

M. Vasdev Hassamal, former Chairperson of the Mauritius Revenue Authority, Member, and

Dr Bhaye Dawood Jaufeerally, MBChB, FRCS, Specialist in General Surgery, Member.

The report of the FFC was submitted to the Chairperson of the TEC Board on 18 April 2014.

I am informed that, according to the provisions of the Clinical Training Framework for Medical Education, TEC is called upon to set up an International Monitoring Committee to recommend accreditation of programmes and ensure quality of same. The Committee has to monitor the Medical College on a yearly basis for the duration of 2 cohorts of students.

According to the FFC Report, four International Monitoring Committee meetings had been held between 2009 and 2013, each lasting for 2 days. In each meeting which included a visit to the premises of D.Y. Patil Medical College, a set of recommendations was made. A total of 62 recommendations had, thus, been made during that period.

The FFC had noted that many recommendations emanating right from the first IMC had not been implemented by D.Y. Patil Medical College at the time the Committee was carrying out its work. These related to provision of a hostel, mess facilities, lecture halls, a museum and an anatomy laboratory. Equally, short comings were noted concerning, *inter alia*, examination process, student attendance and the profile of lecturers. Despite these serious short comings, some of which still prevail as at now, the IMC in 2013 recommended full accreditation of programmes of the College for a period of 3 years.

The FFC also mentioned that the IMC in 2011 noted that there was no evidence of inspection or visit of the UTM to the College. The IMC equally noted that UTM should conduct regular inspections, document the findings and send reports to TEC.

I wish to further inform the House that the FFC had stated that the IMC in November 2013 did not mention in its report the amendment to the Medical Council Act passed in December 2012 which came into force on 01 August 2013 whereby students would be required to undergo and pass the Medical Council Qualifying examination prior to seeking admission to post graduate programmes. However, it is evident that it is the responsibility of the Medical College to keep the students abreast of any changes in the Medical Council Act prior to their admission.

The FFC also noted that the D.Y. Patil Medical College prospectus had not been updated on time to ensure that students of the batch of August 2013 would be aware of the changes prior to enrolment and prior to effecting any payment of fees for admission to the College. This resulted in students of that batch being recruited and made to pay the fees.