



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER 2015

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E.S.E. (2014) of 2015

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Members

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, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, GCSK	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Hon. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Local Government
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
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Santaram Baboo	Minister of Arts and Culture
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
Hon. Sudarshan Bhadain	Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance, Institutional Reforms, Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
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

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Madam Speaker	Hanoomanjee, Hon. Mrs Santi Bai, GCSK
Deputy Speaker	Duval, Hon. Adrien Charles
Deputy Chairperson of Committees	Hurreeram, Hon. Mahendranuth Sharma
Clerk of the National Assembly	Lotun, Mrs Bibi Safeena
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Hansard Editor	Jankee, Mrs Chitra
Serjeant-at-Arms	Pannoo, Mr Vinod

MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 37 of 2015

Sitting of 27 October 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 -

Prime Minister's Office –

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills (In Original) -

- (a) The Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No. XXIX of 2015).
- (b) The Good Governance and Integrity Reporting Bill (No. XXX of 2015).
- (c) The Asset Recovery (Amendment) Bill (No. XXXI of 2015).
- (d) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the *Maurice Ile Durable* Fund for the year ended 31 December 2014.

A. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development -

The Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (United Arab Emirates) Regulations 2015. (Government Notice No. 205 of 2015)

B. Ministry of Local Government –

The District Council of Pamplemousses (Traffic Centre) Regulations 2015. (Government Notice No. 208 of 2015)

C. Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection –

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Price Label) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. (Government Notice No. 206 of 2015)
- (b) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2015. (Government Notice No. 207 of 2015).

D. Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training –

International Labour Standards – Paper on proposed action by the Government of Mauritius on a Protocol and Recommendation adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 103rd Session (June 2014).

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.

PUBLIC BILLS*First Reading*

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

- (i) *The Constitution (Amendment) Bill (No. XXIX of 2015)*
- (ii) *The Good Governance and Integrity Reporting Bill (No. XXX of 2015)*
- (iii) *The Asset Recovery (Amendment) Bill (No. XXXI of 2015)*

Second Reading

**THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2014) BILL
(NO. XVII of 2015)**

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr S. Lutchmeenaraidoo):

Madam Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (2014) Bill (No XVII of 2015) be read a second time.

This Bill provides for the appropriation of an additional sum of one billion, seven hundred and fifty-eight million, two hundred and twenty-two thousand and seven hundred and fifty-four rupees (Rs1,758,222,754) in respect of services of Government for financial year 2014.

Madam Speaker, this is the second time this year that I am presenting a Bill to supplement an Appropriation Act passed by the previous Government. The first one was in April 2015 for financial year 2013. Today, it is in respect of financial year 2014.

I have to do so by virtue of Section 105 (3) of the Constitution which provides that when any Vote requires additional funds over and above what has already been appropriated,

those additional funds must be appropriated by the National Assembly through a Supplementary Appropriation Bill.

The Appropriation (2014) Act had made provision for government expenditure of a total sum not exceeding Rs83.6 billion for financial year 2014. The sum actually spent amounted to Rs77.0 billion, that is, Rs6.6 billion less than the total sum appropriated.

However, spending in four (4) Votes of Expenditure exceeded their approved amounts. These were by way of reallocation of funds.

The Votes of Expenditure and the sums requiring supplementary appropriation are listed in the Schedule to the Bill. Details on the items of expenditure concerned are set out in the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (ESE) that have already been laid before the National Assembly.

The main areas requiring Supplementary Appropriation are as follows –

- first, Rs215 m., to cater for expenses resulting from the early holding of the National Assembly Elections in December 2014;
- second, Rs756 m., for meeting the costs of compulsory land acquisition of various projects under the Road Decongestion Programme such as Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road and Port Louis Ring Road. In addition, funds were required for acquisition of land in connection with the Bassin Blanc National Park Project;
- third, Rs277 m., mainly for rehabilitation of roads across the country by RDA and implementation of community-based infrastructure projects by NDU. Additional funds were also required following a review of the rates payable under the Free Travel Scheme to NTC and other bus companies and operators as from January 2014, and finally,
- fourth, an amount of Rs510 m., for enabling payment of a minimum monthly pension of Rs5,000 to old age pensioners, widows and invalid persons as from the month of December 2014 including the end of year bonus. In fact, in line with our pledge to the nation, this measure was among the first measures this Government decided to implement immediately after taking office.

Madam Speaker, the House may note that the actual budget deficit for financial year

2014 amounted to Rs12.6 billion or 3.2% of GDP, that is, same as budgeted.

However, public sector debt, as defined by the IMF, reached Rs237.7 billion at end December 2014, that is, Rs6.4 billion higher than the budget estimate. As percentage of GDP, it works out to 61.5% compared to the budget estimate of 57.8%.

For the purpose of debt ceiling, public sector debt amounted to Rs209.3 billion. It represented 54.1% of GDP compared to the estimates of 53.2%.

With these remarks, Madam Speaker, I now commend this Bill to the House.

Mr Sawmynaden rose and seconded.

(11.40 a.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Madam Speaker, it is quite remarkable that for the fourth time this year, this august Assembly is called upon to vote an Appropriation Bill. In March, we have had the Appropriation Bill relating to the six-month period ending 30 June 2015, followed by the appropriation Bill relating to the financial year 2015/2016. In April, we have had the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (2013) in respect of financial year 2013, and now, we have the Supplementary Appropriation (2014) Bill in respect of financial year 2014. Once again, the Appropriation Bill is taken on a Tuesday so that Members of the Opposition cannot ask PNQ and PQs.

(Interruptions)

It is a fact!

Madam Speaker, we are being called upon to approve public expenditure in excess of what had been approved by this House in 2013, in the last Budget when hon. Xavier-Luc Duval was Minister of Finance under the Navin Ramgoolam Government. Why? Because as the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has rightly pointed out, section 105(3) of the Constitution requires the National Assembly to approve, by a way of a Supplementary Appropriation Bill, any money that has been expended on any head of expenditure, in excess of the amount approved in the Budget. This time, we are being called upon to approve Estimates - it is not even the final figures - of Recurrent and Capital

Expenditure to the tune of Rs1.7 billion in excess of the amount budgeted and approved in 2013.

Madam Speaker, every year we criticise the system; every year we criticise the fact that the House is put before *a fait accompli*; every year we criticise the fact that we cannot, in Parliament, challenge, block, disallow or even reduce the expenditure because they have already been incurred by the time they come before the House. But in vain! Every year it is the same story and this year is no exception. Government may change, but the system is not changing. It is comical to see, Madam Speaker, that the Government of the day, today, is having to condone the additional expenditure incurred by the former Government. Although, I suppose *la pilule est moins amère vu que l'ancien grand argentier se trouve toujours au sein du nouveau gouvernement ; c'était son budget*.

Of course, they are those expenditures which were not foreseeable and we have no qualms about them. But all too often, the additional expenditure is the result of lack of proper planning. All too often, Ministries and Departments concerned did not do their homework properly and underestimated expenditures. All too often, the excess of expenditures result from mismanagement, recklessness and, if not outright, waste. We cannot continue, Madam Speaker, with a system which encourages Ministries and Departments to spend beyond what Parliament has approved in its Budget. Under the current system, Ministries can overspend knowing fully well that Parliament will be bound to approve their additional expenditures *ex post facto* after the event. Truly, Madam Speaker, it is a futile exercise today to come before this Parliament, at Committee Stage, ask questions about expenditures when we will not be able to change anything. The money has already been spent. Therefore, Parliament is deprived ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't interrupt, please! Hon. Member, please proceed!

Mr Uteem: Parliament is deprived of its constitutional role to scrutinise the Executive and make it accountable for the use of public funds. We should be able, in this House, to question expenditure before they are incurred. Not after! The power of the purse - as it is currently referred to the power of Parliament to control the expenditure incurred by the Executive - is redundant when it comes to approving the Supplementary Appropriation Bill. Elsewhere, Government has fallen and had been forced to call general elections because it

could not get Appropriation Bill or Supplementary Appropriation Bill through Parliament. So, this exercise that is being carried out today should not be reduced to merely rubber stamping what the Executive has already done.

Madam Speaker, there are many ways in which we can improve the system. For example, whenever a Ministry expects to exceed the amount that has been appropriated, it could notify the Minister of Finance and the latter can come before this House with a specific Supplementary Appropriation Bill before the Ministry actually incurs additional expenditure. This was something which the then Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval did in 2013. He approved an Additional Supplementary Appropriation Bill in 2013 itself before the amount was incurred. Of course, to avoid multiplicity of supplementary Appropriation Bills, we could impose a threshold of, say 10% or 15% for each item of expenditure, so that only where a Ministry is expected to exceed the appropriated amount by 10% or 15%, it will come before the House for approval. I am not reinventing the wheel here, Madam Speaker. This is a system that exists already in other Commonwealth jurisdictions. For example, in Kenya, the Constitution, like Mauritius, requires Parliament to approve by way of Supplementary Appropriation, any amount in excess of what had been appropriated. They have to do it within two weeks of the amount spent. What is interesting in the Constitution of Kenya, and I quote –

“In any particular financial year, the National Government may not spend - under this article - more than 10% of the sum appropriated by Parliament for that financial year unless in special circumstances, Parliament has approved a higher percentage.”

So, therefore, in Kenya the Executive cannot spend beyond 10% of what had been appropriated in the Budget.

Madam Speaker, maybe the time has come for Parliament to set up a Budget and Appropriation Committee which exists elsewhere. For example, in Kenya, there is a Budget and Appropriation Committee to investigate, enquire into and report on all matters related to coordination, control and monitoring of the national Budget. The Budget and Appropriation Committee discusses and reviews the estimates and makes recommendation to the House. Maybe the time has come for a thorough rethink of the budgetary process. Maybe we should take stock of what is happening in other countries and follow the recommendation of the OECD and strengthen the power of Parliament in controlling public expenditure and ensuring

greater fiscal transparency, responsibility and accountability. Maybe the time has come to change, to move from cash basis accounting to accrual accounting and budgeting. We can learn from the experience of Australia and New Zealand in that respect. Maybe we can use fair value accounting when estimating costs in line with what is done in the private sector cost estimate practices.

But then, again, Madam Speaker, maybe I am being too optimistic. The only change which this Government has done relating to budgeting so far, is to move away from project-based budgeting to line-based budgeting which generally is recognised as a major leap behind. The truth is, probably, Madam Speaker, that the Executive is favour of the current system which allows them to spend, behind the back of Parliament, and not having to account for anything until after it is too late for Parliament to intervene.

Madam Speaker, turning to the Bill, there are certain ...

(Interruptions)

Turning to the specific expenditure that we have been called to approve under the Bill, there are certain expenditures which clearly were not envisaged by hon. Xavier-Luc Duval when he presented his budget in 2013 and we have no qualms approving them. There is, for example, the Rs200 m. additional expenditure incurred in holding the general elections. We have also no issue when it comes to the Rs715 m. that is being appropriated by the Ministry of Social Security in line with the Government decision to increase pension. But when it comes to approving Rs839 m. additional expenditure incurred by the Ministry of Housing and Land, we have serious reservation. This amount is almost 300% above the Rs300 m. that had been appropriated in 2014. What does this item of expenditure refer to – from the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure; the Rs839 m. relates to additional provision required for the payment of compensation related to the compulsory acquisition of land, in connection with major Government project - it is not even a complete list - such as Bagatelle Valentina link road, Terre Rouge Verdun link road, Port Louis ring road etc.

How come, Madam Speaker, that such a huge amount of Rs800 m. plus had not been budgeted in hon. Xavier-Luc Duval's last budget? Surely, the projects I have referred to were on going before 2014, and there is a planning...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order please!

(Interruptions)

Allow the hon. Member to proceed, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: There is a Planning Division...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, I said!

Mr Uteem: There is a Planning Division and a Survey Division at the Ministry of Housing and Lands, whose function is precisely to identify land for acquisition and compensate beneficiaries whose property is being acquired. Did the Planning Division and Survey Division provide the correct information at the time the budget was prepared in 2013? Madam Speaker, in July 2015, the National Audit Office submitted a Performance Audit Report precisely on acquisition and use of lands for Government project and not surprisingly the National Audit Office was extremely critical of the existing procedure, and I quote –

“Ministry of Housing and Lands has not always been able to acquire land ...”

(Interruptions)

“(...) on a timely basis”.

Let us put something right in perspective. I am not making any controversial comments, but the hon. Minister was in Government in 2010

(Interruptions)

...and they would still have been, were it not for Medpoint...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, please! Hon. Uteem, you have to address the Chair, first thing, and second thing, come back to what we are discussing.

Mr Uteem: The comment is from the other side. I am just putting it in perspective. They were together.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, I have said! Allow the hon. Member to proceed!

Mr Uteem: So, what the National Audit Office said is that the Ministry has not always been able to acquire land on a timely basis and in a most economical manner. This was mainly attributed to long procedure as well as the absence of a time frame for other parties to respond to the Ministry. The National Audit Office criticised the Valuation Department for the delay in assessing the compensation payable to people whose land was compulsorily acquired. The delay resulted in the Ministry having to incur millions of rupees in interest in additional compensation and we are now being called upon to approve what essentially are leeches from the former Ministry and their Officers.

Worse, Madam Speaker, the National Audit Office observed several plots of land, acquired and vested in the selected Ministries and Government Department on or prior to year 2010, were still not developed. Acquisition made without a firm commitment to implement project. So, we are paying compulsory acquisition for land that is not even being used. Madam Speaker, as a barrister, I have had the chance to advise people from my Constituency in connection with the compulsory acquisition of land for the Ring Road Project and I have first-hand experience of the lashes, the inefficiencies, the delay at the level of the Ministry. Now that we have a new Minister, I hope that the hon. Minister will come and implement all the recommendations that have been made by the National Audit in its report.

Coming back to the Bill, we are asked to vote an additional sum of Rs270 m. for the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, despite having appropriated ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please! Don't disturb! Hon. Jhugroo! No cross-talking!

Mr Uteem: Despite having appropriated Rs4 billion in 2014. And, in fact, although we are asked to approve Rs276 m. under this head, really what we are approving is Rs777 m. additional expenditure, but this is offset against an under-spending of Rs300 m. by the Ministry. MPI, Madam Speaker, is what I call a serial over-spender. If I am not mistaken, in every Supplementary Appropriation Bill that have been asked to vote and comment upon since I have become an MP, in every single one of them, there was a vote for additional expenditure for MPI. It is therefore without surprise that once again there has been

overspending under the item of erection of tents for religious activities and festivals. This time, we are asked to appropriate an additional sum of Rs5 m., which roughly represents 25 increase over the Rs20 m. or so voted and still ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed! I have drawn your attention that you disturb the hon. Member.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: ... and still we do not have any transparency as to how money is allocated. We still do not know what are the criteria used to allocate the funding. How many festivals and religious activities are we talking about? Does each socio- cultural organisation get the same size of tent? Now, that we have a new Minister, I hope again - I am a very positive optimistic person - that he will publish the eligibility criteria and ensure fair and transparent allocation of tents. We all know Madam Speaker, how Mauritians are religious, we all know the demand for tents whenever there is a religious activity, but then those tents should be used more to provide shade and shelter to members of public who attend these ceremonies and functions unless to provide a platform for political parasites.

The bulk of the additional expenditure not surprisingly once again relates to contractors' fees for work related to road resurfacing and construction of bridges. There are, in fact, two items of vote under item 909/103, more than Rs222 m. additional expenditure has been incurred which represents more than 25 increase on the initial Rs800 m. budgeted and appropriated in 2014. Under item 9/106, an additional amount of Rs121 m. has been incurred to meet payment to contractors in relation to work undertaken for upgrading of roads, construction and upgrading of cremation grounds, cemeteries and sport facilities. This item represents 50% increase in the budgeted amount of Rs237 m.

Now, Madam Speaker, how do we explain all these additional expenditure? Do they relate to variation cost, claims made by the contractors? Do they relate to resurfacing of roads which were not scheduled to be resurfaced? What criteria were used to determine which road to resurface and which sport facility to upgrade? Was the work evenly distributed across the island, across various Constituencies? In my Constituency, Madam Speaker, there are roads that have to be resurfaced, there are bridges that have to be repaired, there are sports facilities

that have to be upgraded and I am sure it is the same in every hon. Member's Constituency. So, what were the criteria used to allocate this extra amount?

Of course, if it is Budget time, at Committee Stage we can ask, and we do ask for a list of all the scheduled work, but if it is *ex post facto*, as we are now, we have no control, we have no way of ascertaining why one region has been favoured over the other, why one Constituency has been favoured over the other. This is why, Madam Speaker, I stated earlier that we cannot continue with the current system. We need a complete overhaul of our budgetary approval mechanism. We can't keep on approving expenditure which have been incurred without our knowledge. There should be discipline, transparency and accountability.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

(12.01 p.m.)

Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be very brief as this is a traditional year, year in, year out Supplementary Appropriation.

Madam Speaker, many of us were here to approve the Appropriation 2014; I was here. We did approve, after a lot of criticisms, which, as Members of the Opposition, we did. We appropriated the amount for 2014 and at the end of the year there were savings, there were expenses beyond what have been appropriated. When I went through the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure, the big question I asked myself is: how can you supplement something that was not appropriated for in 2014? The word itself does not stand good. There was no appropriation, how can you supplement it? I did not approve it, even if we were in the Opposition. The hon. Members in Government, at that time, approved something that was not appropriated.

At page 11 of the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure, under item *31121 - Provision required for the purchase of two lorries in replacement of old ones*. It was not appropriated in 2014, how did the Ministry approve to buy two lorries if there was no fund? Did the hon. Minister or the Ministry or whoever took it on themselves to approve this sum and, today, we come and put that in front of this House to be approved? I would like the hon. Minister to explain to this House, and to me personally, how come we are going to supplement something that is not appropriated in the last Bill?

There is another item at page 15 which is normally an ongoing grant that we give to certain institutions. Was that forgotten in 2014, Rs16 m. to the MSC Ltd? It should have been appropriated at that time. Was that forgotten, and then they woke up and say: ‘Oh, we forgot to give MSC the Rs16 m!’” Is it now that we are in 2015 that they come to tell us to supplement this and to ask for the approval of this House to pay Rs16 m? Here also, I would like the hon. Minister to explain to the House what is the procedure that the Government - I won’t say this Government but the previous Government, probably the hon. Minister will not be able to answer what the hon. Minister did, but there is an ex-Minister of Finance and Economic Development who is in the Government, but he won’t be able to take the floor.

(Interruptions)

On page 21, also...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Hon. Henry!

Dr. Sorefan: On page 21, Madam Speaker, here also we see something of the same nature, no appropriation, but coming to tell this House to supplement it. It does not fit in my understanding at all!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan, this has always been the practice. So, there is nothing new in it.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Speaker, if a Member tells me because I am a dentist, ‘*rasse les dents*’, I think you have to tell him that Dr. Sorefan is not *un arracheur de dents*. I am a professional!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan! Hon. Dr. Sorefan, please! Come back to the point we are discussing, please. You have got to intervene within the framework of this ESE. So, please, come back to this Bill.

Dr. Sorefan: Of course, Madam Speaker. I am trying to get clarification. If this is the natural way Government goes on, so next year we are going to have a lot of supplements that have not been appropriated. That’s what I am clearing.

Madam Speaker, I have been a professional for 35 years; I will not accept anyone to insult me in this House. A lot of people respect me ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan, please! As Speaker, I won't allow any hon. Member to insult another hon. Member in this House.

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I will ask a few questions at Committee Stage, for clarification. Like I said, I will be very brief. I wanted to know how we supplement something that has not been appropriated and you have answered already on behalf of the hon. Minister that it is the normal routine. So, I will just say thank you to you and to this House. We will come at Committee Stage for further questions.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sesungkur!

(12.07 p.m.)

Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development for initiating this debate today which will help to ventilate the issues which have given rise to the Supplementary Budget. But before I go into the subject, I heard hon. Uteem saying that the timing of this Bill is purposely done so as not to allow the Opposition to put their Private Notice Question or their questions. I must say that we have not gone as far as the Opposition last year when the Parliament was closed for nearly a year.

(Interruptions)

This is a serious Bill, this is an important Bill and it needs the attention of the House. Secondly, when we say that it is futile to debate, but this is needed under the Constitution. It is important for the House to approve the supplementary expenditure. In fact, the Appropriation Bill or the Supplementary Bill is a legislative motion that authorises the Government to spend money. It is a Bill which is required and any amount which is spent by Government needs the approval of the House.

Having said so, that brings me to another matter. The Bill before the House today relates to the Financial Year 2014. As hon. Dr. Sorefan just mentioned, there is always a problem in making estimates. We can only go to some extent to estimate expenditure for the

future. We cannot be accurate about expenses. So, that is why often we have a variance from the budget. You may have items which were not expected, which cropped up like for the General Election. So, this is something which is current and which happens everywhere in the world.

Madam Speaker, while this is an important piece of legislation, the House needs to approve those expenditures, yet it is equally appropriate to highlight that the present Bill is a mere technicality in the sense that there is no decision to be taken because the money has been spent. So, this Bill is a legal requirement, but we cannot do anything about changing what has already happened. I, therefore, do not intend to take much time of this House as whatever has happened has happened and we simply need the endorsement of the hon. Members. We simply need the approval of the hon. Members, the approval of the House.

As detailed in the Schedule to the Bill, the approval of the House is required in regard to four budget items totalling a sum of Rs1,758,222,754. I wish to deal with each item in turn.

The first item concerns an amount of Rs215 m. spent for the organisation of the last General Election in 2014 which allowed Mauritius to maintain its democratic principle and the democratic rights of our citizens. I sincerely think that this is money well spent.

Another item which has necessitated additional disbursement of funds is the payment for the increase in pension which amounted to Rs510 m. Again here, the funds have been applied for a good cause by providing a much needed financial assistance to the poor and vulnerable group. This, Madam Speaker, is a cost for social stability, as the hon. Minister often says: “an investment so that all of us can live in peace in this country.”

Furthermore, an amount of Rs755 m. has been spent for the compulsory acquisition of land by the Ministry of Housing and Lands for development purposes and is classified under item Capital Expenditure. This is good value for money.

Last year, when we went to the poll, already there was widespread concern in the public about the way money was being spent by the previous regime. This Bill naturally creates apprehension in the mind of the public with regard to the Road Rehabilitation Project undertaken by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, where an excess amount of Rs277 m. has been spent. The queries of the public were legitimate as it is true that the previous regime made a blatant abuse of public funds. We all know that the additional

budget has been mostly out of exaggerated spending of funds on election's eve to make voters happy, and in some cases, money thrown to the drain.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sesungkur, I am sorry I have to interrupt you here. Come back to the subject matter!

Mr Sesungkur: Yes, I am coming back, Madam Speaker. We all know the number of projects which have been executed and where the queries of hon. Utem are valid when we look at the number of projects which have been executed in Constituency No. 9 by the former Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport. The Minister gave personalised treatment to his agents using public funds by asphaltting private properties...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sesungkur, please make your comments on why this extra money has been used and query this!

Mr Sesungkur: That was the situation, Madam Speaker. The stark truth is that the previous Government had wasted public money.

The other point I would like to make, Madam Speaker, is that ever since the new Government took office, a series of decisions and actions have been taken to ensure that public money is spent judiciously and that we do not live beyond our means. For example, a new budgetary system was adopted as opposed to the Programme-Based Budgeting to have greater visibility and control over Government spending. The Government is seriously working to curtail our budget deficit sooner rather than later.

The Rt. hon. Prime Minister took a wise decision to set up a dedicated Ministry for Good Governance precisely to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the management of public funds. We, on this side of the House, are doing everything which is necessary to get out of the rotten situation we inherited in December 2014 and we will be coming with a new Bill called the 'Good Governance and Integrity Reporting Bill' shortly. We need a change, not just in laws and practices, but in ethics, culture and responsibility. All the above steps will ensure that any of the spending or abuse of public funds is eliminated and I am confident we are on the right track. I, therefore, support the proposal of the hon. Minister.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development!

(12.16 p.m.)

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, I have taken note of the various proposals made by hon. Members and wish to thank them for their proposals. Naturally, when coming at Committee Stage, we will have the occasion of seeing line by line items of expenditure and come with questions which will be dealt with.

Therefore, I again commend this Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ESTIMATES OF SUPPLEMENTARY EXPENDITURE (2014) OF 2015

The Chairperson: We will be starting on page 2 and I propose to take page by page. So, if you have got any question, page by page we will proceed.

Vote 1-5 Office of the Electoral Commissioner was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under item 21110 on page 2, *Additional provision required for the recruitment of two former electoral cadre as Advisers in the context of elections*, may I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether their contract has been terminated or they are still under contract with the Electoral Commission?

The Chairperson: Pending you get the information!

The Prime Minister: Additional provisions required for the recruitment of two Advisers on contract as from 23 May 2014 as follows –

- (i) Mr Sewnarain Awatar, former Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, and
- (ii) Mr Moorogessen Veerasamy, former Principal Electoral Officer.

The salary drawn by each of the above-named was Rs48,600 per month. The Advisers were appointed in the context of the review of the Local Government Act and the holding of the National Assembly Elections 2014 and the Municipal Council Elections 2015. The contract of employment of both the above-named was terminated on 23 July 2015.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: The question has been answered.

The Chairperson: Yes, pages 2 to 4! No question!

Vote 1-5 Office of the Electoral Commissioner (Rs215,422,993) was on question put, agreed to.

Vote 4-1 Vice-Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Housing and Lands was called.

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Yes, page by page.

(Interruptions)

Page 5! No! Pages 6 and 7!

Mr Baloomoody: On page 7, on item 28212023 NHDC – Grant to Syndics for maintenance of NHDC Housing Estates. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister the number of NHDC complexes and whether the grant to the *Syndics* is continuing now or is there another process?

Mr Soodhun: This is an additional provision required for the payment of management fees for the syndics for period 2012 to 2014, that is, in all 46 *Syndics*.

Mr Baloomoody: So, we are continuing with that grant?

Mr Soodhun: Yes.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ramano! On page 8 !

Mr Ramano: Est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre la somme payée à ce jour en terme de compensation pour la *compulsory acquisition* des terrains faisant partie de l'Avenue des Tulipes à Quatre Bornes ? Est-ce que cette somme là inclut aussi les différentes contestations qu'il y a, à présent, des différents propriétaires?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Chairperson, this provision has been made for the following projects –

- Bagatelle-Valentina Link Road;
- Terre Rouge Road-Verdun Link Road;
- Port Louis Link Road;
- Access to Tian-Li Industrial Estate;

- Widening of Avenue des Tulipes, Quatre Bornes;
- National Park Project - Bassin Blanc;
- Improvement of Quartier Militaire Road Bypass at Valentina;
- Phoenix-Beaux Songes Link Road;
- Construction of Savanne District Council;
- Construction of Stadium/Sports Complex at Rivières des Anguilles;
- Constructions of A1-M1 Link Road;
- Multi-purpose Complex at Parisot Phoenix.

The Chairperson: Yes, hon. Ramano!

Mr Ramano: La question est précisément pour l'Avenue des Tulipes. Est-ce que je peux avoir la réponse pour l'Avenue des Tulipes, quelle est la somme qui a été dépensée jusqu'à ce jour en terme de compensation?

Mr Soodhun: For Tulipes?

(Interruptions)

Mr Ramano: For Avenue des Tulipes, Quatre Bornes.

Mr Soodhun: I would request the hon. Minister to come with a substantive question because this provision has been made for...

The Chairperson: Yes. Hon. Members, please ask as to why this additional sum has been spent. Hon. Members cannot ask as to why up to date what sum has been spent.

Mr Ramano: La question, Madame la présidente, est-ce cette somme là inclut les différentes contestations en Cour?

The Chairperson: This is another matter.

Mr Soodhun: The figure that I have is Rs1,790,000. Payment has already effected and the remaining is Rs52,504.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: On the same item, Madam Chairperson, but lower down, item 31410(vi) *the National Park Project – Bassin Blanc*. Can I ask the hon Vice-Prime Minister what was the amount of money spent on that project and what was the purpose of investing in the National Park Project? Was it for the acquisition of land at Bassin Blanc? What was the reason for including this project in this Capital Expenditure?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, according to my information, it is 35 Arpents of land and for Bassin Blanc, and paid Rs53 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Lesjongard!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under the same item, with regard to the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister confirm whether acquisition of land was also done at a second stage with regard to a new alignment of that road?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, what I have, Madam Chairperson, is 27 Arpents and they have already spent Rs230 m., still we have to pay Rs19 m.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. On the same vote, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, later on, circulate on this amount which we have been called to vote. There many projects. Can we have a breakdown which can be circulated later on, project-wise; the land was acquired from whom and, in each case, *y a-t-il eu des contestations* and how much has been paid ultimately?

Mr Soodhun: Yes, I will.

The Chairperson: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: I am trying to find out. Once again, at page 8, when I read all the compulsory acquisition – I take up where hon. friend just left off – does this include any party whose land was compulsorily acquired, which was not satisfied with what value Government was offering, but had contested it, and later on, there was an increase somewhere by an institution that decided that they should be entitled to more money; and this is what provision has been made for in there, that is the question addressed by my friend?

Mr Soodhun: We will be highly delighted to answer if a substantive question will be put to me. Anyway, the amendments represent the mutually agreed compensation.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under the same item of vote, hon. Bhagwan has requested for the whole list. But may I know from information available to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, whether any of the amounts that have been paid relates to acquisition of land in the context of the light railway transit system, *métro léger*?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, yes, for the light railway.

The Chairperson: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

Mr Mahomed: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. On the same vote, with regard to the Ring Road Project, now, there is a proposition to realign that road, especially along Boulevard Victoria elevated with an elevated viaduct. Is the land that has been acquired, any at all, located on the original trajectory of the ring road?

Mr Soodhun: According to my information, I know that provision had already been made and, there was land which had been acquired for the previous ring road. Acquisition is being made for the ring road based on alignment decided by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Item 31410 reads *acquisition of land in connection with major government projects*, and there is a long list. I do not see the Harbour Bridge on this list. May I know whether the sum paid includes those compensations to inhabitants of Les Salines, especially Reserve Street, where the land has been acquired by Government, but not paid?

Mr Soodhun: I am aware that for Bain des Dames, partly has been already paid and also there is negotiation which is going on.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he can - with the list which my learned colleague has asked - send us a copy of the list of those at Bain des Dames, Les Salines, who have been paid so that we can be made aware?

Mr Soodhun: With pleasure! Seven owners have already been compensated out of the 66. If the hon. Member wants the 66 names, I am going to circulate it.

(Interruptions)

Fine!

Vote 4-1 Vice-Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Housing and Lands (Rs755,526,307) was, on question put, agreed to.

Vote 9-1 Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport was called.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister if he can provide a breakdown of each expenditure under this item of additional expenditure, to which association it was given,

to which NGO it was given, how much was given and, also, the name of the contractors who performed the work?

Mr Bodha: Madam Chairperson, my colleague is referring to item 22030. From what I have been given here, there was a budget of Rs14 m. which had been earmarked with a number of festivals over the year and the additional budget is another Rs5.3 m. I will come back later with a list of all the associations and federations which were granted additional tent facilities for the organisation of these functions.

The Chairperson: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: On the same Vote, Madam Chairperson, can the hon. Minister inform the House - my colleague has asked for the criteria which had been used for the award of this facility - whether it is still the Minister who approves such requests and whether the hon. Minister is coming with new proposals on this very delicate item?

Mr Bodha: Madam Chairperson, I have a list of festivals which were earmarked for 2014 for the budget of Rs14 m. I am going to circulate it. No, I don't approve each and every request with regard to tents. In fact, I presented a Cabinet Memo with a number of very clear criteria to all those who can be granted those facilities. In fact, we go by the list which we had in 2014 and we have in-house facilities over the island where we can provide about 4x3000 square feet of tent with in-house facilities which are not contracted out. So, we are not going to contract out for tent facilities over and above the budget. So far, we have been guided strictly by the budget provisions that we have had and we are in line with it and I am convinced that next year there won't be any supplementary budget. But, I will gladly provide to all the hon. Members the list of all the associations which have benefited. In fact, we may also see whether we can, within the same budget, do a better reallocation.

The Chairperson: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. On the same item, being given that there was an amount of Rs20 m. voted on the Appropriation Bill of 2014 and now we are coming with a supplementary of Rs5 m., will the hon. Minister give us a breakdown constituency-wise what amount had been spent? Following the question of hon. Uteem or hon. Bhagwan, we want to know the name of contractors coming from each Constituency and the details.

Mr Bodha: I will be very glad to provide the information. In fact, there were tenders which were launched for the provision of those facilities. But what happened is that the tenders were launched a few days before the festival and often there were not many people who made the bids - for example, one square foot is around Rs4 - and we ended up in cases to pay, for example, for Maha Shivaratri, Rs14 per square foot. What we are going to do now? In fact, we have launched the tender for the whole year at a basic average rate for all the festivals.

The Chairperson: Yes, hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Jhuboo: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Item 26313 *Current Grant - Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB)*, mention was made that additional provision required to cater for insufficiency of funds as the CIDB was not able to generate funds. Can I know from the hon. Minister how will the CIDB generate funds and whether it will come from the private sector?

Mr Bodha: No. In fact, Madam Chairperson, the CIDB receives fees which are paid by contractors when they register. So, we had an expectation that a number of contractors would register so that the CIDB would be, in fact, operational and be using its own funds. The fact is that not all contractors have registered. We still have a backlog and the additional funds are replacing the fact that we cannot generate enough funds for the Board to run.

The Chairperson: Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. On the same item 26313, it is stated and I quote that –

“(...) CIDB was not able to generate revenue as forecasted due to circumstances beyond its control.”

May I know what were these ‘circumstances beyond its control’?

Mr Bodha: I think it was because the Bill had not been presented. The Board had not been nominated.

The Chairperson: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: On the same issue, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the Board has been reconstituted, who chairs the Board and who are the members of the Board?

Mr Bodha: I am going to have the information in a few minutes. The Board has been constituted and the Chief Executive also has been nominated.

The Chairperson: Yes, hon. Ganoo in the meantime.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister explain to the House what use was made of that amount of money which we are now voting for?

The Chairperson: What use was made of that money?

Mr Bodha: Well, it is the functioning of the Board, from what I have here. Yes, the Board has been constituted. There was a grant every year. From the figures I have been given here, in the year 2017 the operational cost was Rs6.5 m. The Chairperson of the CIDB is Mr Gaétan Siew, the architect. For 2012 the operational cost was Rs6.5 m.; for 2013 it was Rs6.7 m. and for 2014 it was Rs7.4 m.

The Chairperson: Yes, page 11. Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Madam Chairperson, under item *21111 Additional provision required for payment of: (i) overtime to General Workers performing the duties of watchman*, may we have a breakdown which can be circulated of where were the duties performed by those watchmen?

Mr Bodha: The additional provision was required for payment of:

- (i) overtime to General Workers performing the duties of watchman - as the posts of watchmen were still vacant, and
- (ii) wages to General Workers posted to other Ministries/Departments - this was on the provision of basic salary.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: On page 11, item *31121 Provision required for the purchase of two lorries in replacement of old ones*, may I know from the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, this is no laughing matter, sorry!

Mr Bodha: Well, from the information which have been provided to me, Madam Chairperson, it is additional provision required for the purchase of two lorries in replacement

of old ones. The Ministry had proposed to purchase two lorries as they were considered essential equipment for the improvement of service delivery in sub-offices, that is, for the moving of furniture and materials from one Ministry to another, for the erection of *Salle Verte* and organisation of major sports, for cultural and religious celebrations at national level, like the National Day celebration, Maha Shivrataee and Divali.

The Permanent Secretary approved the purchase in September 2014. The letter was sent to the Financial Secretary in that same month. And, in October, the Financial Secretary informed that there was no financial objection for the Ministry to use an amount of Rs4 m. from its own budget. This was again approved on 07 October and the bids were launched and vetted on 14 October 2014.

Mr Jhugroo: On page 11, under *Item No. 22040*, with regard to *Office Equipment and Furniture*. We see that we have got a supplementary of Rs107,000. Can I know from the hon. Minister what we do with the old furniture? Is there any store to place these items because, at the Government House, we see old equipment lying everywhere?

Mr Bodha: Well, we will take care of that, Madam Chairperson. The additional provisions were required for the purchase of photocopy machines and computers in placement of old ones.

Dr. Sorefan: On page 12, under item *31113*, may we know from the hon. Minister the list of roads and drainage across the country that have been done for this supplementary amount? If he doesn't have the answer, he can circulate it later on.

Mr Bodha: I have been told that the old furniture is sold by auction. As regard to the list, I will provide a detailed list.

Mr Uteem: On the same item *31113*, will the hon. Minister circulate the list of contractors who have been awarded the contract to carry out these resurfacing and the amount they received, and also the procurement method used to allocate the contract to them?

Mr Bodha: I will certainly do that. But I know that there were two very famous ones. One was Super Builders and they had a contract of Rs1.2 billion over a few years, then you had Best Contractors who had a contract of Rs700 m. over a few years. But I will certainly provide the list.

Mr Ganoo: Under item 31113(ii) – *the construction of bridges*. I would like to ask the hon. Minister, in regard to the rehabilitation of the steel bridges at Tamarin, Rivière des Galets and Souillac, if he is in a position to give to the House the sum of money spent for each of these bridges and whether, in the case of Tamarin and Rivière des Galets bridges, there were cost overrun? Can the hon. Minister give us the original contract price for each of these two bridges and what finally was spent at the end of the day?

Mr Bodha: I will certainly do so.

Mr Baloomoody: On the same item, the hon. Minister just mentioned the names of two contractors. Can I know the way the contract was allocated and the procurement method used and, secondly, whether the additional provision we are paying is for additional work or additional extra time? What was the original price of the contract and what is the final price of the contract?

Mr Bodha: In fact, from what I have here, they were the list of works which were qualified as urgent and the additional provision was required for works related to road surfacing, road safety measures and drainage. The programme consisting of urgent works for an additional amount of Rs335 m. was submitted and was approved by the then Ministry of Finance in September 2014.

Mr Rughobur: Under the same item, would the hon. Minister confirm - as he just stated - whether it was an emergency procurement, and if the Ministry is conducting an enquiry on the contract that was awarded under that emergency?

Mr Bodha: I think the exercise is on. In fact, the National Development Unit is working on each contract because, from what I understand, there was a first *tranche* which had been paid for the first month of the year. There are still arrears of about Rs300 m. which have not been paid for works, which, because they were urgent works, often they did not have clearance and there was no supervision of those works.

Mr Jhugroo: Under the same item, with regard to these two contractors, can I know from the hon. Minister whether this case has been referred to the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, and if so, can we know when and, if not, why not?

Mr Bodha: From what I have been told, there is an enquiry. Some enquiries are at the level of the Police; the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms is looking at most of the contracts of the NDU.

Madam Chairperson: Page 13! Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Madam Chairperson, under item 21111(i) *refund of travelling expenses*. May I know from the hon. Minister how these travelling expenses are calculated? Is there a scale of fees? Is this a return bus fare ticket?

Mr Bodha: The information I have, Madam Chairperson, is that the additional amount is for mileage allowances claimed by the Road Transport Inspectors and Traffic Wardens in respect of checks and enquiries carried out throughout the island. It was also linked with overtime to staff involved at the Road Transport Inspectors Division.

Madam Chairperson: Page 14! Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Under item 25210, from the total number of buses that we are going to pay, may we know how many buses were out of order during that period?

Mr Bodha: From the information I have, the bus companies were paid Rs382 m. yearly. We have about 800 individual bus owners and I will have the specific figures as regard to the number of buses which were out of order.

Mr Bhagwan: On page 14, item 31113018, *Road Safety Devices*. We are being asked to vote some Rs44.5 m. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether this concerns the street lighting on the motorway and also the traffic lights which are still a big problem with regard to road safety? Can he give us details about the Rs44 m., how many new traffic lights have been installed, what action is being taken with regard to the traffic lights on the motorway?

Mr Bodha: The cost of street lighting does not fall under the purview of this provision, Madam Chairperson. But I have a list of the additional provision which were required for supply and fixing of traffic signs for speed cameras, additional emergency works at Plaine Magnien for the fixing of traffic lights. We had additional works for the construction of footpaths and drains at Chebel. We had a number of other measures which were taken to enhance road safety. I can provide the specific provisions which were made as regard to traffic lights.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under the Item Nos. 25110 and 25210, the rationale for the increase is set out as being –

“(...) to cater for increase in the number of beneficiaries”.

This is the wording of the estimates. May I know from the hon. Minister if there has been a change in the eligibility criteria for the beneficiaries and how many new additional beneficiaries were added in 2014?

Mr Bodha: Well, we know that we have an ageing population; every year the number of people who cross the 60-year line is increasing. So, that is why you will have a number of beneficiaries as from January 2014 and then I think this is going to be systematically the same for January.

Dr. Sorefan: To follow on the question of hon. Uteem and the answer the hon. Minister gave, that the number of beneficiaries are the increasing old aged people. But the hon. Minister knows very well that the old aged people don't travel on those high buses. So, it does not fall within the logic of paying about 13% increase. Will the hon. Minister justify the 13% - apart from what is written, the increase in the number of beneficiaries - increase to the original, when people are not really using the buses?

Mr Bodha: Rs37 m. out of Rs293 m. does not make 30%, it is less. 13%, yes. We have an increase in the number of beneficiaries as regards the old aged pensioners and, this year, we have an increase because we change the number of students travelling on buses. It was 85 and we have reduced it to 60 for safety reasons.

Mr Jhugroo: Hon. Minister, with regard to road safety devices, can I know whether with the Supplementary Appropriation Bill that we are voting today, there is any provision for the Plein Bois Road where we had several accidents in the past years and, if so, what are the measures taken so far?

Mr Bodha: This is what has happened in the past; we will have to see now, in the new budget, how to make provision for those accident prone areas.

The Chairperson: Page 15! Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: On item 28213 - *Provision required to meet one-off grant to the MSC Ltd. for extra lost incurred from the transportation of livestock from Rodrigues*. May I know from the hon. Minister what was that extra cost and why was it not envisaged?

Mr Bodha: Madam Chairperson, the information I have is that there was an additional provision to meet a one-off grant to the Mauritius Shipping Corporation for each extra lost incurred from the transportation of livestock from Rodrigues and there is a Cabinet Memo dated 16 May 2014 approving this payment.

The Chairperson: Page 16! Hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Can the hon. Minister table a list of all projects implemented under item 31113, as well as the names of the contractors and the cost for each project, please?

Mr Bodha: Madam Chairperson, I do have the information. So, it is going to be circulated right away.

The Chairperson: Page 17! Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Just like for the previous page, Madam Chairperson, can we also have a list of where those drains were implemented? By whom and how much it cost?

Mr Bodha: This will be done, Madam Chairperson.

Mr Baloomoody: Under the same item, may we know the procurement method used for all these projects?

Mr Bodha: From what I gather, there were tenders; there were district constructors and rates which were provided and on-site orders were made.

The Chairperson: Page 17! Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you. Under item 31113, *Other Structures*, with regard to “Additional provision required to meet payments to contractors for the construction of drains mainly in regions affected by torrential rains”. We had a lot of rain and a lot of money also went to some people, especially to contractors. May we know from the hon. Minister whether when they were allocated the work it was on a piecemeal basis, because of torrential rain, they just tell the contractor carry on with the work or was it on a procurement basis?

Mr Bodha: Well, as regard to construction of drains, the additional provisions were required to meet payments to contractors for works undertaken in the construction and maintenance of drains in areas where you had torrential rain. The maintenance and the money was, in fact, earmarked to provide each Municipality and District Council Rs3 m. for the maintenance of drains for the year 2014 in the context of also of the fight against Dengue fever.

Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport – Programme Code 9-1: (Rs276,878,547) was, on question put, agreed to.

Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions – Programme Code 22-1, was called.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Madam Chairperson, regarding *Rent*, 22030 ...

The Chairperson: Page 18?

Dr. Sorefan: Yes. Mention is made for payment of arrears in respect to NPF building. May we know what arrears are we talking about, for which year?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: From information which I have, I understand that payment of the increase in rent has been backdated with regard to some floors in the NPF building rented by my Ministry.

The Chairperson: Pages 19 and 20! Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Page 20, on the last line, item 22900. We are being asked to vote nearly Rs1 m. for “*Additional provision required to meet catering services for Lady Shushil Ramgoolam Recreation Centre*”.

Can the hon. Minister give us some details with regard to the person responsible for catering and how he was given the contract?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, Mythos Co. Ltd. for catering services for 2014.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you, Madam. At page 20, on item 22090 *Security*, may I know from the hon. Minister the particulars of the payment for security services, who is the contractor? Whether we have renewed the contract or extend the contract? How is it that we

had to pay additional fees and also a contract for alarm system? May we know the procurement method used for acquiring that alarm system and who is the contractor?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: For security services, it is Defense High-tech Security Services and Rapid Security Services. This is the only information I have for the time being.

Mr Baloomoody: Have we extended their contract? What was the procurement used to extend their contract and if the Minister can reply for the alarm also?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes. I understand that one of the contracts has been extended. As for the alarm, let me check! No, for the alarm, unfortunately, I don't have the information now.

Mr Baloomoody: I hope there is alarm there.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes, there is.

The Chairperson: Page 21. Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under item 26313 *Current Grant to Extra Budgetary Units – Additional provision required to cater for insufficiency of funds for: (i) Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board*, may I know from the hon. Minister the composition thereof?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Can the hon. Member just repeat the question?

Mr Uteem: I would like to have the name, the composition of the *Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board* and also *Chagossian Welfare Fund*.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: The Board has not yet been reconstituted. It is the Permanent Secretary who is acting as Chairperson as regards the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board. As for the Chagossian Welfare Fund, I will circulate the information.

The Chairperson: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Chairperson, on the same page, under item 28211 *Current Transfers to Non-Profit Institutions - Additional provision required to cater for insufficiency of funds for Lois Lagesse Trust Fund and other charitable institutions*, can we have a breakdown of this item, to which institution and also how much the Lois Lagesse Trust Fund received?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, from the information I have, it is additional funds of Rs475,000 to meet the increase at Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund and the other charitable institutions and orphanage in respect of capitation grant, inmates allowances, wages of attendants, payment of water rates, etc. I don't have the list; I will circulate it later on.

The Chairperson: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: On the same page, on item *31122 Other Machinery and Equipment*, again, it is with regard to the CCTV camera, may we know...

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: On which page?

Mr Baloomoody: On the same page 21; the procurement method used for the acquisition of the CCTV camera and the name of the contractor?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Additional funds for the supply, installation, testing and commissioning of CCTV cameras at SSS Recreation Centre and J. B. David Recreation Centre to increase security of residents and I understand that a bidding exercise has been followed.

Mr Baloomoody: Can we know the name of the contractor?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Let me check if the officers have the answer! Well, regarding the questions put earlier concerning capitation grants, let me see if I can circulate a document which has just been forwarded to me by the officers. Unfortunately, the document is not complete.

The Chairperson: In the meantime, can we move to the next question, please?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under the same item *21122 Other Machinery and Equipment*, may we know why we are providing CCTV camera to these two institutions?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: For security reasons and to better protect all elderly and make sure that there is no abuse on their persons.

The Chairperson: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under the item 28212 *Current Transfers to Households – Additional provision required for repatriation expenses and gifts to centenarians*, may I know from the hon. Minister the number of people who have been repatriated and what criteria are used to disburse money for those who want ...

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes. Good question! I have been informed that seven Mauritians in distress have been repatriated in 2014: five students from Ukraine, one person from Germany, one person from Spain. Moreover I have been informed that those persons have to refund the amount given to them.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Under the same item, Madam Chairperson, when the hon. Minister says gifts to centenarians, can we know how many centenarians we have? Can we know what is the number as at to date?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes. From memory, I can say we have about 109 and most of them are females.

(Interruptions)

The Chairperson: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Under item 31121, Madam Chairperson, *Transport Equipment - Additional provision required to meet the cost of a semi-low floor bus to cater for travelling of elderly and disabled persons for Lady Sushil Ramgoolam Recreation Centre at Pte-aux-Piments*, can the hon. Minister tell us the reasons for this supplementary appropriation, because we were told in this very House, in fact, that the cost of such a bus is Rs3.5 m.? So, what is the use of providing for that amount of money that we are being asked to vote for?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, that this is an additional fund to meet the cost of a 44-seater semi-low floor to cater for senior citizens, tours at historical tourist places in the vicinity of the LSR Recreation Centre for residents. That is, for proper transportation of our elderly.

The Chairperson: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. The hon. Minister answered my question on CCTV camera that it was for security purposes to the elderly and disabled persons. Is she aware that the building, especially J. B. David Recreation Centre at Curepipe, is not a secure place for the elderly because as per what we read it is on continuous maintenance? Will the hon. Minister look into it before putting CCTV camera that all the floors do not fall on those elderly persons?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Which building is the hon. Member referring to in Curepipe?

(Interruptions)

No. Which building are you...

Dr. Sorefan: J. B. David Recreation Centre.

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, I am not aware of. If the building needs refurbishment, then needful will be done.

The Chairperson: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Chairperson, I will again come to item 28212 *Current Transfers to Households – Additional provision required for repatriation expenses and gifts to centenarians*. I thank the hon. Minister for inviting us to these, I would say, very important events. Can the hon. Minister at least have a fresh look on the gifts which are given to our centenarians, well deserved gifts, because sometimes they are given gifts which they can't use? So, can the hon. Minister have a fresh look on that item and see to it that they are given proper gifts that they can use?

(Interruptions)

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, if the hon. Member can make some suggestions, well and good, he is most welcome.

The Chairperson: Pages 22 to 24! Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under the last item 31111 *Dwellings – Provision required for upgrading of Rehabilitation Youth Centre for Girls*, may I know from the hon. Minister where is the Rehabilitation Youth Centre concerned located, who made the

upgrading, who were the contractors who were awarded the contract and what was the procurement method used to allocate the contract to those contractors?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Let me wait for the officers to give me the answer!

The Chairperson: Can we pass on to the next question in the meantime?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Yes.

The Chairperson: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: I would refer the hon. Minister to item 27210 *Social Assistance Benefits in Cash*. We are being...

The Chairperson: You are coming back on page 23? We are already on page 24.

(Interruptions)

Do you insist on your question? I will allow you.

Mr Ganoo: I am sure the hon. Minister will gracefully answer this question. Under item 27210, can the hon. Minister give us the particulars of this sum of about Rs715 m.?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, it represents additional fund in connection with increase in pension rate in December 2014. I don't have breakdown of the figures, but from information I have received with regard to the basic retirement pension, we have about 181,000 beneficiaries; basic widows pension: about 23,700 beneficiaries; basic invalidity pension: about 26,000; and for those benefitting from the child allowances, we have about 16,000 beneficiaries.

The Chairperson: Does the hon. Minister have the reply to the previous question?

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo: Well, regarding the question put by hon. Uteem, I will circulate the answer.

The Chairperson: Okay!

Vote 22-1 Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reforms Institution (Rs510,394,907) was, on question put, agreed to.

THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2014) BILL**(NO. XVII OF 2015)***The Schedule was agreed to.**Clauses 1 and 2 were called and agreed to.**The title and the enacting clause were agreed to.**The Bill was agreed to.**E.S.E. (2014) of 2015 and the Supplementary Appropriation (2014) Bill (No. XVII of 2015) were agreed to.**On the Assembly resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.***Madam Speaker:** *I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours.**At 1.13 p.m. the sitting was suspended.**On resuming at 2.48 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.***PUBLIC BILLS***Second Reading***THE ARABIC-SPEAKING UNION (AMENDMENT) BILL****(No. XVIII of 2015)****THE BHOJPURI-SPEAKING UNION (AMENDMENT) BILL****(No. XIX of 2015)****THE CHINESE-SPEAKING UNION (AMENDMENT) BILL****(No. XX of 2015)****THE CREOLE-SPEAKING UNION (AMENDMENT) BILL****(No. XXI of 2015)****THE SANSKRIT-SPEAKING UNION (AMENDMENT) BILL****(No. XXII of 2015)****THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION BILL**

(No. XXIII of 2015)

THE HINDI-SPEAKING UNION BILL

(No. XXIV of 2015)

THE MARATHI-SPEAKING UNION BILL

(No. XXV of 2015)

THE TAMIL-SPEAKING UNION BILL

(No. XXVI of 2015)

THE TELUGU-SPEAKING UNION BILL

(No. XXVII of 2015)

THE URDU-SPEAKING UNION BILL

(No. XXVIII of 2015)

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr S. Baboo): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I move that the Arabic-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XVIII of 2015), the Bhojpuri-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XIX of 2015), the Chinese-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XX of 2015), the Creole-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XXI of 2015), the Sanskrit-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XXII of 2015), the English-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXIII of 2015), the Hindi-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXIV of 2015), the Marathi-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXV of 2015), the Tamil-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXVI of 2015), the Telugu-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXVII of 2015), the Urdu-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXVIII of 2015) be read together a second time.

Madam Speaker, Shakespeare once said, and I quote -

“There is no art to see the mind’s construction in the face”.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Baboo: Therefore, language, be it verbal or written, is an important means of communication and even more. My colleagues will agree that language ensures the dissemination of knowledge and values in a society.

It is, therefore, imperative that the pace be set for a robust and sustainable linguistic development. To this end, we have to review and prepare policies and strategies periodically to meet new challenges, new aspirations and ever-changing needs of the population. We consider our multilingual tapestry to be a blessing of our National Cultural Heritage. All efforts are geared towards the effective promotion of our ancestral languages with a view to preserving the cultural identity of all components of the Mauritian society.

Speaking Unions translate into action the cultural policy and tangible projects as laid down in the objects of their respective legislations.

Madam Speaker, as a matter of fact, the Speaking Unions' legislations were enacted at different period of time since 1993 and there are too many differences such as composition of Executive Councils, quorum of meetings, appointment of Auditors and their objects.

With a view to redressing the situation, I am proposing to bring significant changes in the legislations with the following main objects -

- (i) harmonise the legislations and place them on equal footing;
- (ii) make judicious use of public funds;
- (iii) adhere strictly to the principles of good governance;
- (iv) provide that the statement of accounts on the operations of the Speaking Unions are audited by the Director of Audit;
- (v) review the composition of their Executive Councils, and
- (vi) maintain the identity of these institutions in a secular manner.

Madam Speaker, this Government is bent on putting the right person in the right place. I would add, at the right time and at the right cost. We want to acknowledge the competency of our citizens and designate persons of high integrity and selfless dedication at the helm of our cultural institutions.

Our institutions should shine as models of management based on the principles of good corporate governance where prevail -

- (i) transparency of corporate structures, decisions and operations;
- (ii) proper risk management and internal control, and
- (iii) accountability of the Board to Government.

Good Corporate Governance helps to -

- (i) facilitate the decision-making process;
- (ii) ensure accountability and appropriate delegation of responsibility within and outside the institution, and
- (iii) confirm that decisions are made in a rational, fair and transparent manner.

Good Corporate Governance encompasses authority, accountability, stewardship, leadership, direction and control. We want judicious use of taxpayers' money by our institutions.

Madam Speaker, we expect value for money and a high quality service to the population and the objectives of these amendments to the Bills are to ensure same.

The creative industries are increasingly occupying a significant position in the world economy: Printing and publications, closely related to the promotion of language, have a major share in development. Culture must, therefore, be placed in the mainstream of our economy.

Our institutions must start tapping sources of finance and create both cultural and financial riches rather than surviving as passive revenue consuming bodies. They must start thinking out of the box, become creative and innovative. It's time now to think of increasing the social and economic dividends from cultural products and the creative genius of our people.

Madam Speaker, the quantum leaps in information technology and globalisation have significantly changed the lifestyles of our citizens. We have to reshape the pattern of cultural production, distribution and consumption in this world of texts, sounds and images.

We are in an era of knowledge revolution. We cannot afford to lag behind with a passive mentality and complacency.

It's time to move forward by democratising access to our linguistic landscape and Government-funded institutions. The use of ICT tools for the promotion of literature and books has become imperative today. E-book, E-bay, Amazon.com are some examples of the shift in technology.

Madam Speaker, I shall, now, delve on the proposed amendments with a quotation from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, at the launch of the High-Powered

Committee on achieving the Second Economic Miracle and Vision 2030, on Saturday 22 August 2015. I quote –

“We are introducing new and reinforced legislations before the end of the next Legislative Session so as to further stimulate a culture of good governance and rightness among all Mauritians”.

To this end, concrete measures have already been initiated. This Government is highly committed to the cause of arts and culture and to the creation of a conducive environment for their development in complete serenity.

The present legislations for the Speaking Unions have a number of shortcomings that are being addressed by the Amendments being proposed.

Madam Speaker, the main shortcomings in the present legislations of the Speaking Unions are as follows –

- (i) the Executive Councils comprise between eleven and thirty members which is a major inconsistency;
- (ii) some of the Unions comprise twenty or more members resulting in funds being mostly used for payment of allowances to members instead of the organisation of activities;
- (iii) the Executive Councils of the Speaking Unions are normally constituted through elections or nominations by ordinary members from among themselves. Hence, there are two modes of appointment for Executive Councils which is not considered to be fair and equitable for parastatal bodies funded by Government;
- (iv) some of the Unions expected to appoint Executive Council after holding elections amongst their ordinary members, have not recruited any ordinary member till now;
- (v) there is no provision for recruitment of staff in certain legislations;
- (vi) powers of the Minister exist in certain legislations only;
- (vii) in some cases, the statutory seat of the Union is at one place whereas the official seat is at some other place.

(viii) there is no statutory obligation for the accounts of the Unions to be audited by the Director of Audit.

Madam Speaker, the most recent legislations, that is, the Arabic, Bhojpuri, Chinese, Creole and Sanskrit Speaking Unions enacted in 2011 are more or less comprehensive, but still have some shortcomings. I am, therefore, proposing to repeal the other Speaking Union Acts and align them with these recent ones after necessary amendments are brought to the relevant sections thereof.

Madam Speaker, with a view to rationalising and harmonising the Executive Councils of the Speaking Unions set up in 2011, I am proposing the following amendments to the Principal Acts -

The composition of the Executive Council at clause 6 will be as follows -

- (i) four members having interest in the promotion of the respective language to be appointed by me;
- (ii) four members following election among ordinary members of the Union having a minimum of 15 members. In case of Unions, which do not have a minimum of fifteen ordinary members, I shall appoint the four members, until the Unions recruit the minimum of fifteen members and hold election;
- (iii) a President appointed by me from amongst the 8 members, and
- (iv) representatives from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Ministry of Arts and Culture.

In line with the principle of accountability and cost saving in terms of fees paid in a cumbersome structure, the number of office-bearers is being reduced from eight to six.

The offices of First Vice-President, Second Vice-President and Public Relations Officers are being abolished.

The office-bearers will henceforth be as follows -

- President;
- Vice-President;
- Secretary;
- Assistant Secretary;

- Treasurer, and
- Assistant Treasurer.

The members and office-bearers shall hold office for a period of three years instead of two, to enable them to implement a comprehensive plan for the promotion of the respective languages.

At clause 5, provision is made for the setting-up of such Ad-hoc Committee as may be necessary for specific purposes to avoid unwarranted appointment of numerous co-opted members for an indefinite period as in the existing legislation.

Madam Speaker, the quorum of all Speaking Unions is being harmonised as it varies from one-third to half of the total number of Executive Council Members in the present legislations. Henceforth, the quorum will be seven out of eleven members.

With a view to maintaining checks and balances and ensuring sound financial management, the Director of Audit will be the auditor of all Speaking Unions to ensure scrutiny as public funds are involved.

With regard to good governance and financial accountability, the Unions will have to submit an annual report and an audited Statement of Accounts on its operations.

Madam Speaker, with the aforesaid harmonisation, the legislations on the Speaking Unions will be more efficient and will satisfy the needs of the various linguistic groups. Therefore, the Speaking Unions will be legally empowered to recruit staff as per clause 9 of the Speaking Union Bills.

Clause 13 will make provision for Powers of the Minister. The official seat will, now, be determined by the respective Speaking Unions under clause 3(3). Transitional provisions have been made for the Minister to appoint, at the commencement of this Act, eight members of the Council as well as its office-bearers for a period of six months. Thereafter, in the event that the minimum number of members required is reached, election would be held for the four members amongst ordinary members of the union to form part of the new Executive Council.

Madam Speaker, this Government is committed in maintaining the *acquis* of the Speaking Unions. As already highlighted, the existing ordinary members will continue to be the ordinary members of the Speaking Unions. However, it has been observed that in certain cases, ordinary members are not being recruited resulting in a limited number of ordinary members being eligible for appointment to the Executive Council.

With a view to remedy the situation, the Speaking Unions will require a minimum threshold of 15 members else appointment will be made by the Minister. This will definitely trigger the recruitment of new members especially for those Speaking Unions which have not recruited any member since their establishment.

The Transitional provision will also provide the following -

- (i) the current “Patron” shall continue to be the Patron of the respective Union.
- (ii) the existing ordinary members shall continue to be ordinary members.
- (iii) any act or things done by the Speaking Unions under the repealed Acts shall be deemed to have been done by the new Unions. Hence, any affiliation obtained or projects started under the previous legislations will continue under the new legislations.

Madam Speaker, we are broadening the spectrum of the different languages in use in Mauritius to evolve in a multicultural set up as integral parts of our linguistic heritage. This will give a new dimension to the concept of mutual understanding and sharing of values enshrined in the different cultures making our colourful Nation, a model to be emulated.

Today, we stand to bring linguistic equity and open the ocean of knowledge to each and every citizen of Mauritius. The objects of the Speaking Unions are being reinforced by including the promotion of intercultural and inter-linguistic understanding and harmony through exchanges and participation in joint projects.

Madam Speaker, this is a landmark achievement in the linguistic history of Mauritius as language is a strong source of unity and nation-building. Eleven Speaking Unions will be fully operational in the days to come without any distinction or differences in their missions.

Thank you, Madam, Speaker

Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo rose and seconded.

(3.08 p.m.)

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Madam Speaker, I am sure all of us in this House believe that only by promoting our ancestral language and culture we will be able to consolidate national unity and promote peaceful coexistence amongst our multicultural population. This is why since the early 90s we have had many Governments and each Government has had its contribution towards nation-building.

We have had, in 1993, the first Speaking Union - that is the oldest one we have - the English-Speaking Union. Then, we had under the MMM/MSM Government, all the cultural centres. Then, under the Labour Party Government we had the Speaking Unions. We all agree that language and culture are the two sides of the same coin. But, when we look at the objectives, especially the objectives of the English Speaking Union which were copied by the subsequent Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu Speaking Unions, it is important to know what was the idea behind it. Let me quote from the then Minister when he introduced to this House, in 1993, the English-Speaking Union Bill, I quote –

“The purpose of this Bill is to provide for the establishment of an English-Speaking Union, an autonomous body, which would aim primarily at promoting the English culture, both in written and spoken (...).”

An autonomous body! And he goes further –

“The English-Speaking Union is an independent private organisation, established from 30 years of the world which sponsor a number of (...), etc.”

He was speaking about the Union which existed before amongst certain intellectuals, composing of Judges, ex-Vice President, QCs at that time. But the setting up of that in 1993 - they wanted to set up a non-governmental organisation which would pool and utilise resources for the promotion of English language, not only among students but among the population at large - comes at the right time and fits within the efforts of Government to promote quality teaching, etc. So, the idea was to have an independent autonomous institution which will promote language and this one was for the English-Speaking Union. He goes even further, and I quote –

“The Union would operate independently and without interfering in the work of the Ministry and existing non-governmental organisation.”

This was the idea behind, to have volunteer, independent cultural persons in their respective culture and language to promote their language. The principle was the same for the English-Speaking Union, the Hindi-Speaking Union, the Marathi-Speaking Union, the Tamil-Speaking Union, the Telugu-Speaking Union and the Urdu-Speaking Union, to have an independent autonomous organisation, independent of the Ministry, independent of the interference from any outside party. That was the idea.

Today, the hon. Minister comes and tells us that we have to move with time, we have to reactivate, but when we look at the law, what he is amending today, he is not touching the objective and function of the institution, starting from the English one to the recent one, which means that the objective and the function remain the same. What objective did they have in 1993? Same is valid for 2004 when we created the other Speaking Unions and same is valid today. Because with the new amendments coming and where the previous Acts are being done with, the Ministry is keeping the same objectives and the same functions. I am not going to read it, but it is listed in the new Bill. It is the same that is listed in the Act of the English-Speaking Union and all the other Unions. So, we are not changing the vision, the mission of the Speaking Unions. What we are doing is changing the vision and mission of the Minister!

Today, we are coming mainly with two amendments. What do that two amendments talk about? On the first one, we do not have any quarrel with regard to regulating their financing. We believe, and we have said it in our first report of the Public Accounts Committee, that, wherever public funds is used, and where there is scrutiny by the Director of Audit, we want even the Public Accounts Committee to have the authority to look into it. Concerning the financing, we have no problem because it is public money and it has to be accountable. But when it comes to the composition of the Executive, this is where we are going to have political interference. And when the hon. Minister said: "We are going to put the right person in the right place", histories has shown us that political appointees have always made misuse of public funds.

This is what we are going to have, political appointees! Because four of them will be appointed by politicians, by the Minister, by the Government and another four - in case there are no 15 - again will be appointed by the Minister. And what we have, apart from the eight nominees by the Minister, a representative of the Ministry, a representative of the Ministry responsible for the subject of Education - it is unfortunate that the Minister of Education is not here because I am going to quote her - and a representative of the Ministry responsible for the subject of Finance. So, on the Government side itself, we will have eight from the Ministry and three from other Ministries. 11 out of 15! This is autonomous! This is independent! This is non-interference! What the Minister is doing and what Government is doing today is politicising these institutions! Find an excuse, a monetary excuse, taking that opportunity to politicise that institution! Appointing *les petits copains et les petites copines* and have a control, and this is dangerous, Madam Speaker!

The Father of the Nation has said one thing: “You never play politics.” I have just said it about culture. And when I talk of culture, I talk of religion. We have been taught in this multicultural country that we should never play politics with religion, culture and language. This is what exactly this Government is doing today by putting the maximum people from their Ministries, from the Government side on these institutions.

Let me remind what the hon. Minister of Education - she is shining by her absence, not taking part in such an important Bill because the idea

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, please! You can't make these remarks. The hon. Minister may be taken elsewhere or she is not in Mauritius. So, please, don't make remarks about her.

Mr Baloomoody: She is on official mission, we are not informed. Anyway! But Hansard remains and I shall quote from what she had to say when the Telugu and Marathi-Speaking Unions Bills were being presented. At that time, the Ministry was appointing only one person. And this is what she had to say –

“We have passed a few legislations in the past. We have the Urdu-Speaking Union, the English-Speaking Union and I have gone through these Acts and I have noted that nowhere in these Acts was the Minister given so much power than in to nominate members and as many as 40 members of the Union. I wonder what was the rationale behind it. I believe (...)”

And she goes on to say –

“I do not think it should be for the Minister to decide.”

Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun was then a backbencher; she was speaking on the Bill when, in fact, in that Bill there was only one person appointed by the Minister. And today, we have 4, 4 and 3, that is, 11 persons appointed by the Minister on the Board. And they want us to believe that these bodies will function better! They call that democratisation. She mentioned the word ‘democratisation’ of our language, of our Speaking-Union - when you are dominating the Executive. After having decided to dominate the Executive, the Minister, when he was reading, he did not mention the Minister - and hon. Soodhun was looking at me, and we were both shocked.

He said: “I will appoint”, not even mentioned ‘the Minister’. When he was reading his First reading, he said: “I will appoint the president”. Who is the Minister today to know better than the Urdu-Speaking Union, the English-Speaking Union, the Tamil-Speaking Union, the Telugu-Speaking Union? He said: “I will appoint”. He is the one who knows best about all the languages, all the Unions! At least, he should have said “the Minister” and not “I”. But even there, is it the role of the Minister to appoint a Chairperson – we are supposed to have a team, be it of 13 or 15, or I do not know how many? The Minister decides to appoint the Chairperson!

(Interruptions)

Of course! This is directly controlling these institutions and directly telling them what to do and not what to do! And we know, in the past, how these institutions have been used for political purposes, for political mileage. We know how these Cultural Centres, these Speaking-Unions - even when there was no political appointee - have been used, but now it will be worst. It will be worst!

(Interruptions)

Don't say Ramgoolam! It will be worst, because you are choosing, you are appointing, you are the majority! It will be worst! You are going to do politics with these institutions and it will be used for political gain.

(Interruptions)

So, when we talk about these institutions...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Baloomoody: So, what we are doing today – now the election. At least the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life came forward to amend the Pharmacy Bill. He said that the election should be conducted by the Electoral Commissioner; he should organise, but, here, the Permanent Secretary will organise the election! Apart from nominating all the parties for the four poor chaps who are going to be elected, the Permanent Secretary will organise! You have to drop your candidacy at his Ministry, go and give your name, give your address, he would decide whether you are suitable, whether you are eligible to be a candidate, then, they will have the election. Why is it that the Ministry will decide to conduct the

election? So, we say today, and I will terminate here, this is the first step by this Government to politicise our cultural institution and it is a dangerous move, we are playing with culture, language and religion. This is dangerous. I ask the hon. Minister, the Government to review, especially when it comes to the members of the Executive Committee.

Thank you.

(3.21 p.m.)

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central): Madam Speaker, I am speechless. Speechless I am because today I thought we were going to talk about culture; I thought we were going to talk about Speaking Union, about language, the emphasis being again once more on culture. What I saw was a display of emotions.

(Interruptions)

And drama indeed! When we talk about language, Madam Speaker, we talk in the words of Edward Sapir who quoted that language is a feature of our daily use and we rarely pause to think about it; we just use it; we just display it; we just end up in a rhapsody, but we do not really think about what language means.

It is not true to say that language comes as natural as walking to man because wherever you will put man, he will walk and yet, wherever he will put man, he will talk differently. Of course, to put in a political context depending on which side you are sitting and which side you are defending; of course, you will talk differently. You will speak a certain language when we saw everything was right, but when, here, we are talking about reforming, we are talking about transparency, we are talking about good governance, we are talking about setting things right and breaking Boys Club, then we are to be blamed and the Minister is being called arrogant! Let us look at the different sections of the law and what it is meant to bring about! We had heard earlier on...

Mr Baloomoody: On a point of order!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus, please sit down, I think the hon. Member has...

Mr Baloomoody: I don't know how my friend interprets what I have said, but I have never mentioned that the hon. Minister is arrogant. I never used the word 'arrogant'.

Madam Speaker: Could you please take note of this, because I think you have just mentioned that hon. Baloomoody said that the hon. Minister was being arrogant. He said that he did not say this.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: I did not say hon. Baloomoody was arrogant. I did not say that. I just made reference to arrogance.

Madam Speaker: No, you misunderstood what I said. You said that hon. Baloomoody has said that the hon. Minister was being arrogant. So, he did not say this, please withdraw this!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: I take note, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

I was saying that language, Madam Speaker, is something that is, of course, influenced by culture, by tradition, by our environment. Of course, we are predestined to talk, but what we say and how we say is impacted by culture and it is not an instinctive legacy, it is an acquired cultural function, hence, my emphasis on cultural, be it religious, be it custom, be it act of people, everything will impact on languages.

In fact, languages are essential to the identity of groups and individuals and they constitute a strategic factor of progress and it contributes towards sustainable development and harmonious relationship between the global and the local context. That was the case in 2008, as stated, as was in the message of the then Director General of UNESCO and this is the truth of today. What these Acts, these series of 11 Bills intend to do is to give recognition but also go beyond and revitalise and create a greater symbiosis, and I will go into what is happening. The hon. Minister had talked about it and I will go about it in a minute.

According to survey undertaken by UNESCO some years back, 50% of the world's 70,000 spoken languages face the danger of disappearance from the surface of the globe. Therefore, for the hon. Minister to come with such Bills is actually to salute that. What he has done is he has taken recognition of what UNESCO is saying that our different languages are on the face of disappearance and he is coming to revamp it, and ways to revamp it are found through the Bills. We had talked about the English Speaking Bill and what hon. Baloomoody –honourable and learned, both, of course - had said that this actual Bill does not bring anything new. In fact, I would urge hon. Baloomoody to have a closer look at Act 17 of 1993

and he will see that in that Act, there was no provision for the promotion and organisation of literary activities and interchange of books, pamphlets, etc. and this is something new that is being brought about by section 4, subsection (g) of this Bill. It promotes the publication of literary works and newspapers and that is again something which is new. It promotes intercultural and interlinguistic understanding and harmony through exchange and participation in joint projects. That again is new and that is found at section 4 subsections (g), (h) and (i) of the Bill.

Principles of good governance are something that l'*Alliance Lepep* has espoused right from the start, be it in the Government Programme, be it through the dedication of a Ministry for that purpose. So, what is being achieved through these Bills is nothing less. What we are talking about is the Ministry of Arts and Culture is injecting colossal sums of money to promote these respective languages, these respective unions. But, at the end of the day, we are talking about public funds and I am glad that hon. Baloomoody, at least, agreed on that and he agreed that what we need is greater transparency. With greater transparency comes greater benefit to the society. Good governance, in fact, increases the organisation's purpose, it focuses on the organisation's purpose, hence, the respective Speaking Unions' purposes and the outcome is that the better good comes for each and every citizen of the country and the population at large.

When we look at section 14, indeed what we have through the Bill is that the Minister has greater *droit de regard*. In fact, 'greater' is the wrong word, I should rather use *un droit de regard* full stop. What was happening in the past was that the Ministry is here funding, providing funds to these institutions. Yet, he could not even have a *droit de regard* and therefore what we are having, public funds no accountability, public grant no transparency. What are we doing? We are merely doing what we said we are doing. Those whose mind is tainted and are bent on seeing the negative and the bad, of course, will only see through the glasses that they look at and will only see that.

This Government here - we are on this side of the House - is committed to saying and doing what we have promised and this is what we are doing. The hon. Minister may now and there are parameters set at Section 13. I beg the House to look at Section 13. The hon. Minister may give written directions of a general character. We are talking about general character to the Council. It has to be in consistency with the Act itself and it will have to be in the public interest only then the hon. Minister will give directions. We are not the kind of

Government which will say put our '*petits copains*' here and there, we are not this kind of Government. We are a Government dedicated to work for the public, to work for each respective union that we have set up and we are dedicated to that. Funny it may seem, but to those sitting on the other side of the House, we are bent on that and we will do that.

The House may find this funny, but what we had before was that the Council would act as it may please. The Council had no duty and there was no provision in the law for the Council to go and say to the Ministry: 'these are what we have organised'. Now, Section 13 Subsection 2 actually gives the power to the Minister to require the Council to furnish such information and in such a manner in respect of activities that the Council carry out. What is wrong in that? Again, if we are intended to go and see and ascribe motives, we will, through the rest of our mandate do that, but here, what we are saying is : Tell us what you have done, we have given so much grant, what activities have been carried out to promote such and such language, to promote such and such culture. This is what Section 13 says.

Now, we go further as regards the provision for general fund. The Union, as has been in the past, shall set up a general fund but it is now mandatory that all donations, all grants, everything, go through that general fund and all payments also are effected through that fund. Is this a Government or a Ministry that wants to control or is it the act of a Ministry which wants to actually see things being done in an accountable and transparent manner? We go further.

When we look at Section 17 of the Bill and compare it to the former Section 10 of the respective Bills which actually made it possible it was the way that it was operating. These Unions, through their Council, would select an auditor to audit the accounts but what are we doing now through Section 17 of that the Bill? We are saying that the Council shall and, therefore, it is imperative upon the Councils to act in accordance with Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act. They will prepare the Annual Report and submit it to the hon. Minister together with an audited statement of accounts on operations of the Union in respect to every Financial Year. So, what we are promoting, what we are enhancing is, again, once more accountability. We are not saying: you should not be there. Do what you do for the promotion of the aims and objectives of each respective Union; however, do so in a transparent manner, show us what you have done with public fund, show us how you have promoted that particular language, that particular culture.

This is what it is all about. This is what the Ministry of Arts and Culture is about: promotion of such respective languages and culture in this particular context. What is more is that now the Minister, himself, under Section 17 subsection 2, shall be able to lay a copy of that annual report and audited accounts before this very Assembly. These accounts that we are actually asking for in these Bills will be laid to scrutiny of this particular Assembly, something which has never happened before. In my humble submission, Madam Speaker, I shall say that, what is going through all these eleven Bills, there are no dark motives. We are here to increase dialogue, to increase transparency, to promote all these cultures and languages and we are doing it through the Bills. I think the hon. Minister should be applauded for this laudable and honourable transparent Bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Monty!

(3.34 p.m.)

Mrs M. C. Monty (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Madame la présidente, l'union autour de la langue est une force indéniable autour de laquelle se réunit, se reconnaît un groupe, une communauté, un peuple et en l'occurrence notre île Maurice pluriethnique, pluriculturelle, multilingue. N'oublions pas, Madame la présidente, que les langues sont les instruments les plus puissants pour préserver et développer notre héritage réel et intangible.

Madame la présidente, si nous faisons l'historique autour de la reconnaissance des langues, nous verrons que les Nations Unies ont trouvé un moyen pour les peuples du monde de faire l'observance au sujet de certaines questions convenables touchant l'ensemble des divers peuples. Ainsi, entre autres, le 21 février nous célébrons la Journée internationale de la langue maternelle. Ainsi, la langue étant l'expression propre de la personne humaine, d'une communauté, de l'ensemble d'un peuple et de la reconnaissance identitaire de chacun d'entre nous. Il est intéressant, Madame la présidente, de reconnaître l'aspect identitaire autour de l'observance de cette date proclamée par la Conférence de l'UNESCO le 17 novembre 1999 et observée chaque année depuis l'an 2000 pour favoriser la diversité, le multilinguisme et le multiculturalisme.

Donc, Madame la présidente, tous les mouvements visant à favoriser la diffusion des langues maternelles serviront non seulement à encourager et à soutenir la diversité

linguistique et l'éducation multilingue mais aussi à développer une conscience plus totale des traditions linguistiques et culturelles dans le monde entier et, bien sûr, dans notre pays et aussi à inspirer la solidarité basée sur l'encouragement, la tolérance et le dialogue. Ainsi notre pays n'est pas resté en reste de cette reconnaissance des diverses langues parlées et écrites et autour desquelles se tissent les échanges tant au niveau national qu'international. Les *Speaking Unions* en elle-mêmes se veulent être un espace d'échange culturel et interculturel visant à promouvoir tant l'expression personnelle que la reconnaissance identitaire.

Madame la présidente, nous devons reconnaître la chance que nous avons d'habiter un pays où les différentes communautés se respectent et où les différentes *Speaking Unions* se complètent et qu'on vit dans la paix même si nous savons que l'UNESCO a proclamé le 21 février journée internationale des langues en souvenir d'un triste événement ayant eu lieu le 21 février 1952, après que quatre étudiants bangladais avaient été tués à Dhaka alors qu'il y avait une polémique autour des langues de Bengali et de l'Urdu, et qu'ils s'étaient montrés en faveur d'une langue particulière. Il est bon aussi de rappeler qu'au Bangladesh le 21 février est jour férié en souvenir de ce malheureux incident et qu'un monument portant le nom de Shaheed Minar ou connu comme le monument du martyr a aussi été érigé à Dhaka.

Ce gouvernement, Madame la présidente, ne veut rien laisser au hasard et c'est dans ce souci de réajustement que viennent s'inscrire les différents amendements aux différentes *Speaking Unions* de notre pays. À chaque langue parlée et écrite, est accordée une place autour de laquelle s'inscrivent de nombreuses initiatives de développement et d'échange. Je cite le slogan de l'UNESCO qui dit -

« Dans la galaxie des langues, chaque mot est une étoile et tient le premier rôle. »

Et c'est ce à quoi ce gouvernement veut tenir et c'est justement dans ce but de donner une meilleure structure que viennent s'inscrire les différents amendements du nouveau Bill proposé. Il est bon de rappeler aussi, Madame la présidente, que les amendements prévus ne touchent en rien aux buts et objectifs de nos différents *Speaking Unions* mais ils viennent au contraire proposer une refonte du comité exécutif. Ainsi seront éliminés dans le nouveau *Bill* les rôles encombrants du premier vice-président, du deuxième vice-président.

On se verra alors, comme dans presque tous les comités, avec un président, son vice-président, un secrétaire, son assistant secrétaire, un trésorier et son assistant. Et aussi éliminer

le *PRO*, l'officier des relations publiques, rôle trouvé superflu au sein d'un comité judicieusement constitué. Toutefois demeurera en poste, un comité incluant le président et ses membres sur une période de trois ans au lieu de deux ans permettant ainsi aux membres d'être en fonction pendant une période beaucoup plus étendue et de mieux servir la cause pour laquelle ils ont été nommés.

Si une nouvelle législation vient régir les *Speaking Unions*, relative à l'anglais, l'hindi, le marathi, le tamil, le telugu, l'urdu, les autres *Speaking Unions* n'en seront amendées qu'au niveau de certaines clauses et le changement le plus conséquent est apporté au niveau du comité exécutif où nous voyons que le comité devra être composé, entre autres, des représentants pouvant montrer impérativement leur lien avec la langue parlée et aussi leurs intérêts et leurs engagements au niveau du développement de la promotion de la langue spécifique au *Speaking Union* à laquelle il adhère.

En sus des autres membres élus selon la sous-section 2, comme spécifié selon le Schedule, on verra une représentativité élargie où un représentant du ministère concerné sera présent avec en plus un représentant du ministère des Finances pour veiller aux dépenses judicieusement choisies.

Si on voit une autre composition, ce sera un autre aspect de la composition du comité. On verra qu'il y a aussi un représentant du ministère de l'Éducation à juste titre, car n'oublions pas que nous parlons de langues et de développement et du statut de la langue, subtile, moyen de communication et l'échange linguistique et culturel. De plus, Madame la présidente, il est bon de rappeler que l'identification dû à toutes les langues parlées et écrites se trouve facilité à travers les différentes *Speaking Unions*. C'est une bonne initiative qui vient naturellement ajouter - comme le gouvernement veut le faire - sa pierre vers la réalisation de cette reconnaissance des langues.

De grands efforts sont faits par les différents organismes sociaux culturels pour favoriser et préserver les langues telles que le tamil, le telugu, le marathi, l'urdu, le mandarin, l'hindi, le bhojpuri, le sanskrit ou le créole. C'est dans cette perspective qu'au conseil des ministres du 16 octobre 2015, ces amendements aux différentes *Speaking Unions* ont été proposés, ayant pour but de consolider ces initiatives devenues des acquis et sur lesquelles se base notre société pluriculturelle, pluriethnique et plurilingue. Société qui se veut tolérante, juste, égale et qui vise à faire une place au soleil de l'île Maurice à tous ces enfants et à leur donner reconnaissance et respect.

Madame la présidente, je veux, pour terminer, féliciter l'honorable ministre pour les amendements qu'il a voulu apporter et, sur ce, je vous remercie de votre attention.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Toussaint!

(3.43 p.m.)

Mr J. C. Toussaint (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to say a few words on these amendments. First of all, I would like to congratulate my good friend and his staff for bringing changes that, *comme on dit, Madame la Présidente, vont ouvrir l'espace linguistique et culturel de notre pays.*

Pendant la préparation, je me disais bien où est-ce que j'allais commencer parce que nous parlons ici de langues. Les langues sont vivantes et ici nous parlons de onze langues et de onze *Speaking Unions*. Et voilà qu'actualité oblige, arrive hier Jane et je me suis dit que je vais me baser sur ce que j'ai déjà entendu de Jane Constance. En passant, je la félicite ainsi que toute sa famille. Je l'ai déjà entendu chanter en français, en créole, en hindi en Inde aussi bien qu'en anglais, aussi bien qu'en italien. Voilà le riche parcours, voilà le riche espace que je disais, l'espace linguistique et culturel des gens de notre pays. Et je parle là, d'un enfant. Ce que mon ami, l'honorable ministre Dan Baboo, apporte avec ces changements, c'est de pouvoir promouvoir encore plus les langues que nous côtoyons journallement dans notre pays.

J'ai bien envie de répondre un peu aussi - ma bonne amie, l'honorable Jadoo-Jaunbocus l'a fait - aux critiques de l'honorable Baloomoody. Je lui dirais d'aller écouter la chanson de Dalida - "Paroles, Paroles, Paroles".

(Interruptions)

Il n'est pas nécessaire de faire le show. Il n'est pas nécessaire de faire le spectacle. Nous sommes là pour parler de choses sérieuses. Nous ne sommes pas nécessairement là pour ricaner à tout bout de champ, mais ce serait bon aussi que nos amis puissent nous écouter sans nous interrompre.

(Interruptions)

Oui, *good manners!* Alors la langue est un théâtre dont les mots sont les acteurs.

(Interruptions)

C'est de Ferdinand Brunetière.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, don't interrupt!

(Interruptions)

But you can't ! Cross talking is not allowed!

(Interruptions)

You are interrupting the hon. Member.

(Interruptions)

Mr Toussaint: *Thank you, Madam Speaker.* Donc, je disais qu'on parle ici de promotion de nos langues, promouvoir nos langues. Nous sommes, il me semble, un des rares pays où nous organisons, à travers le ministère des Arts et de la Culture, un *drama festival* – si je fais une faute, l'honorable ministre pourra me corriger - en 11 ou 12 langues il me semble. Les officiers sont là ; nous sommes un des rares pays au monde à le faire. Et moi-même dans le passé, j'ai eu l'occasion de participer dans une pièce française, créole. J'ai même aidé une collègue à monter une pièce en hindi et tout ceci vous montre le foisonnement qu'il y a autour de la langue. Nous avons, dans notre auguste Assemblée, pas mal de connaisseurs des langues. L'honorable Madame Monty qui vient de faire son discours, sait de quoi je parle. Et on ne peut pas aujourd'hui rester insensible à ce qui va venir, à ce qui va s'améliorer dans ce que nous avons déjà.

J'ouvre une petite parenthèse. Il y a en ce moment, nos tous petits de la *CPE*, aujourd'hui ils ont eu leur premier papier dont fait partie ma fille. Je les salue d'ailleurs ces enfants-là. Jeudi, ils vont avoir leur papier *d'Asian Language*. Et vous vous rendez compte donc qu'aujourd'hui, dans notre pays, nous avons des jeunes enfants de 11 ans qui parlent couramment et qui écrivent très, très bien, que ce soit le mandarin - ma fille a fait le mandarin – que ce soit le créole mauricien, que ce soit l'hindi, l'urdu, le tamil, toutes ces langues. Moi, je ne peux pas rester insensible et je ne peux pas sentir cette vibration d'entendre et de voir les jeunes parler couramment ces langues.

(Interruptions)

Et ce que nous disons ici dans ces différents amendements, c'est d'emmener tout ceci à un niveau encore plus élevé.

On a parlé de livres, on a parlé de CDs, le côté informatique sera un outil extraordinaire, l'informatique une traduction immédiate. On a qu'à taper quelque chose sur l'ordinateur et on a la traduction immédiate dans la langue que nous voulons. Et nous aurons, dans quelques années, à travers ces jeunes, ces petits qui montent, et grâce aux amendements apportés, ici, par le ministre, un peuple, une population qui va parler, qui va s'exprimer dans différentes langues. Quand un étranger va venir dans le pays, qu'est-ce qu'il va se dire ? Qu'est-ce qu'il va dire ? Qu'il se retrouve ! Il y a le monde qui est là. Il se trouve en Asie, il se retrouve en Europe, en Chine, il voit tout cela dans notre petite île Maurice. Sur certaines cartes nous n'apparaissions même pas et vous vous rendez compte, aujourd'hui, ce que nous sommes en train de faire!

Donc, soyons positifs ! Allons voir un peu plus loin que le bout de notre nez, s'il vous plaît, allons voir l'avenir, *si nou contan nou pays nou participer avek tou ce ki pe vini*. Et si je fais cela, c'est aussi, en même temps, l'espoir que, peut-être un jour - ce n'est pas le débat, mais on en parle tellement, tout le monde parle du créole mauricien - éventuellement, le créole mauricien fera son entrée au Parlement. Ça c'est un autre débat.

Donc, Madame la présidente, je ne vais pas aller dans les détails techniques légaux et tout ça. Il y a certaines personnes qui font semblant de ne pas comprendre. Tant pis pour eux ! Moi, je vois le côté riche de tout ce qui vient. Les langues que nous utilisons, ici, dans le pays, nous font devenir très riches. J'avais noté quelques petits points comme ça. Oui, quelque chose de très important - le ministre en a parlé lui-même - c'est le tourisme culturel. C'est à travers justement ces amendements que nous pouvons emmener tout cela. Ce serait intéressant. Je prends un exemple, pour les Chinois qui viennent dans le pays pour voir les petits mauriciens, les petits africains - nous faisons partie du continent africain - et leur dire *ni hao, she she*. Ils seront ébahis, ils seront contents de voir tout cela.

(Interruptions)

Non, *mon appran ek mo tifi*. Cela ne va pas se faire comme ça. Il faut qu'il y ait des cadres, il faut qu'il y ait des structures, il faut mettre de l'ordre et c'est tout cela que ces amendements apportent.

Pour terminer, je vais citer une petite phrase d'un *Nobel Prize Winner in Literature in 1956*, Juan Ramón Jiménez qui nous dit –

«Qui apprend une nouvelle langue acquiert une nouvelle âme».

Donc, chers amis, commencez à apprendre quelque chose de nouveau - il y a tout plein - une nouvelle langue. Essayez et éventuellement, vous aurez une nouvelle âme.

Merci beaucoup Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

(3.54 p.m.)

Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, firstly, let me start by congratulating the Minister of Arts and Culture for having brought this legislation which, in fact, is going to revolutionise the Speaking Unions functioning in this country for the first time.

Let me remind Members of this House that it is through this Minister, hon. Baboo, that we had the refurbishment of Serge Constantin Theatre at Vacoas which was in a dilapidated condition. He also transformed the Cultural Centre Trust by making it a more accountable and more transparent institution in Mauritius. It is his Ministry currently working on the law that is going to revolutionise and modernise the Rights Management Society, which society, today, is in a shame condition when you look at what happens with the Rights Management Society and how copyright issues are affected in this country.

Madam Speaker, after having heard all hon. Members, who have intervened so far, from the other side of the House and from this side of the House, it is an undeniable fact, it is undeniable that language promotes culture, language promotes the spirit of nationalism, language promotes identity. We are one of the rare countries in the world where we have a blend of languages that exist. They are not simply there in their existence, but they are there in the usage in everyday life, whether in written form or in spoken form and these languages reflect our culture, our tradition, our religion, and, with this richness of tradition, culture and religion, today, we are a society that sets example of what we call: living in peace and harmony.

We should never forget the objective of this Government that we are trying to promote, firstly, to bring economic miracle, *l'harmonie sociale et la paix sociale*. And how do we bring that? We bring that by virtue of acting in a way that we make everybody in this country feel that they belong to this country, to a community, to a cultural identity and to a society that is knitted to bring economic development in our country.

Now, my friend Baboo, the hon. Minister, has been vehemently criticised by hon. Baloomoody, insofar as how the Minister is going to nominate, how the PSC is going to nominate. But, let me remind him one thing. The entire objective of introducing this legislation is to bring transparency, is to bring harmony as between other laws that exist in the country. Now, what do we have in one of the clauses of this legislation? The Director of Audit will audit the accounts of all the Unions. Now, are we going to say that the Office of the Director of Audit is not an independent body; the Auditor is not an independent person? Is this politics that my hon. friend has referred to? Now, let us look at just a few of them...

Mr Baloomoody: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I never referred the Director of Audit of doing any politics. I referred to the Members. I have much respect for the Director of Audit and I would like that my friend withdraw or if he did not understand what I have said I hope that now he understands because we agree that the Director of Audit should audit the accounts and we are for it. I have never mentioned that we are playing politics. This is an issue that we should not play politics.

Mr Rutnah: I am grateful to the point that has been raised by hon. Baloomoody. I never said that he referred to the Director of Audit as not being an independent person. What I said, I asked the question rhetorically that: are we going to say insofar as accountability is concerned, that the Office of the Director of Audit is not an independent office? I asked the question rhetorically because there was allegation made that this Government, in particular the Minister, is going to politicise the issue.

Now, let us talk about politics a little bit. Let us look at the previous legislation, the one he referred to, for example. Let us look at section 6 (4) of the English-Speaking Union. What section 6 (4) of the English-Speaking Union, the precedent one, says, is as follows –

“Notwithstanding this section, the members of the Committee and the office bearers of the Union shall be the persons specified in the Schedule.”

Now, let us look at the Schedule - a few names only. The Schedule comprises of - I am not saying he is a politician or he is involved in politics, that is a matter for people to draw conclusion –

- Prof. Jagdish Manrakhan;
- a representative of the Prime Minister’s Office;
- a representative of the Ministry of External Affairs;

- a representative of the Ministry of Education & Science;
- a representative of the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Leisure and Reform Institutions...

(Interruptions)

Mamma mia!

(Interruptions)

Goodness! Gracious me! If this was not politics in action, then what are we going to term this?

Now, let us look at, for example, the Hindi-Speaking Union, without going into details of all the Unions. Let us have a look at section 5 (3) –

“The office bearers of the Council shall be the persons specified in the Second Schedule to the Act.”

Now, let us look at the names on the Second Schedule of the Act –

- Mr Deepchand Beeharry;
- a representative of the Hindi Pracharini Sabha;
- a representative of the Ministry of Education & Science;
- a representative of the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Youth Development.

Then we have got a number of names –

- Mr Deotam Santokhee, and
- Mrs Meenakshi Seetulsingh.

Jesus Christ! Are we going to say...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I think it is good that you restrain yourself to the Bill without making any abusive comments, please!

Mr Rutnah: I apologise if the word ‘Jesus Christ’ offends the House today.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, I am not saying that one word is offending the House or the other word. I am just telling you to restrain yourself to the parameters of the Bill. You address yourself to the Speaker and if you could restrain yourself from saying “mamma mia” or what not! Please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Rutnah: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

I am just loving this debate and that is why I am coming with all these. But, I will now deal strictly with what is happening in this House today.

Now, at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, after I gave all these examples of the endemic culture of political control that existed and today the changes that the Minister is bringing in this House, the changes that he is bringing are, firstly, to harmonise the legislation and place them on equal footing. Secondly, to make judicious use of public funds. Taxpayers’ money should be used judiciously and without that money being abused by any institution that exists in this country. Thirdly, to adhere strictly to the principle of good governance. We have a mandate from the people, we have a mandate from the nation to ensure that good governance becomes the culture in this country and that is why this Government has created a Ministry specifically designated to Good Governance.

Very soon, when in this House there will be a Good Governance and Integrity Reporting Bill that will come to actually reinforce this principle of good governance that today is concerned with this Bill, and the Unions will have an obligation to come up with accounts to show how they have spent taxpayers’ money and, as I said earlier on, the Director of Audit will have a bird’s eye view on how they are using the money, I am sure any misuse of funds will be chased and those who misuse those funds will be accountable somewhere somehow.

The review of the composition of the Executive Council and maintain the identity of these institutions in a secular manner, of course, without revising the Executive Council we will lag behind and, what we are doing today is to ensure that those who are going to sit on

that Executive Council will not do politics. They are going to promote the Speaking Unions. They are going to promote the culture. They are going to promote identity in this country.

Madam Speaker, as I said, this is for the first time that such a Bill has been presented in this House which is compatible and compliant with the mission statement of this Government.

On this note, Madam Speaker, I am honoured and with great pride I say thank you that I have been given the opportunity today to intervene on this Bill.

(4.08 p.m.)

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Let me say, Madam Speaker, that I am also honoured to be able to participate in this debate and, as parliamentary tradition demands, it is my right nay, but my duty as well to not only listen to all Orators who have addressed this august Assembly on this particular Bill but I should, as I have just stated, parliamentary tradition dictates that I should also come up with what I believe the Bill says. But, also rebut whatever has been said if I believe that whatever has been said is devoid of any merit, and if I am of the view that whoever made certain statements in this august Assembly – stated whatever he said in a way that he did not understand what he was saying – maybe I should clarify matters.

I have listened to everyone today and none of us have addressed the very important element: do we really need to have Speaking Unions? If we do really need to have them as organisations that are created to be separate to cultural centres, is it really a good policy decision?

That is the question that one should ask oneself. The reason why I asked that is the following: true it is that we have an advantage as a country, a country where we have people who have come from various corners of the world and who have brought their cultures, religions and their languages. When we put all those elements together, it does indeed potentially, I say, create such a dynamism that can really propel our country to new heights. Have we managed, as a nation, to put together all those various elements of different languages that make us inherently a strong people? Have we managed to bring it together and turn it into energy that could propel us forward as a nation? And the answer, in my humble view, is no, we have not.

I remember at a time when I went to Geneva for a Conference - and many friends in this august Assembly have attended conferences in Geneva only recently, if I am not mistaken. When you go to all those international conferences what you do see are small booths; booths where you find translators, instant translators. I was happy one day when I was there as the former Minister of Labour and I had this young man who came to touch my shoulder. He introduced himself and I was so surprised seeing this young man and he spoke Creole to me. He said that he is from Mauritius. He was not more than 24 years old. He was working in Geneva and was appointed by the United Nations to carry out translation for this activity of the organisation for migration.

(Interruptions)

As an interpreter! He was there doing a fantastic job. He told me that he decided to take it upon himself to come over to Geneva, go to a school, be qualified as an interpreter and, at the age of 24, he was so happy that he was earning more than €7,000 a month. At 24!

When I looked at him, it made me so proud to see this young Mauritian man, who had taken it upon himself, he could not obtain the training in Mauritius because the exact training for him to be qualified to work for the United Nations or any other international organisation, is not available in Mauritius. So, he searched the Internet, in his thirst for knowledge, in his thirst for betterment, decided to take it upon himself. Coming from a very humble background, sacrificed himself and his parents also sacrificed themselves and paid for him to go to Geneva and become this vibrant young man who was, once again, made the pride of our country through his ability to master what we have as the basis of knowledge for languages, bring it in such a way and turn it into a way that he can earn his money on the international scene. Have we, as a nation, managed to do it?

I looked at the website of Arts and Culture of the Government of the United Kingdom and it says that languages not only - as well as arts - can bring us together as a people and sure create national unity that we so desire, that we dream of, that we must continuously try to work for and strive towards. But it also ensures that languages can propel the country to economic success. So, the question is: has Mauritius used languages, that is, our forte, from babe in arms - the children of this country learned various languages - when we are still infants, we learn not one but sometimes three or even four languages. From the ancient days in Mauritius, when people started going to all religious schools for languages; from the times in the villages when we had *baitkas* to the times of today when we learn languages in

different modern means. The strength of this country, the strength of our people is that we have the ability to master various languages. But have we used it to make it an economic strength? The answer is: no, we have not.

The pity is that I expected the hon. Minister who only recently stated that he wanted to make of Arts and Culture another pillar of our economy. This is an opportunity that has been missed. Because when you look at the objects of each and every Bill, when you look at the functions of each and every Speaking Union, never a single moment do we have in there as you have in the United Kingdom that the object of arts and culture is to propel a nation to economic success. Nowhere in there is this very simple idea mentioned. The reason why it is not mentioned is because at the seat of Arts and Culture – and here I am not blaming the Minister, but I am saying that his role is to administer that proper policy decisions are taken.

What I am saying here is that at the seat of the Arts and Culture, it has always been the case that they do not see it as a potential for an economic force. I am not saying only you from the moment that you become Minister; it is not only since he has become Minister. It has been the case for the past 30 years or even more that no-one has seen language as a way of going forward as a strong economic force. England does not have what we have; France does not have what we have; Spain does not have what we have. We have it!

In Mauritius, we have the ability to master English and French, let alone other languages. Imagine the strength of a people that can do that. Just go to the websites and look at jobs offers, just go to international job offers and look for what they look; bilingual people. Imagine if we could put that on our side and make us economically strong! Look at the beaches of Mauritius; look at all the sellers of various wears to tourists, people who have not been to school, who, all of a sudden, master Italian, German, Russian, after simply having been exposed to tourists from those various countries and they speak those languages as though they were native speakers! What a strength that, as a people, we possess and we should really look at that element! Because if we have it in our DNA, as a people to master languages, it is something that other countries look at with jealousy and envy.

So, I would have expected, Madam Speaker, that this element - since the hon. Minister has already said that he wanted to turn Arts and Culture into a pillar of our economy - should have been seen into this Bill; it is an opportunity that has been missed; make this piece of legislation something different, something that has never existed before, be different

and there to be different to previous Ministers of Arts and Culture. There to be better and, unfortunately, it is an opportunity that has been missed.

(Interruptions)

This is my view.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Mohamed: When I look at this Bill and I maintain that it is an opportunity that has been missed, it is because I will get to the rebuttal element of my intervention.

Hon. Rutnah talks about – and I love seeing hon. Rutnah smile because he knows what’s coming and he knows exactly what’s coming - *Wohi hota hai jo manzoore khuda hota hai!* He knows exactly what is going to come. I hope so. I am causing the suspense. I mean we are not trying to be over-dramatic, but suspense we need to have it. He talked about the English-Speaking Union and he talked about a Schedule of the English-Speaking Union, the old law with glee, with such a smile that he usually shows us. How he is so happy with himself! Hon. Rutnah came up and said: “Madam Speaker, we have Professor Jagdish Manrakhan there”, he was obviously laying the blame of what is in the Schedule of that particular old piece of legislation at the doorstep of the previous Government or Governments. He thought that what he was doing is scoring a very important point because just before saying that, he said he was going to take care of the politic side and being a politician, normally we expect him to score political points. That was an own goal and beautifully executed in such a style that no one would want to even copy him. So, how he masterfully said: “we are going to deal with politics now, we are going to deal - look at what they did in the past”, Professor Manrakhan...

(Interruptions)

That is difficult.

Madam Speaker: No cross talking!

Mr Mohamed: He was expected to make everyone in this august Assembly believe and obviously he’s learning very fast, each and every time that he hears something, you see his head turns slightly up looking at the press gallery ...

(Interruptions)

I have taken many years to learn that but the good thing is that in the rank of Government, Madam Speaker, they are fast learners, they are very fast learners but then again if only he had used the small inclination in his head to look at his speech and look at the law he would have seen 1993 and you see now he is shaking his head saying, my God I should have read better!

I guess when he saw me stand up and said 'I would rebut what he has to say', he thought to himself - have I missed something there, what is he going to come up with. I'll come up with nothing else but a simple reading exercise - '1993'. He has only the...

(Interruptions)

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

Mr Mohamed: So coming back to that issue - there is more to come, unfortunately. The great thing about this debate today, Madam Speaker, is that even colleagues on the other side - and I call them colleagues former, future or otherwise I don't know - are enjoying the blunder of hon. Rutnah.

Even people on his side of the House are all smiles and are laughing, and really being fair and accepting and agreeing; admitting that blunder there was and he should have read better. Now, I fear for him, I guess at the next Parliamentary meeting he would be called to order and he would be told: next time that you make a speech ensure that you read who was President then - it was hon. Cassam Uteem President of Republic, it was Sir Anerood Jugnauth Prime Minister. Let me explain the reasoning behind it. It was an English Speaking Union that already existed and hon. Baloomoody kindly passed me on the Hansard for those days when that Bill came and a little reading exercise carried within a few seconds here just when the hon. Member was speaking allowed me to see where he went wrong.

Now, having said that, the whole object of this whole debate when I have heard everyone here is to ensure the independence of the Unions, but before I get to the independence of the Unions, let me just talk about whether or not we need Speaking Unions. Because no one has really talked about it and the reason why people try to avoid speaking about this is what: because sometimes people view it as politically incorrect to even go and challenge the idea of saying why should we create Speaking Unions. I believe it in this day and age to be politically correct to try to see and analyse independently whether it goes against the previous Government's policy to whom I belong.

Sometimes hon. Soodhun also belonged to that Government, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval belonged to that Government, hon. Henry belonged to that Government; hon. Sinatambou belonged to that Government, at some point in time, not recently. But we all have to look at

what we have done in the past and say maybe we should look at ourselves and criticise constructively.

Do we need unions? Already we have Islamic Cultural Centre, we have different cultural centres. Imagine and let us analyse as hon. Members, Madam Speaker, what is the cost of having a Speaking Union and a Cultural Centre? I could have proposed that the Islamic cultural Centre simply has a department where you have the Urdu there and you have Arabic as well there. It could have been basically amalgamated. You could have a merger of a Cultural Centre and a Speaking Union in order to be more efficient in the work, in order, to be more economically efficient and in order *pour ne pas avoir du gaspillage, parce que c'est du gaspillage*. Let us not forget that taxpayers' money would be paying each Speaking Union and, finally, at the end of the day, let us analyse what has this country managed to achieve after so many years, after independence in terms of Unions. Is it true or not today that youngsters are speaking less English? Fact, we have an English Speaking Union but youngsters in this country speak less English. It is true also that youngsters speak less and less languages of our ancestors.

I remember the times when I was forced to go and learn Urdu, I was forced by my late grandfather to ensure that I could understand and even write Urdu, which I am proud I do, I can, but today, I, as a father and many of us here are fathers and mothers or even grandfathers and grandmothers, we are afraid for the people out there and we say to ourselves - will we be able to see the day and guarantee the day when our children and our grandchildren will be able to master all those languages like our parents forced us to? Will we have the same opportunities? Will they be able to transmit it to their children? The fact remains in that it does not in any way help to have a proliferation of unions or a proliferation of cultural organisations, it does not help. What helps is that there is efficiency within, what helps is that money is spent and well spent.

Today I am ready to come out and say the Urdu Speaking Union, one of the founding fathers was my late grandfather. He ensured that the Urdu Speaking Union was in Mauritius in order for people to understand and speak it and that it is spread to all those who would have the love of Urdu and poetry. He ensured that I had lessons every single day until I was 18 to learn Urdu but does it mean that it is going to keep on working for the new generation - it does not. So, in my humble view, and this is the view I have, we should try to merge, amalgamate all those organisations and not simply have a proliferation because it is not helping out.

Another issue which I would like to get at here is the issue of independence. I will basically try to pick up where hon. Baloomoody had left. Hon. Toussaint had stated, at some stage, that hon. Baloomoody has criticised the Minister. At no time did hon. Baloomoody criticise the hon. Minister, this is Parliamentary tradition that we criticise the policy of the Minister and not the Minister. It is very, very unfortunate that Members on the other side - some Members on the other side - feel that whenever you criticise a policy, they are already on the defensive. Even before you start criticising a policy they are on the defensive. What have they got to fear? Why are they so paranoid that they have to basically believe that we are criticising the person. We are not criticising the person, we are criticising the policy and not a single Member of Government who stood up today has managed to come and explain why is it that, in the previous legislation there was only one representative of the Ministry that was going to be on that Council. As opposed to today – you have seven when you count them; I've counted them and have come to seven. Let's go through it.

In the previous Act there was only one representative of the Ministry and when there was this one representative of the Ministry I remember, as rightly pointed out by hon. Baloomoody, the intervention in this august Assembly of hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun who said - and it is in Hansard: "I do not think it should be for the Minister to decide".

Here, she was talking about the policy of the then Government to appoint one member of the Ministry, not *un petit copain - un ami d'un ministre ou quelqu'un qui est proche du pouvoir - ou une copine. Ce n'était même pas ça l'intention, ce n'était même pas ça dans la loi. Ce qu'il y avait dans la loi, Madame la présidente, c'était simplement - rien de plus compliqué que cela - le ministre qui avait le droit de choisir un membre du ministère des Arts et de la Culture et de l'envoyer sur ce conseil d'administration. Pas plus que ça. Et à cela, l'honorable Mme Dookun-Luchoomun avait dit, I go on -*

"I think the Union should have elected their own members. I am sure there are plenty of people who would be happy; who would be ready to do the job and it does not really sound good for the Minister having so much of *mainmise* over Speaking Unions."

Let me repeat that. Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun stated in this august Assembly that, and I quote -

"It does not really sound good for the Minister having so much of *mainmise* over Speaking Unions."

What does *mainmise* mean? According to hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun then, nominating one member of the Ministry was *mainmise*, nominating one member, a civil servant, was *mainmise*. If this is *mainmise*, what's this today? Today, this is a hostile takeover, that is, a conquest. This is this very Government, Madam Speaker, that said in the electoral programme, on all political platforms and now, Madam Speaker, just like hon. Rutnah did, I will also embark on that political agenda, but I will make sure to read properly before I say anything. This is this Government that said they will not go on platforms to make speeches when there are religious festivities.

This is this Government that took an oath in front of the people, a sacred commitment that they would not mix politics and religion, that they would keep those people at arm's length. This very Government has found an excellent scheme: "we will not go on this political platform, we will not make a speech at all those festivals, but what we will do is that we will go and sit in the Speaking Unions ourselves." Basically, you could not bring yourself to go to the platform of those religious organisations, but what you did is that when to sit and squat, you went to squat in the Speaking Union yourself. This is what happened. Because, here, if hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun believes that one person, a civil servant, was a *mainmise*, not one Member from the Government side - not one - has managed to justify this decision. They have just simply stood up and said: 'why do they criticise the Minister?' Nothing followed afterwards.

Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus stood up, has she come up with one single argument to come and justify the need to have more people nominated by the Minister as opposed to the previous Bill? No! Not an iota in an argument to come and support this decision of Government. So, what I expect today? What the people outside expect today? And this is not a show, as hon. Toussaint believes. This is diabolical on the part of the Minister. He said ...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, please!

(Interruptions)

You know the golden rule of debates in this House is not to be passionate, to be calm and not to be passionate about what you are saying.

Now, you have just said the word 'diabolical'. I don't think you can treat the hon. Minister like this. Please, withdraw this word. I am appealing to you.

Mr Mohamed: I withdraw the word ‘diabolical’ but then again, I find no words to describe - let me put it that way - the amazing feat of the hon. Minister, that has been approved by Cabinet. Therefore, Cabinet stands by this Bill, Government stands by this Bill, Government believes that it is okay to have a representative of the Ministry nominated by the Minister; believes that four members have to be appointed by the Minister; a representative of the Ministry responsible for education appointed by the Minister, a representative of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development appointed by the Minister. We have come from the figure one to seven. There are eleven Members on the Executive Council, seven of the eleven are decided and appointed by the hon. Minister.

Now, do we need any other explanation as far as Mathematics go? I did not call it by any word that anyone may deem provocative or passionate or unparliamentary. I leave it to posterity to know what exactly this hon. Minister and Government has done, because I would like to hear today why seven and not one. Let us take the reasoning further, let me say that I agree with hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun that one is a *mainmise*, what is seven? What is seven?

(Interruptions)

‘Mo pou allé encore are sa!’ Because it hurts, that’s why, and it is the truth. Why seven? I would like to hear the hon. Minister, Madam Speaker, to come and explain, to tell us, is this a Government that wants to really make an organisation independent? And what is more shocking is what was said in 1993 in this august Assembly by a Minister of hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth. It was hon. Parsuramen as he was then. And hon. Parsuramen, when he was Minister then, what did he say? He talks about autonomous. That is in Hansard in 1993.

In 1993, the Government led by Sir Anerood Jugnauth believed that an organisation such as the Speaking Union should, by all means, be autonomous. That is all to his honour, hon. Parsuramen then, as he was. Many, many years later on, the same Government, with the same Sir Anerood Jugnauth, with more experience behind him, with more wisdom behind him, believes that the autonomy which he stood for in 1993 should be thrown out of the window. The same Prime Minister who stood for autonomy in 1993, today presides Cabinet and approves a Bill that comes to this august Assembly that kicks out the whole autonomous mechanism out of the window. If this is not a clear operation of this Government in order to take over completely, *même pas une mainmise*, not even the hand, this time the whole body, the foot and the whole corpse has been brought into that Speaking Union.

This is basically supplanting the role of an autonomous organisation. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that I know what will happen. I will be told off by people who can't accept that someone like us, in the Opposition, may have a different view. I may be told off because some people will say: well, he was overdramatic. But it is a dramatic situation that demands one to be dramatic. I may be told off, but you will see there will never be an iota of an argument to come and explain why from one to seven. He cannot justify, because if it would be easy to justify, we would have heard the justification already. He would not be turning towards the other bench of Government and finding the answer and because he has no answer and the only way he could really defend himself is by attacking.

Therefore, let us bring down this Parliament into a situation where whatever we propose - we thought until recently, that whenever we came with amendments, it was going to be something different that the Government was starting, new, that even our Government did not do. When they believe that there are situations that demand that there is transparency and autonomy, that they would come and listen to good suggestions and bring amendments. Until today, I have lengthened that speech, waiting every second, waiting every minute, hoping that the hon. Minister would circulate an amendment. People out there are waiting that they would not use it as a political tool. People out there are waiting to ensure that they would not use those Speaking Unions and Cultural Centres as political tools and we expect to see an amendment circulated. Do we see anything? No!

What you will see in conclusion, Madam Speaker, is simply just like certain other countries that they believe that numbers are the sign of might. They believe that numbers are a sign of might. But what they don't realise is that you may have numbers here, but out there people want autonomy and not this is what in the Bill.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Baboo!

(4.40 p.m.)

Mr Baboo: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank hon. Members on both sides of the House for their brilliant exposés on the Bills and for their positive contributions in the debates. I have taken good note of their proposals which will be taken into consideration at the implementation stages once the Bills are passed.

As regards the nomination by the Minister, it is to be pointed out that only four members of the Executive Council will be concerned, out of 11 members. This neither forms the quorum nor commands of the majority in the Executive Council. In fact, these four members who should have an interest in the development, propagation and promotion of the respective languages, will bring new blood and a new perspective in the management of the affairs of the unions.

Referring to what hon. Baloomoody has mentioned that no changes have been brought to the new objects of the Speaking Union Bills. In fact, hon. Baloomoody should understand well the new objects. The new objects have been enriched and the promotion of intercultural and interlinguistic understanding has now been introduced in the objects to promote intercultural dialogue at section 4 (d) and section 4 (i).

It is the duty of the Government to have some control on the grants ranging from Rs1 m. to Rs2.3 m. being given to the Speaking Unions. Exercising to same extent, financial control does not mean that the Unions are not autonomous. It is not seven as the hon. Member on the other side just said. It is four nominated by the Minister, four elected by the Union, three from the office or representatives of the Ministry.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't interrupt the Minister, please!

Mr Baboo: Four nominated by the Minister, four elected by the Union and three members nominated who are representatives of other Ministries. So, it makes seven.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Baboo: Madam Speaker, we are being faithful to our roots by consolidating our linguistic heritage and opening them to all our citizens. We are assured that the unions will be instrumental in maintaining...

(Interruptions)

Pas peur nous prend li compte!

(Interruptions)

...our customs, traditions and folklore from the linguistic perspective. The strength of our colourful nation lies in the multiplicity of our roots and origins. Our linguistic landscape is being given the necessary space to blossom in the best condition.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Bills to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bills read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The following Bills were considered and agreed to -

- (a) The Arabic-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XVIII of 2015)*
- (b) The Bhojpuri-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XIX of 2015),*
- (c) The Chinese-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XX of 2015),*
- (d) The Creole-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XXI of 2015);*
- (e) The Sanskrit-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XXII of 2015);*
- (f) The English-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXIII of 2015);*
- (g) The Hindi-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXIV);*
- (h) The Marathi-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXV of 2015);*
- (i) The Tamil-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXVI of 2015);*
- (j) The Telugu-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXVII of 2015);*
- (k) The Urdu-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXVIII of 2015).*

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the following Bills were read the third time and passed –

- (i) The Arabic-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XVIII of 2015);*
- (ii) The Bhojpuri-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XIX of 2015);*
- (iii) The Chinese-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XX of 2015);*
- (iv) The Creole-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XXI of 2015);*

- (v) *The Sanskrit-Speaking Union (Amendment) Bill (No. XXII of 2015);*
- (vi) *The English-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXIII of 2015);*
- (vii) *The Hindi-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXIV of 2015);*
- (viii) *The Marathi-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXV of 2015);*
- (ix) *The Tamil-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXVI of 2015);*
- (x) *The Telugu-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXVII of 2015);*
- (xi) *The Urdu-Speaking Union Bill (No. XXVIII of 2015).*

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 03 November 2015 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun) rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

(5.04 p.m.)

PRB REPORT – LATE PUBLICATION

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to you for having allowed me to intervene at Adjournment Time on a matter which concerns the civil servants of this country. In fact, it is concerning the late publication of the PRB Report.

As we all know, Madam Speaker, this report was scheduled to be published in October of this year and was to be implemented in January of next year. It is the first time that the report of the PRB will be published after three years instead of five years and it is the first time in history also, as far as I know, that the PRB Report has not been published at the scheduled time.

As I said, it was announced that the report was to be implemented in January next year, but with the delay of the publication, many questions have arisen and the civil servants in this country have already expressed themselves. We have listened to many trade union leaders already giving their opinion, expressing their apprehension, their confusion, disturbed

and they have expressed also their dismay because this delay will inevitably impact upon the situation and the life of many civil servants. This late publication will impact upon the recruitment, the promotion, the restyling, among other things; this, as a result of the late recommendations of the forthcoming report.

I don't have to say also, Madam Speaker, that the late publication of the report will cause prejudice to those who are intending to retire as soon as the report would have been published. Therefore, different Civil Service Federations have already reacted, as I have just said, to this late publication of the report. Different trade unionists have reacted differently at the announcement of this late publication and we have also heard how they have also been on different wavelengths.

Why has there been this delay? All the civil servants are asking the question. One trade union leader has said, and I quote –

“Les torts sont partagés et que tous doivent jouer le jeu.”

Is the late publication of this report due to the PRB itself, to the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, to certain Departments which, we have been told, have failed to submit their proposals in time? It is the same trade union leader who has been reported to say that the new Director of the PRB has opined that the report could be ready by mid-December *si chacun joue son rôle*.

Another trade union leader, Madam Speaker, has squarely called for the revocation of the Director of the PRB after Cabinet had issued its communiqué on 09 October of this year which communiqué, I will just remind the House, talked about, and I quote –

“The PRB report will be published in the first quarter of 2016 owing to factors beyond the control of the Bureau.”

So, in view of all this confusion, this trade unionist has suggested that a 15% increase be paid on an interim basis pending the publication of the report.

The point of my intervention, Madam Speaker, today is to request the hon. Minister to enlighten the House as to the real reasons of the delay of this report and also if he could give the guarantee to the civil servants of this country that the report will be implemented as from 01 January next year as originally scheduled, whatever be the date, time and month in which this report will be made public.

I have done, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I would like to intervene. I am surprised by the hon. Member's statement. This is the first time, Madam Speaker, that the PRB is being made over a period of three years and not five years and that is a major step forward, Madam Speaker, and that is the main reason why it is taking a little bit longer. It is because it used to take five years to be prepared, now it has to be prepared within three years and it is taking a few months more. Of course, it will be effective as from 01 January of next year. But that is the reason, I say again that it is because we have made a huge step forward for the civil servants, instead of waiting for five years, they will have it in three years.

It is a major achievement. Therefore, that is the reason, Madam Speaker. Of course, also in the meantime there has been a change of Government and priorities have changed. According to the will of the people, Government has changed. Obviously, there have been views and submissions which have changed. So, there is no need to panic and it will be there in the first quarter of next year.

(5.10 p.m.)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gobin!

RIVIÈRE DES ANGUILES & SOUILLAC - FLOODING

Mr M. Gobin (First Member for Rivière des Anguiles & Souillac): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity of speaking at Adjournment Time.

The reason why I rise this evening is due to the increasingly urgent issue of flooding in Constituency No.13. On Sunday 25, two days ago, there were hardly two hours of heavy rain and what I have witnessed in my Constituency, starting from Camp Banane, Grand Bois, La Flora and going down to Souillac at Pont de Negres was that there had to be traffic diversion. I witnessed that about noon, the worst point. Right at the doorstep of the Fire Services at Saint Aubin, the Police had to solicit help from inhabitants to effect a traffic diversion because of heavy rains, water overflowing the only main road which goes through Saint Aubin and down to Souillac. This situation has been there for too long, far too long and it requires the urgent attention of authorities, NDU on one hand, MPI on the other and also Environment for the cleaning of the rivers.

There are situations where this spills over to other Constituencies, when excess water flows down Rivière du Poste, it floods over in Marc Tabac, in Constituency No.12. We have witnessed the worst situation, I think, earlier in the year, in March/April and on Sunday last, just two hours of heavy rain and it was back to square one.

I am appealing to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister as Minister responsible for NDU, the hon. Minister responsible for MPI and my very good friend, hon. Minister for Environment and Cabinet, as one team, to have a personal attention to this situation. Urgent works are required and I am rising this evening, once more, to appeal to Government to see to it. It is good that my very good friend, the hon. Minister of Finance is here to release the appropriate funds for the works to be done.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and Disaster and Beach Management (Mr R. Dayal): With the permission of the Leader of the House, I would like to state a couple of things which are very important for hon. Gobin to know.

First, I was in my car when I heard somebody on Top FM airing his concern concerning flooding in Batimara area in the South, St Aubin. Immediately, I reported to the Meteo Services, I called for Mr Servansingh and I called equally for Mr Golaub and Mr Mangra. I took the decision that we should initiate a special bulletin because, according to meteo conditions, if we have 25 mm of rain in half an hour, it is already a subject of concern and this is what flash floods are all about. We have to take action and be prepared for action. We activated the National Disaster Centre and we made a special bulletin. We were right, the diversion happened because I triggered the mechanism for the diversion.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, can you please sit down! Please, sit down! Can you be brief please because we have got two other hon. Members who want to intervene? You have to reply to the hon. Member what you propose to do.

Mr Dayal: I have already done what should be done in the best interest. We are the only country in the world where we have flash floods, we have no casualty, no loss of property. So, we are doing what should be done.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

DESBOUCHERS ROAD - REPAIRS

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East): Thank you, Madam Speaker. There is a problem in my Constituency; it is in relation to *la rue Desbouchers qui se trouve à Roche Bois*. It starts from Route Nicolay till the end of the motorway to the North. It is in a very bad state and with the recent heavy rainfall, there have been so many *nids de poule* which constitute a serious danger for motorcyclists.

I urge the hon. Minister of Local Government to take necessary steps so as to remedy the situation urgently.

Thank you.

The Minister for Local Government (Dr. A. Husnoo): Madam Speaker, we are aware of this problem and, actually, this road is on the NDU list to be done this year. It is included in this financial year, so it is going to be taken care of, the drains and the road.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. S. Mohamed!

(5.16 p.m)

AIRMATE - MR RAWAT – LOSS OF JOB

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I had in a recent past, well, several months back, raised an issue at Adjournment Time, which touched a lot of Members on both sides of the House. It was the very sad story of this young man living in my Constituency who is one Mr Rawat. He is a very young man aged 20 years old; someone who is dumb and deaf and loses his job when he is employed by Airmate.

Now, I had stated here to the hon. Prime Minister

(Interruptions)

This is where a lot of people had been fired by Government; it is that place, Airmate!

Finally, I said here to the hon. Prime Minister to please look into this matter because all of us, on both sides of the House, try to ensure that people who are citizens of this country, who are weak, who have problems such as being deaf and dumb, should not lose their jobs simply; for no reason whatsoever. No reason was given in the letter simply kicked out. When people are being kicked out, they call it the cleaning process. There was an undertaking on

the part of the hon. Prime Minister that he would personally look into that precisely on humanitarian grounds, precisely because this young man is wondering why he has lost his job. No one has explained to him up to now. He is someone now who is *cloisonné chez lui*. He cannot go outside. He does not want to go and visit the public out there because he feels that once he had a job, he had obtained prizes there. He was performing and was congratulated for his excellent work.

People in his place of work appreciated him and today I expected something to be done since many months. I wait every day and call the family to find out if something has been done. Until today, no one has even bothered to call the family. No one has even bothered to even find out or tell them: listen, we are going to look into the matter, please give us some time. No one has even bothered to lift a phone call or even send a telegram or God knows what in order to, at least, tell the person that you are an equal citizen of this Republic and we recognise that we must help you. No one!

So, I reiterate my request. I hope this time it does not fall on deaf ears that this young man of 20 years old - I mean if someone wants to go and see him and, at least, make publicity that this Government has given him a job again, so be it. But, at least, he should be given a chance to function as a normal citizen in this country and that his handicap - we recognise it, it is a handicap - is not a barrier for him to keep a job. On the contrary, he should be encouraged to continue being a productive citizen. I am speaking more than I did last time because the first time it did not work. So, I am trying to put the more masala in it in order to make it work.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, we are time bound.

The Deputy Prime Minister: By chance, I have a letter from Mr Rawat in my hand at this very moment in time, it was by chance. In the absence of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Madam Speaker, I will look into the matter. It is a matter of fact that large companies do need to employ 3% of their staff among the handicapped.

At 5.23 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 03 November 2015 at 11.30 a.m.