



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION

TUESDAY 15 APRIL 2014

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 04 of 2014

Sitting of 15 April 2014

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis

at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office –

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (Amendment) Bill (No. III of 2014).

B. Ministry of Arts and Culture –

The Annual Report of the National Art Gallery for the years 2009 – 2011.

C. Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment –

The Manufacturing Sector (Collection of Contributions) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 56 of 2014).

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL MORTUARIES/CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS - DEAD BODIES –
TRANSFER

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the removal of dead bodies, he will state, since 2000 to date –

- (a) the names of the –
 - (i) institutions having received, and
 - (ii) Government, charitable or other bodies having delivered, dead bodies, indicating in each case –
 - (A) the number of dead bodies received and delivered, and
 - (B) if records of the number of dead bodies received and delivered have been kept;
- (b) if there are alleged reported cases of dead bodies having been removed, conveyed and handed over illegally or against payment, and
- (c) if Magistrates have authorised the removal, conveyance and handing over of dead bodies to institutions, more than 6 months after death, and, if so, give details thereof.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, no one in this House or outside can remain insensitive to the treatment of dead bodies that ran counter to established norms, ethics and practices. On such a sensitive issue, it would be adding insult to injury if we, in this August Assembly, embark on a blame game.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 19 March 2014, the Prime Minister received a letter wherein allegation of trafficking of dead bodies from Krishnanand Seva Ashram, Calebasses was made. In view of the seriousness of the allegations, the Prime Minister immediately referred the letter to the Commissioner of Police for an in-depth and broad investigation.

Upon receipt of this letter, the Police immediately conducted an exercise islandwide with a view to verifying with all medical colleges, universities, hospices, *ashrams*, residential care homes, as to whether they had taken/handed over dead bodies for medical studies.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Police inquiry is still under way.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to parts (a) (i) and (ii) of the question, preliminary information obtained from the Police is as follows -

- (i) SSR Medical College, Belle Rive; MAURAS College of Dentistry, Arsenal, and Anna Medical College, Solitude have received delivery of dead bodies.
- (ii) Bodies were delivered by the following institutions –
 - Krishnanand Seva Ashram, Calebasses,
 - Dr. Jeetoo Hospital,
 - Victoria Hospital, and
 - In 2001 by the Police Department.

Regarding parts (a) (A) and (B) of the question, I am informed that the SSR Medical College received 12 dead bodies. MAURAS College of Dentistry received one which was subsequently transferred to Anna Medical College. The Krishnanand Seva Ashram acknowledged having delivered six dead bodies to SSR Medical College and the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life delivered, through its hospitals, four dead bodies and one was delivered by the Police Department in 2001.

I wish, Mr Speaker, Sir, to inform that the Police inquiry is still ongoing to reconcile the actual number of bodies delivered and received.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, concerning allegations of dead bodies having been removed and handed over illegally or against payment, I am informed that Police together with other competent institutions are investigating into these allegations of illegal payment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, the Police inquiry which is ongoing, has not, as at today revealed the existence of a Magistrate's Order authorising the transfer of bodies to any medical college.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Police inquiry is still on. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has tried to find out why as from 2000, Government regulated how bodies can leave hospital mortuaries and yet has not done anything; no Government has done anything to regulate how bodies, if any, would be allowed to leave charitable and other institutions?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier, yes, in 2000, Government, at that time, did come with regulations regulating the transfer of dead bodies to medical institutions, but, unfortunately, so far, Police inquiry has revealed that in no circumstances there has been a follow-up *à la ligne* to the regulation as established in the regulation published in 2000.

Mr Bérenger: I think the Minister has not understood what I am saying. I am saying that as from 2000 what was regulated was how bodies can leave mortuaries after six months and only after all procedures by Magistrates and so on. This concerns only Government hospital mortuaries. My question is: has the Minister enquired why no regulations, nothing has been done concerning transfer of dead bodies from charitable and other institutions?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is factually correct. In fact, no regulation has been made to enable charitable institutions, by whatever means, to transfer dead bodies to any medical institution, whether it is the previous Government or this Government, except that we have passed the Human Tissue Act.

Mr Bérenger: As the Minister refers to the Human Tissue Act, in that case we are dealing with donation and transfer of organs. Since he has referred to it, can I ask him why now we are meeting with problems of transfer of bodies? He says that we have provided as far as our organs are concerned. Can he tell me why, to this date, because the law that we voted in 2006 - prepared before, voted in 2006 and amended last year - has still not been proclaimed, that is, there is absolutely no protection as far as trafficking of organs is concerned, just as in the case of eventual trafficking of bodies from private institutions?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition, as he rightly said in his intervention on the Human Tissue Bill in 2006 where he said that the Bill was prepared in 1995 when they were in power. Rightly so! They discussed about the Bill, but they could not present it and, in 2006, we presented the Bill through the then Minister of Health, hon. Faugoo.

I came in 2012. When I assumed the portfolio of Minister of Health, there was some lacking within the law and, more so, with regard to immunity for the Board Members. I brought in the amendment in this National Assembly in May 2012. Subsequently, we negotiated with experts from the Marseille University and experts from the World Health Organisation whereby we were working with regard to protocols and regulations for donations of organs. I have gone to Cabinet twice this year. On a couple of times, a few things have to be fine-tuned. Hopefully, it will come to Cabinet and the regulations are almost ready, *comme on dit en français, je pèse mes mots*, with regard only to donations of organs and transplantation.

During my speech, on the presentation of the amendment, on issues raised by hon. S. Boolell and hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, I did make it clear that, at this moment in time, we are not looking forward to prescribe this part of the law with regard to cadaveric because we are of opinion that we have to move in phases and step by step.

Mr Bérenger: The bottom line remains that - the law has not been proclaimed - there is, therefore, absolutely nothing to prevent trafficking in organs just as there is nothing, no regulations to prevent trafficking in complete human bodies, if that is the expression.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2005, the Protection of Elderly Persons Act was voted. We are talking about old people who have been tied in charitable institutions. There were a lot of talks that now elderly people are going to be protected; there would be a unit in the Ministry to protect the elderly people. There would be a National Monitoring Committee with four members of the public sitting on that Board, appointed by the hon. Minister. Has he liaised with his colleague, the hon. Minister of Social Security to find out how all that we are discovering these days escape the attention completely of both the Unit and the National Monitoring Committee?

Mr Bundhoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. My colleague, hon. Mrs Bappoo, did bring a paper in Cabinet last Friday, where she apprised the Cabinet of the Monitoring Unit. But, at the same time, I must say that we have thorough discussions about this and she has established a guideline with regard to bodies, people who pass away at the *ashrams* or the old people's homes. I will try to take one point raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition earlier. We do have the law, the Public Health Act, which somehow governs with regard to the dead bodies.

Mr Bérenger: It has nothing to do with trafficking in dead bodies. It has been provided under the Public Health Act in the case of mortuaries, but, let me move on to mortuaries. The only regulations that exist, Mr Speaker, Sir, are regulations proclaimed in 2000 that say –

“Any body entering the hospital mortuaries must stay there, at least, six months and cannot leave without the authority of Magistrate.”

A very spelt out procedure - all the precautions taken. Now, I have just heard two things which are in total contradiction: one, it has been confirmed that bodies have left mortuaries to go to medical institutions. This is confirmed, I have just heard the hon. Minister say that, and, at the same time, he has said, as far as the inquiry goes, no Magistrate has been involved. Therefore, will he agree with me that the law has been flouted totally, if I am right in saying that firstly, he has confirmed that mortuaries have delivered bodies, and secondly, he has told us that there is no evidence that Magistrates were involved at all, although it is provided specifically in the regulations?

Mr Bundhoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is totally in order to say that the law has been flouted and all the cases happened between 2001, 2003 and 2004 with exception of one case in 2007 where it left the hospices directly to one of the Medical Colleges.

Mr Bérenger: I think I heard the hon. Minister say three private medical institutions have been involved. I think I heard him say that two hospital mortuaries have been involved where bodies have left these two mortuaries against the law as the hon. Minister has just acknowledged.

Now, is he aware – has he inquired from the Prime Minister, the Police and so on – that on last Wednesday 08 April, whilst all this is going on, a poor attendant from the Candos hospital mortuary turned up at the Police Station of Quatre Bornes to say that the day before all the records recording bodies coming in and going out have disappeared?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, not all the records have disappeared. The present book is presently there and in service. Records prior to May 2013 are untraceable and this is precisely why the Ag. Regional Health Director then, through our office, instructed one of the persons

there to make a Police statement at the nearest Police Station with regard to the supposedly missing records.

Secondly, when we learnt this, we appointed an Internal Committee to investigate of the whereabouts of these records and the inquiry is still on at the Victoria Hospital. We have also extended the same inquiry to all other regional hospitals.

Mr Bérenger: Has the inquiry established how many cases of delivery of bodies by mortuaries there have been outside law, that is, without abiding what the 2000 Regulation provides for? How many bodies have been involved?

Mr Bundhoo: As I said earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is five within the hospital mortuaries and one from the Police. The Police inquiry is still ongoing and they will establish whether procedures have been followed or not. But, so far, it is clear that, at no time, application was made and, so far it is clear that, at no time, that is, between 2001 and 2003 when these bodies were transferred, no Magistrate authority was provided.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I heard the hon. Minister say that the investigations are still on to establish whether bodies were delivered – clearly – illegally. The hon. Minister says that –

“Enquires are going to establish whether bodies were delivered illegally or against payment.”

Now, the main so-called charitable institution concerned - I won't name it - a *crié sur tous les toits* that no money was involved, but it was donations. Now, it is a known fact that the finances of that institution are in a total mess and the existence of a *caisse noire* has been alleged for years. Therefore, are Government, the Police and the Ministry prepared to do a full-fledged inquiry into the financial situation/transactions of that so-called charitable institution?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I take from what the hon. Leader of the Opposition just said, it is clear that most of the bodies were transferred between 2001 and 2004. Therefore, *la caisse noire* of this specific institution was very much in the black at that particular material time. Now, should we appoint a Commission of Inquiry or whatever names to this specific allegation; as I said earlier, the hon. Prime Minister has set up an inquiry from the Police? It is then that the Police would advise ultimately whether we have to broaden the inquiry and, if we

have reached this point, I am sure Government will take a decision for further and more in-depth inquiry.

Mr Bérenger: The regulations are in the case of the mortuaries because, in the case of charitable institutions, nothing is being done to date. It is free-for-all, if we can talk like that about old people's dead bodies. But the regulations proclaimed in 2000 provided also that if a body has been delivered to the mortuary and the members of the family and so on want to take back the body that they can go through procedures again involving a Magistrate. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the inquiry has established that anything of the sort has happened?

Mr Bundhoo: Not to my knowledge, Mr Speaker, Sir, because, as I said, the Police inquiry is still on. I have to repeat myself, so far, there is no existence of any Court Order or affidavit in Court by anybody with regard to allowing the cadavers to leave whichever institution and so far, documents have not revealed any Magistrate Order with regard to transfer of cadavers, be it in 2001 or 2002 or 2003 or 2004.

Mr Bérenger: Again, there have been allegations. Well, I put the question: has not the inquiry established whether bodies that have left some of these charitable institutions - left before death - were reported to the authorities as is the procedure? Therefore, have bodies being transferred even before death been reported? And is the inquiry also looking into - I find that totally shameful - the possibility that old people having died, the institution concerned continued receiving their old-age pension and cashed it and probably in the *caisse noire* that I mentioned earlier on?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with the specific question raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am sure the House will agree and appreciate that we are in 2014 and most of the cases are from 2001, 2002 and 2003. It is quite difficult for me, at this point in time, to be aware of whether the death before being recorded at the Civil Status Office, the body was already transferred to a medical institution. I have every reason to believe that the Police inquiry would look and probe into this issue also.

Mr Bérenger: I think the hon. Minister is not aware that possibly this is still going on, that is, old people dying now, recently, their old-age pension keeps on being cashed in by that institution concerned.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, has established the principles and the guidelines and I am surely going to liaise with her, the Police and everyone, and the Police inquiry will reveal whether there are still bodies going out. But, so far, from the preliminary inquiry, only thirteen bodies have left either the mortuary, the ashram or the Police Department and most of the cases were within the specific period I mentioned before.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the number of cases which the hon. Minister has mentioned - the medical institutions having received dead bodies - can he say in how many cases either the Director or an officer of that institution had sworn an affidavit with regard to what is prescribed in the legislation?

Mr Bundhoo: From the preliminary inquiry and information I have gathered from the Police, at no point in time, no Director of any medical institution has sworn any affidavit either in 2001 or 2003. It is only a general type of affidavit signed previously which is not related in any manner with the individual transfer of dead bodies from any institution.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, considering that no institution has a cold room or a freezer or whatever, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether all the bodies have transited through the Government mortuaries which fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life?

Mr Bundhoo: I have already answered to this question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Some of the bodies may have transited through the mortuaries; some may have gone directly to the medical institutions. Some, as I said, in 2001, have transited from the mortuaries of the Ministry of Health and transferred by the Police to these medical institutions.

Mr Ganoo: I pick up on what the hon. Minister has just said. Can he, therefore, confirm that since we are agreed that there is no subsidiary legislation or regulations to regulate the removal of dead bodies from charitable institutions or homes, therefore, especially as there have been bodies which he, himself, has just said, have been transferred directly from the homes to these medical institutions, there might have been risks of inmates having died of communicable diseases, put at the disposal of the medical students who are at these institutions for training?

Mr Bundhoo: I said earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, anybody who passed away and wherever he passed away, if the body is to be given for medical research, the body should first be kept - as the hon. Leader of the Opposition rightly said - in the public mortuary for a minimum period of six months. Thereafter, all procedures, as established by the Regulation of 2000, have to be followed. And, I repeat myself, in no circumstances there has been any follow-up of any regulations between 2001 and 2003.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that out of all the bodies that have been transferred, there was one that was transferred by the Police. So, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the preliminary inquiry has led to any proof about whether any high ranking officers authorised this disposal or how this happened?

Mr Bundhoo: The present Police inquiry will determine in 2001 how this happened, under whose authority and why it did happen.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister about the case in 2007? Was the body that was given to the medical institution kept for six months before delivery or was it carried there straightaway after the death of the individual?

Mr Bundhoo: I have already answered to the question. I have said right from the beginning that none of the thirteen bodies has observed the rules and regulations as mentioned in the Regulation of 2000, whereas the body for 2000, I understand, was transferred from the people's home, where it was, direct to the educational institution.

Mr Roopun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we heard the hon. Minister stating that there were six bodies transferred from public hospitals. Could we know the protocol which has been followed for those transfers? We know that the regulation had not been followed, this is one thing, but how was it done, who took the decision and how procedurally it was done at the level of the hospitals?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered this question. I have said the inquiry from the Police will determine whether these bodies that have been transferred, have been done within the existing Regulation of 2000.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know whether the hon. Minister will confirm that DNA sampling has been effected on these newly found bodies and matched their profiling with any reported missing persons?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very far advanced question which has to be dealt with by the Police and the Forensic Laboratory. I would transfer the hon. Member's question to the Forensic Laboratory for ongoing analysis with regard to DNA matching dead bodies with living people.

Dr. S. Boolell: I have heard, Mr Speaker, Sir, the name of the Anna Institution being mentioned as being in possession of a dead body. Now, this institution has existed over the past three years which would take us to 2011, whereas we have been talking about bodies up to 2007. So, I would like to ask the hon. Minister where does the 2011 or 2010 body come from.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered this question. I can appreciate the hon. Member's query with regard to the Anna Medical College. The body that went to the Mauras College of Dentistry was that same body. It was an internal transfer between Anna Medical College and Mauras College of Dentistry.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister if there has been any arrest at the level of the homes of Calebasses. Let me explain!

Mr Speaker: Put your question, no explanation!

Dr. Sorefan: Yes. My question relates to: is it not illegal for the Calebasses or other ashrams to dispose of bodies? Because when someone pass away, I get a medical certificate, a clearance from the Civil Status Office, and can I bury my loved one in my garden to dispose of it? Can the ashram, getting all the papers, deliver the body or dispose of the body to the medical institution?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is precisely why the hon. Prime Minister has set up an inquiry for the Police to determine how the whole illegal transaction was carried out from the mortuaries in 2001, 2002 and 2003.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre si les *dead bodies* mentionnés concernent aussi des foetus ou des bébés mort-nés?

Mr Bundhoo: I am sure the Police inquiry would determine this. I am to understand that they are also looking at all the aspects with regard to dead bodies - *bébés ou non bébés*.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: From what we have heard from the hon. Minister, it is clear that there has been connivance, there has been a racket going on over the years concerning the issue we are talking about. So, can the hon. Minister, at least, give guarantee to the House and the population that at the final stage, the culprit will be brought to justice, that we don't have any report and then there is no action?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House and the country at large may rely on the hon. Prime Minister to apply the law with vigour and the culprit will be brought to Court.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister whether at one point in time Mauras was removed from the list and then re-included - one of the institutions was removed and put again - on the list to be able to receive those dead bodies for clinical treatment and may I ask what was the reason for removal and what was the reason for re-insertion?

Mr Bundhoo: As far as I know Mauras was included in the list in 2006, if I am not mistaken. Whether it was removed, I am not so sure that was the case.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, this issue is way above party politics, but we have supposedly three inquiries ongoing: Police under the hon. Prime Minister's overall control; the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, how records have disappeared and all sorts of inquiries, and thirdly, I am sure the Ministry of Security is looking very closely at how money was paid to the institutions and so on, whatever control was not exercised on the disposal of bodies of old people. So, we have three ongoing inquiries. This is going to take a long time with dispersal of inquiries and so on. Can I appeal to Government and the hon. Prime Minister whether there is not need to set up one inquiry to look completely - call it commission; it has to be a commission of inquiry, but, again, maybe a retired senior Magistrate, a respected one - to establish what has taken place and make recommendations. Now, pending recommendations, if that is the course

followed, in the meantime, will the hon. Minister urgently proclaim the required regulations to control the disposal of bodies by private institutions?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to setting up one inquiry, I am sure the hon. Prime Minister, at a point in time, after taking cognizance of the preliminary findings and recommendations of the central investigation of the Police department, will advise accordingly. With regard to my Ministry, yes, we have set up a High-Powered Committee presided by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry with two assessors for reviewing the whole thing and one of the assignment of this Committee is also to liaise with the Ministry of Social Security and the Ministry of Tertiary Education in order for Government to harmonise once and for all and to clear the mess created since 2001, 2002 and 2003. Thirdly, with regard to the proclamation of the Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Bill, yes, as I have explained earlier, we are going to proclaim section by section of the law in phases. As everybody in the House is very much aware, it is a very sensitive piece of information. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question B/181 in regard to the Residential Care Homes for the elderly addressed to the hon. Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reforms Institutions will now be replied by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister in keeping with practice PQ B/181 will now be replied at the end of Prime Minister's Question Time, that is, after PQ B/159, of course, time permitting.

Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Rodrigues. Hon. François!

MAURITIUS-RODRIGUES ROUTE – AIR FLIGHTS

(No. B/151) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Mauritius-Rodrigues route, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from Air Mauritius Ltd., information as to if the direction thereof is aware of the difficulties being encountered by travellers to secure seats on the flights thereof and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for an increase in the number of daily flights thereof, and

- (b) state if consideration will be given for a freezing or cross-subsidisation of the taxes on the air tickets therefor, pending the remedy of sea connectivity along that route, to facilitate the movement of people between Rodrigues and Mauritius and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Chief Executive Officer of Air Mauritius that the Company operates two daily flights between Mauritius and Rodrigues. However, during peak periods, Air Mauritius makes arrangements for additional frequencies to cope with the demand. In such circumstances, it may be as many as seven daily frequencies are operated.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the CEO of Air Mauritius that he has not received any representation concerning difficulties encountered by passengers to secure seats on the flights between Mauritius and Rodrigues. But with the technical laying off of the Mauritius Pride, it is expected that there may be an increase in the demand for passengers to travel by air. However, I am informed that the Mauritius Trochetia has increased its monthly trips to Rodrigues from one to four to compensate for the trips effected by Mauritius Pride.

I am also advised by Air Mauritius that all possible arrangements will be made to cope with the increased demand for seats if such a need arises, and it appears from the hon. Member's Question that there is such a need.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am informed by the CEO of Air Mauritius that following a meeting with all commercial stakeholders in Rodrigues, a new fare structure was proposed last year for different levels of fares catering for the different segments from both Mauritius and Rodrigues with the aim of giving maximum flexibility to the travelling public. The new tariff structure provided a differentiation in the price of ticket on the Mauritius-Rodrigues route which favoured those who booked their ticket early as compared to those who booked their ticket at the last minute. However, following representations to maintain the flat tariff, Air Mauritius did not implement the new tariff structure.

I wish to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that since 01 August 2009, no taxes are being charged on the air tickets for the Rodrigues and Mauritius route. Hence, the question of freezing or cross-subsidisation of taxes on air tickets does not arise.

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the question of demand, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that nearly every week I, myself, as MP, when I am travelling, I am being on a waiting list to secure a seat to travel back and forth from Mauritius. I don't know where the problem lies. In connection to the question of air fare, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that a return ticket for a passenger travelling from Rodrigues to Mauritius is Rs8,030 including fuel tax of Rs3,050 amounting to 44% the cost of air ticket and air fare Rs3,990 and service fee Rs500 whereas the holiday package is about Rs5,430 all inclusive. My question is, Mr Speaker, Sir: why this inequitable fuel tax of Rs3,990 on our national carrier?

The Prime Minister: I don't know how the structure of the taxation is worked out, but it is done for all tickets that we buy; we have to have a structure for payment. The hon. Member is right to say that the holiday package is less than the normal fare, but that is because they provide for this.

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware of the frequent problem faced by Air Mauritius ATR 72 aircraft causing much inconvenience to travellers along the domestic route? Recently, on 07 April a plane was grounded in Rodrigues. On 12 April, two flights were cancelled. Last night itself, MK 144 arrived in Rodrigues and could not land. Could the hon. Prime Minister see to it with Air Mauritius the reasons of the repetitive problems or breakdowns of ATR 72 and if the aircrafts are coming to the end of their life cycle, are provisions being made for their replacement to avoid a similar situation to that of Mauritius Pride?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly look into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Obeegadoo!

TERTIARY EDUCATION – TEC BOARD & UoM

(No. B/152) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the recurrent problems in the tertiary education sector, he will state if he will consider –

- (a) requesting Dr. the Honourable Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology to step down;
- (b) reconstituting the Board of the Tertiary Education Commission, and
- (c) taking urgent and appropriate measures to ensure the proper management and operation of the University of Mauritius and of the University of Technology Mauritius.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that the University of Mauritius was set up in 1965, with the objective not only to broaden access to higher education, but also to train students in those fields of knowledge crucial for the economic and social development of the country. It should also be underlined in the year 2000 another public university, namely the University of Technology was created to cater for the increasing demand for ICT and Management Professionals.

Prior to 01 July 2005, it was the Ministry of Education which was approving registration of tertiary education institutions as there was no specific legal framework for registration of such institutions. On 01 July 2005, the Tertiary Education Commission Regulations for the registration of private institutions was made, giving the Commission the authority to register such institutions. However, the final approval of the Minister was still required. In 2007, the Tertiary Education Commission Act was amended withdrawing the powers of the Minister and giving the Commission the sole prerogative to approve registration of institutions.

Consequently, the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology has no power or authority under the prevailing legislation to give any directives or interfere in any matter relating to the registration of post-secondary education institutions or accreditation of any programmes offered by these institutions. Therefore, there is no possibility of any conflict of interest in this respect.

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

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the recent initiatives to boost up the Tertiary Education Sector, the Government has decided, in view of the rapid expansion of this sector and in line with international best practice, that a comprehensive audit of all tertiary education institutions in Mauritius be carried out, with a view to ascertaining whether they are operating along international norms and standards. We need to ensure, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we adopt the highest standards as far as tertiary education is concerned, and it is essential, if we want to make Mauritius a hub for education.

In this context, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of the United Kingdom (QAA) has agreed to undertake, on my demand, this assignment this year. With a view to ensuring the total objectivity of the QAA assignment, Government has decided that it will work under the aegis of the Office of Public Sector Governance, which falls under my Office.

The main role of the QAA is to safeguard quality and standards in UK universities and colleges, so that students have the best possible learning experience.

The QAA will check to what extent the universities meet their responsibilities, will identify good practice, and will make recommendations. It would also publish guidelines to help those institutions develop effective systems, to ensure that students have a high quality education. I have spoken to the authorities concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, and my understanding is that the QAA team will, in fact, be in Mauritius very shortly to start this assignment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, given the facts and circumstances, the question of the Minister stepping down does not arise.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the Board of the Tertiary Education Commission is being reconstituted pursuant to section 5 of the Tertiary Education Commission Act.

Concerning the University of Mauritius, I am advised that a number of measures recommended in the last Visitor's Report on the Restructuring of the University of Mauritius have been implemented, while others are in the process of being implemented.

Insofar as the University of Technology, Mauritius is concerned, I wish to inform the House that I am setting up an inquiry, in accordance with section 6 of the University of Technology, Mauritius Act, to look into its operation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to reassure the House that Government will leave no stone unturned to ensure that a proper legal and regulatory framework is put in place in the Tertiary Education Sector, because we need to transform Mauritius into a regional centre of excellence for higher education.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to stress the seriousness and the urgency of the present situation. Does the hon. Prime Minister realise that, never, since the creation of the Tertiary Education Sector, has the sector been mired in such unending controversy, bringing the country into disrepute, jeopardising the knowledge hub project, as has been the case since the appointment of the present incumbent in 2010? Does the hon. Prime Minister realise the strength of feeling outside, and the exasperation of the nation as a whole vis-à-vis the present Minister?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I am not surprised, because we are a developing country, we are expanding, we are turning Mauritius into a hub for education. So, obviously, you have an expansion of demands and all those things.

As far as the other things are concerned, that is why I have set up all these inquiries, including this authority from the United Kingdom to precisely look into this matter, because I share the concern of the hon. Member. We need to ensure that there is a high-level quality education in our universities. That is essential if we want to achieve what we are planning to achieve.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is such a thing as ministerial responsibility, since for the first time in the history of the country, we have a fully-fledged Ministry of Tertiary Education and a full-time Minister of Tertiary Education. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the country as a whole is opposed to the policy of the present Minister of prioritising quantity at the expense of quality in the Tertiary Education Sector?

The Prime Minister: I have said it a few times, Mr Speaker, Sir. We must look at quality, not quantity. It is no good we try to have quantity without the high standard that we expect. That, I agree.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware of the statement made by Prof. Michael Porter from Harvard about the state of tertiary education in Mauritius? The hon. Prime Minister has been mentioning international standards quality. But

what he said was, in fact, that the knowledge hub is not what we intended, that is, a centre of excellence.

The Prime Minister: He said we do not intend? Well, we do intend to have a centre of excellence.

(Interruptions)

Remember, even Harvard University - I was a member on the Board of Harvard, in fact, if the hon. Member does not know.

(Interruptions)

But I had to give it up. Do you know why I had to give it up? Because of the 1st of May! The Board was being held just prior to 1st of May. Ask hon. Dr. A. Boolell!

(Interruptions)

I had to give up that seat because of the 1st of May.

(Interruptions)

But, anyway, they too had a lot of difficulties. One of the Directors of Harvard gave me a book that he had just written about the difficulties that Harvard is getting about the quality of education. We know what the reputation of Harvard is! But that is precisely why we are putting all these inquiries, to ensure that we are on the right path.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the terms of reference of that inquiry to be carried out by the recognised authority from the UK on tertiary education have been finalised, and whether we have a rough idea of how long it will take them to produce a report?

The Prime Minister: The terms of inquiry have not been finalised, Mr Speaker, Sir. They suggested that when they come here, they will look at things and then decide on the terms of inquiry. But I want to have it as large as possible, so that it can cover everything that needs to be covered, in the interest of the country. I have no idea how long it will take, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Obeegadoo: As regards part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister explain to the House why is it that, whereas all the controversies, all the problems concerning non-recognition of diplomas, operation of dubious institutions testify to the failure of TEC, this Board has never been reconstituted since 2005?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Board was actually there, but we have decided that they need to have a completely new Board, and that is why we are having inquiries going on. Perhaps, I will do it at the same time. We have to look at that. The inquiries that I mentioned earlier on are by that Board actually at Tertiary Education.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, since the Board is being reconstituted, that he will consult, through appropriate channel, the Chief Justice, to see whether he agrees that a member of the Judiciary should sit on the Board, as has been the case over the past recent years?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly do that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister must be aware of the negative publicity that our tertiary education is getting in the Indian press. Since this is the case, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has done anything with his counterpart in India to change this perception about tertiary education in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: That is why I have set up all these inquiries. We have to make sure what is actually happening, what can we correct and what we should correct.

Mr Bhagwan: Pending the outcome of all these inquiries, being given the importance of this sector, can the hon. Prime Minister, at least, direct the Head of the TEC, the one who has just been appointed? Already, on his appointment, there is controversy, and the way he is behaving at this institution. Instead of putting order in the house, for which he does not have the capacity, his main problem is to become a member of a social club, the Gymkhana Club, what type of car, what type of office. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of the controversy which is happening at the Tertiary Education Commission concerning Mr Bakhshi?

The Prime Minister: That is why we are looking at the whole matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Obeegadoo: On part (c) of the question, does the hon. Prime Minister realise that since 2009 the University of Mauritius has known seven Vice-Chancellors, substantive and interim? Has he been made aware of the very many protests of students of UTM to the effect that this institution is plagued by political interference and sheer managerial incompetence?

The Prime Minister: I had meetings with the students, Mr Speaker, Sir, when I went there. They have made their complaints not just on these areas, but also about the conditions and

whether we could have an expansion of the University and this is something that we are looking into.

Mr Jugnauth: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of the last agreement that was signed between TEC and the UGC on 29 January 2014, reiterating what was in past agreements namely, that any local institution that is registered in Mauritius as an offshore campus and centre of Indian institutions are operating as per the rules and regulations of the UGC, both UGC and TEC, of course, clearly that some of the institutions are in complete violation of that section? Has the hon. Prime Minister taken cognizance of the fact that UGC has even reiterated this proviso?

The Prime Minister: I think this is a new matter. In the law, there was no such provision for an inquiry. But we are doing these inquiries precisely to look into all the matters. It will cover all the aspects of tertiary education.

Mr Speaker: Yes, one question for hon. Fakeemeeah!

Mr Fakeemeeah: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Following the public outcry, can the hon. Prime Minister consider the possibility of returning back to the former formula of having only one dedicated full-fledged Ministry of Education that would encompass all levels of education?

The Prime Minister: I thought it was a good idea to do the tertiary education separately because of the increase in tertiary education and that is why we did it.

Mr Speaker: Yes, last question!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether in the meantime, while awaiting the results of the inquiry, students will still be admitted in the colleges and institutions that are considered to be a *'flou'*, i.e. where we are still having problems with their accreditation and the recognition of their certificates?

The Prime Minister: No, these institutions have been prevented and ordered not to recruit any student until all this is over.

HIGH COMMISSIONER P. D. - APPOINTMENT

(No. B/153) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External

Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to Mr P. D., Ambassador, he will state the capacity in which he is serving and since when, indicating -

- (a) his qualifications, and
- (b) terms and conditions of appointment.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that, from December 1976 to June 1982, High Commissioner P.D. was a Member of the Legislative Assembly and also held the function of Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Power, Fuel and Energy.

The High Commissioner has been serving, on a contract basis, as High Commissioner of the Republic of Mauritius to Malaysia, with residence in Kuala Lumpur, since 14 January 2012.

Prior to his posting in Malaysia, he was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary of the Republic of Mauritius to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and Permanent Representative of the African Union, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, with residence in Addis Ababa, from 13 February 2007 to 31 August 2011.

In regard to part (a) of the Question, the High Commissioner possesses the G.C.E. Ordinary and the G.C.E. Advanced level certificates.

Concerning part (b) of the Question, the terms and conditions of the appointment of the High Commissioner are in accordance with the provisions of the Pay Research Bureau Report 2013 and the Errors, Omissions and Anomalies Committee Report 2013.

Mr Ameer Meea: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether his attention has been drawn to the misbehaviour of Mr P. D., Ambassador in official functions and whether he has been *rappelé à l'ordre*?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: In fact, I immediately inquired into what has supposedly happened. My understanding is - I have also talked to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development - what probably has been misinterpreted is he did not walk out, as people have been saying, but he did ask the permission of the hon. Minister because he had to go somewhere else. He did ask his permission...

(Interruptions)

...to go; he indicated that he would have to leave.

Mr Bérenger: Since the hon. Prime Minister just said that, that person has been appointed Ambassador to Malaysia with residence in Kuala Lumpur, is it true that he has been complaining very loudly recently - he is very angry, he is saying so - that when he was removed from the African Union Headquarters that he was complaining that he was promised to be sent to Malaysia but has been sent to Kuala Lumpur?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: There are all sorts of things, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, in view of the fact of the numerous incidents involving Ambassador P. D., whether it would not be a wise decision, in the interest of the nation, to replace Ambassador P. D. because it is our reputation at international level which is at stake?

The Prime Minister: We are having discussions, in fact, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to look at our whole foreign service, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY - PROCEEDINGS - LIVE BROADCAST

(No. B/154) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the long outstanding issue of the live television and radio coverage of the proceedings of the National Assembly, he will state the latest intention of Government in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that in reply to PQ B/835 on 12 November last, I explained that there might not be a need to set up a new Select Committee on live TV broadcast of the proceedings of the National Assembly given that previously there was a Select Committee that was instituted and it had completed its assignment and it had made a certain number of recommendations.

I also stated that I had no objection whatsoever to the suggestion made by hon. Ganoo for a motion to be tabled in the House adopting the recommendations made in the report of the last Select Committee. Although I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, we wanted to have some discussions before moving ahead about some of the facilities that have to be provided for in the House. But as I informed that I would speak to Mr Speaker – yourself, Sir - about this, and accordingly, it appears that – after consultation – in fact, we would have to have a fresh motion for a Select Committee which would have to be made for the purpose of dealing with the matter, probably to accept whatever the previous Select Committee has adopted. So, we are going to proceed on that level.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I request the hon. Prime Minister, at least, to have this motion at the next sitting of the Assembly?

The Prime Minister: The question is: how long is a piece of string? But I will certainly look into it as quickly as possible because I want to have it aired as well.

Mr Speaker: Yes, next question, hon. Bhagwan!

CONFLUENCES 2014 - SPONSORS

(No. B/155) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the organisation of *Confluences 2014*, he will state -

- (a) who presided over the organising committee therefor;
- (b) if overseas missions have been effected in connection therewith and, if so, give details thereof;
- (c) the total amount of sponsorship money received, indicating -
 - (i) the names of the sponsors together with the respective amount of money received, and
 - (ii) if the total amount thereof has been credited to Government and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not, and
- (d) if the Director of Audit will be called upon to effect a comprehensive audit on all the aspects of the organisation thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Second Edition of *Confluences* International Book Fair organised by the *Culture et Avenir* Unit of my Office, was held at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, from 06 to 09 March 2014.

This unique event has two main objectives. The first objective of organising *Confluences* aims at transforming Mauritius into an international cultural destination in line with the worldwide trend of creating cultural industries to maintain cultural diversity and enhance economic performance. Indeed, the development of the creative sector into an industry can become a new pillar of economic growth.

The second objective is to bring together renowned international authors, editors and artists, from different countries and there have been many who have come from India, China, France, South Africa, United States of America as well as those from our own region to interact with our authors, writers and other stakeholders which would help sustain their creativity and bring arts and culture in the mainstream of the economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is precisely in this context that the *Culture et Avenir* Unit of my Office proposes to organise the *Confluences* International Film Fair, in the near future, to further consolidate the position of Mauritius as a cultural destination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the Question, the Committee for the organisation of *Confluences* 2014 was presided over by Mrs G. H-J, Adviser at the Ministry of Arts and Culture.

Concerning part (b) of the Question, Mr A. G-G, Senior Adviser on Culture, proceeded on overseas mission to France, from 21 to 27 May 2013, to meet French journalists, writers, publishers and officials of the French Ministry of Culture, in connection with the organisation of *Confluences* 2014.

In regard to part (c) of the Question, no sponsorship in cash has been received for the organisation of *Confluences* 2014. However, the *Culture et Avenir* Unit received sponsorship in kind, that is, in terms of air tickets, hotel accommodation and transport facilities, limited, I must say.

Parts (c) (i) and (ii) of the Question do not, therefore, arise as there was no cash transaction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (d) of the Question, as the House is aware, in accordance with the provisions of section 110 of the Constitution, the public accounts of all Government bodies are audited and reported on by the Director of Audit. For that purpose, the Director of Audit or any person authorised by him in that regard shall have access to all the books, records, reports and other documents relating to these accounts.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether - even for last year and this year also - he has received representation from local Mauritian authors, who are deliberately excluded, be it in Hindi, Urdu or even in Mauritian Creole, from participating in this *Confluence*?

The Prime Minister: I can say to the hon. Member that – because I follow that as well with my Adviser – nobody is excluded. But maybe some of them, I am just saying this; I'll have to check - are not respecting all the criteria that have to be respected. I can tell you that everybody is invited.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: With regard to money paid to sponsors, will the hon. Prime Minister state whether any money was paid to a particular media or members of that particular media, and if so, what amount?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member is talking about cash transactions, there were no cash transactions at all.

Mr Speaker: Hon. S. Boolell!

RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES (ELDERLY) - DEATH - REGISTRATION

(No. B/156) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to registration of death, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Civil Status Division, information as to if it receives a return in respect of the disposal of the bodies and if so, indicate if it is in presence of such returns in respect of the deaths which have occurred at the Residential Care Homes for the Elderly.

The Prime Minister: With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply to Parliamentary Question B/181 together with this Question as both Questions relate to the same subject.

Section 38 of the Civil Status Act provides for the registration of a death made by a declarant at the Civil Status Office of the district where the death took place or where the deceased last resided within 24 hours of the occurrence thereof.

The disposal of dead bodies is governed by the provisions of the Public Health Act and, after the registration of a death, the Civil Status Officer issues a Burial or a Cremation Permit to the declarant for the disposal of the corpse.

In October 2000, Regulations were made under the Public Health Act to provide for the handing over of corpses from the Government mortuary house or hospital to medical institutions subject to the body remaining unclaimed or unidentified for at least six months and upon order of a Magistrate, as the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life has just said.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as such the Civil Status Division does not receive any return in respect of the disposal of bodies, including for those deaths occurring at Residential Care Homes for the elderly.

However, under section 41 of the Civil Status Act, it is stipulated that in cases of death occurring in an institution, the person in charge of that place shall cause the death to be registered within 24 hours. Regulation 15 of the Residential Care Homes Regulations 2005 also provides that in the event that no person assumes responsibility for the burial of a deceased resident, the person in charge shall make a provision for such burial in accordance with the law and the religious belief of the deceased.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the proposal for the legislation to be amended to provide for each death occurring in a Residential Care Home to be subject to Police inquiry, I should like to point out that consideration is being given to that matter. However, there are many other implications that have to be taken into account. For example, I must point out that one of them is that on the passing away of a person, relatives always press for handing over of the body for religious or other purposes. They want to have the body straightaway.

At any rate, Mr Speaker, Sir, the law provides for a Judicial Enquiry to be carried out in certain specific cases as stated under the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act, namely in cases where the person has committed suicide, has been killed or has died in

prison or in the custody of the Police or where the Police think the circumstances are not clear, therefore, they will have to have a Judicial Enquiry.

Dr. S. Boolell: Considering that the Civil Status Office has no returns and is unable to know about the whereabouts of dead bodies, and in view of the fact that bodies from Residential Care Homes fall under the responsibility of the Director of that Home and the High-Powered Committee from the Social Security can do nothing about it and cannot monitor the fate of the bodies after death or even before death, will the hon. Prime Minister not consider that that might be time to centralise the powers to monitor the elderly's complaints around an Ombudsperson for the elderly?

The Prime Minister: Whether it should be an Ombudsperson or whatever, but I think we should look at it very carefully because these kinds of things that are happening, and as the hon. Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition have said, are quite unacceptable.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether an inquiry had been carried out to see the involvement of Mr B. M., who is a member of the Board of SSR Medical College, and also a member of an *ashram*?

The Prime Minister: The inquiry is ongoing. Let us see what the inquiry result produces.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers. Please note that Parliamentary Question No. B/176, in regard to the Accreditation and Recognition of Prior Learning for potential candidates from Rodrigues addressed to the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources will now be replied by Dr. the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology.

EDC HOUSES – ASBESTOS - SENSITISATION CAMPAIGN

(No. B/160) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the EDC houses in which asbestos is present, he will state the facilities granted to the owners thereof to reconstruct or upgrade their housing unit, indicating if any sensitisation campaign has been launched to assist the owners thereof to avail themselves of the facilities and, if not, why not, and, if so, indicate –

- (a) if an evaluation of the success thereof has been undertaken, and
- (b) the group of people having been targeted in relation thereto.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to my previous replies to PQs B/946 of 06 December 2011 and B/553 of 25 June 2013 on the same subject wherein I mentioned that there are several schemes available for upgrading or reconstruction of housing units containing asbestos. Any house owner who either wishes to upgrade or reconstruct his housing unit may take advantage thereof.

Mr Speaker Sir, the facilities include –

- (i) assistance for the removal and carting away of asbestos wastes;
- (ii) grant for the casting of roof slabs or for the purchase of building materials through the NHDC Ltd.;
- (iii) subsidised loan facilities from the MHC Ltd., and
- (iv) assistance from the National Empowerment Foundation for the construction of a housing unit.

With regard to part (a) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, the sensitisation campaign is an ongoing exercise which is being pursued by the officers of my Ministry and representatives of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

As at to date, out of the 3113 EDC houses constructed on 59 housing estates -

- (i) 665 housing units have been completely demolished and reconstructed in concrete;
- (ii) Concrete extension has been carried out to 2107 housing units;
- (iii) 278 housing units are still in their original state and in fair condition, and
- (iv) 63 housing units are in poor condition out of which 45 units are occupied and the remaining 18 are unoccupied.

The status clearly shows that the conditions of EDC houses have significantly improved over the years, mainly as a result of the measures taken by Government.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can assure the House that the sensitisation campaign on facilities available for the construction or upgrading of housing units has been carried out on all the 59 housing estates indiscriminately. This campaign is ongoing and particular attention is being given to owners of the housing units which are in poor condition.

It is good to note that, as long as the asbestos panel's integrity is not breached by drilling, there is no danger to health. The only danger is when the integrity of the panel is breached and is likely to release fine asbestos particles which can be inhaled by occupiers of the house. Then prompt action is taken to remove these damaged panels.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the same answers as many PQs were asked in this House. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking on...

(Interruptions)

For me, I consider it as a very serious matter that affects the life of many people in my Constituency and across the island. The hon. Minister mentioned a list of facilities; however, many of these poor people do not have the information or do not have the financial resources to reconstruct their house. Can the hon. Minister provide materials as under the aegis of the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups to these poor people?

Dr. Kasenally: I am giving the answers which you require. What are we doing? In fact, we are continuing to do those things. If you are asking the question four times, five times, I will give you the same answer because our policy has been consistent in helping these people and, as far as your Constituency is concerned, I have given the list to you, I don't want to come back. The then Leader of the Opposition, hon. Ganoo, asked questions. This matter has been debated and every time you come and say we do not do enough. This Government is doing more than has ever been doing and I will...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, supplementary questions are put when all the information is already in the original answer.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that exposure to asbestos causes lung cancer called mesothelioma...

(Interruptions)

He should be made aware. A disease which causes death as a result of inhaling and consuming asbestos particles.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said, nothing will happen until the integrity of the asbestos panel is breached. When these particles are inhaled, they then provoke an intense inflammatory reaction within the lung tissue which causes fibrosis, and chronic inflammation can eventually lead to what we call a special cancer which is called mesothelioma of the lungs...

(Interruptions)

...which is a rare cancer of the lungs. Fortunately, we do not have it in Mauritius. Over and above that, they can cause, you know, what we call pulmonary fibrosis which leads to pulmonary hypertension and eventually cause right heart failure.

The statistics, which have been so far provided by my colleague, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, does not prove that there has been such a resurgence. However, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and my own Ministry are looking at it, you know, very carefully. At the moment, there are very few houses left which are totally in asbestos, but most of them have been upgraded. As I said, we could help these people. *On peut porter le cheval à l'abreuvoir, mais on ne peut pas le forcer à boire.*

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has admitted that he is aware that exposure to asbestos causes lung cancer. From his answer, he mentioned few houses, but in my Constituency alone there could be over 150 of these houses. Mr Speaker, Sir, having known all these years that asbestos causes lung cancer - because the question has been asked for many years - why couldn't the hon. Minister disseminate the information properly so that the people can come forward to do what they need to do to address the issue?

Dr. Kasenally: I beg your pardon, I did not hear...

(Interruptions)

Disseminating, but this has been done by officers of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. They are telling people to move out. We have improved all these houses. If you look at the houses which have been built in the place of the EDC, there are very few that need to be upgraded and there are other schemes, we are going to help them. Always the hon. Member

accuses Government of not doing enough or not doing anything. At one stage she did, but she is gradually reducing her criticisms. I hope that, eventually, it will follow an exponential curve and come to zero.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for having reminded the House that I raised this matter on many occasions in the past. In fact, before 2010, I raised the issue. The hon. Minister has given us the number of such houses and has highlighted that there are about 45 houses which are of really poor condition and which have not yet been renovated or demolished. In this case, the explanation must surely be because the owners are old couples who live alone without any children in these decrepit houses. Can I ask the hon. Minister, then, whether he should not urgently look at the case of these 45 houses which he, himself, said are in poor condition and liaise perhaps with the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment to help these occupiers to get rid or renovate these 45 asbestos houses?

Dr. Kasenally: They are maybe in poor condition, but they are not in decrepit condition. These people have been, you know, asked many times to have their houses improved, but they don't want it. We want to sell the land to them, they don't want to buy the land because they are alone. They do not want to spend even Rs2,000 because they say: 'if you are going to do it, our relatives are going to enjoy it and we do not want so'. This has been the case, but there are only two which are left abandoned and they have built their houses. If they do not want their houses to be removed, it is very difficult, but we can always try to see if there is any danger we shall then use the force of the law to remove them and give them appropriate shelter. There is social housing which this Government is prepared to give to the poor and the underprivileged; something which we do regularly. It's a question of persuading them, but we cannot force them. Some of these old people do not want to move.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, some time back in 2010, I still recall that the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology carried out a study and a survey - a research, I would say - on the question of asbestos. Can the hon. Minister say whether whatever he has just said about the link between asbestos and the supposedly diseases that are occurring out of asbestos are a result of whatever research was carried out by that Ministry?

Dr. Kasenally: When I said there is a risk of cancer, it is only when there is a breach of the asbestos sheet. Whenever there is any breach of the asbestos, they are taken away

immediately, they are carted away. In these circumstances, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and my own Ministry persuade them that they should leave. So, they are not really exposed to it. We do not give them a chance to be exposed. I was just explaining it; under what circumstances you get cancer.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Mrs Radegonde-Haines!

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister mentioned: when there will be danger then the people would be removed. The hon. Minister also mentioned ongoing sensitisation. I want to come back to that and I want to know when have these sensitisations been launched and where, at schools, village halls or community centres because I have no information about the sensitisation campaign?

Dr. Kasenally: I am sorry the hon. Member doesn't have the information, but it is carried out by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life also. I shall enquire and give the hon. Member perhaps a timetable of where they go. Sometimes they don't get all the people to come around. They go from house to house because there are not many and they explain to these people because if you want to have sensitisation, they will not come; we go to them. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Ministry of Housing and Lands go regularly and pay visit. Perhaps the hon. Member has certain areas in her Constituency which are not covered. She may draw our attention and we will act promptly to ensure that this is done.

Mr Speaker: This question has been sufficiently debated and aired. So, this is a proper time to suspend the sitting for one and a half hours.

At 1.02 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.38 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

FILM INDUSTRY – REBATE SCHEME

(No. B/161) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the film industry, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Film Development Corporation, information as to the number of films having been shot in Mauritius, since the launching of the new rebate scheme in relation thereto, indicating the names of the producers thereof.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Film Rebate Scheme does not fall under the purview of the Mauritius Film Development Corporation but under the Board of Investment. It was introduced in the 2012 Budget to stimulate the interest of both local and international film makers and encourage the setting-up of a film industry in Mauritius.

To provide an additional boost to this activity, the threshold which was at 25% rebate for the qualified production expenditure in Mauritius was increased to 30% in March last year.

The FRS is open to any film production company registered in Mauritius, including those with 100% foreign ownership. It is also open for projects using the services of a locally registered production services company.

The scheme covers a wide range of productions and projects, namely -

- Feature films
- Documentaries
- Digital animated films
- Reality TV
- High-end TV commercials
- Tele-movie or single episode drama television programme
- Episodes of factual, natural history, lifestyle, magazine or commercial programmes.

The minimum local qualifying expenditure per project is -

- Feature films (including animation): 100,000 USD
- Television drama series or single dramas: 50,000 USD
- Television documentaries: 50,000 USD
- Other television programmes: 30,000 USD

The following items are included in the Qualifying Production Expenditure -

- Travel to Mauritius (by air and by sea)
- Accommodation in Mauritius
- Catering Services
- Ground transport and facility vehicle services

- Labour costs including non-nationals
- Post-production services (picture and sound)
- Production service company fees
- Professional services (such as insurance, legal and accounting services)
- Rental of camera and lighting equipment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Board of Investment that 21 projects for the shooting of feature films have been approved since the launching of the Film Rebate Scheme. Out of these 21 projects, 14 Feature Films, 7 TV Programmes and Commercials (TVC) have already been shot. Since its launching an estimated amount of Rs145 m. has been spent by the producers. These spending qualify for refund under the Film Rebate Scheme. I am further informed that the Board of Investment has approved location scouting for 9 feature films.

The list of projects which have been approved is being tabled.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister tell us whether our country has reaped some benefit in terms of contracts allocated for logistics, transport and hotels and who were awarded those contracts?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot answer.

(Interruptions)

But these are services being provided to the producers and their crew. They could be staying in a hotel and they could be using the transport facilities over there. So, of course, the arrangement will be between the hotel, the crew and the producers.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know how many local producers are there and how many are international ones?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, I am tabling the list. However, for the information of the hon. Member, we have three local producers. The remaining are foreign producers.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell us whether Mauritian talent has been given a chance to perform on the international stage, since this

objective was to create job and generating income and, if so, how many jobs were created for these talented actors?

Mr Choonee: I do not have the figures of how many jobs have been created, but the use of local talents is being optimised in the production of different films and we definitely want more Mauritians to become actors and performers. I think we do not have shortage of that in the Assembly.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: *M. le président, compte tenu de notre diversité culturelle sans laquelle on ne peut jamais parvenir à une politique de cohésion sociale* and Mauritius has signed the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, will the hon. Minister tell us whether the promotion of our cultural diversity is one of the required conditions in the contract signed with the local project or...

Mr Speaker: I have to intervene here and draw the attention of the hon. Member that the main issue in the question is as to the number of films having been shot in Mauritius. You have to go within the purview of this question, don't go outside. If you have no further question, then I'll invite – do you have another one?

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Yes. I just wanted to know whether the promotion of our cultural diversity is one of the required conditions in the contract.

Mr Speaker: No, this supplementary question is not allowed. You have to stick to the issue in your question. Next question!

BUSES (LOW FLOOR) – COST

(No. B/162) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Low Floor Buses Agreement signed with the Japanese Government, he will state the total cost thereof, indicating the conditions attached with the –

- (a) line of credit, and
- (b) National Transport Corporation, indicating the number of low floor buses which will be handed over thereto, indicating when.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, during the visit of the hon. Prime Minister to Japan in June last year, the financing of the purchase of 100 buses for students was raised. However, to allow for optimum utilisation of the buses, the Ministry decided that the buses would be used for conveying students as well as the general public and would be under the custody of the National Transport Corporation.

Subsequently, a meeting was held at my Ministry with Japanese officials on 17 October 2013 and at that meeting, the terms and conditions of the Japanese Official Development Assistance loans for the purchase of 100 semi-low floor buses were discussed. The loan criteria were, however, found to be quite restrictive. I am submitting a copy of the terms and conditions of Japanese Overseas Development Agencies Loan. The explanations were that Mauritius was not eligible for soft Japanese loans under the prevailing Japanese Development Assistance Policy since Mauritius is near to becoming a high-income country and hence there was no possibility of full or partial grant financing.

An alternative financing mode or line of credit from the Japanese authorities is, therefore, being considered.

Notwithstanding the above, Government has made budgetary provisions in the current Budget for a comprehensive Bus Replacement Mechanism to enable bus operators to purchase 600 modern semi-low floor buses over a period of three years. A subsidy of Rs1 m. will be provided per bus and VAT will also be waived for this type of bus. These two measures will reduce the acquisition cost of a semi-low floor bus by some Rs1.6 m.

TERRE ROUGE-VERDUN/VERDUN-TRIANON-VALENTINA LINK ROADS & RING ROAD – FEASIBILITY STUDIES

(No. B/163) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the decongestion of traffic on the M1 Motorway, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if a traffic assessment and survey in relation thereto was carried out prior to the implementation of the Verdun-Terre Rouge, Valentina-Bagatelle, Ring Road Phases 1 and 2 projects and, if so, indicate –

- (a) when was it carried out;
- (b) who carried out same;
- (c) the cost thereof, and
- (d) if copy thereof will be laid on the Table of the National Assembly.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that the feasibility studies carried out prior to the implementation of Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road, Verdun-Trianon-Valentina Link Road and the Ring Road (Lots 1 and 2), included, as a vital component, full-fledged traffic studies with respect to M1 road. These traffic studies encompassed detailed calculations of the potential traffic using M1 likely to be diverted on the proposed roads.

The feasibility studies concluded that the projects should be economically feasible with Internal Rate of Return as follows –

Terre Rouge-Verdun	-	81%
Verdun-Trianon	-	61%
Ring Road (Phase I and Phase II)	-	71.5%

In regard to the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road, the feasibility study was carried out in 2006 by French consultants, BCEOM, in association with Gibb (Mauritius). The study cost Rs3,779,245.

As for the Verdun-Trianon Link Road, the feasibility study was carried out in 2009 by Indian Consultants, Frishman Prabhu, in association with Dagon Ingénieur Conseil Ltée, at the cost of Rs2,379,390.

Insofar as Port Louis Ring Road (Lots 1 and 2) is concerned, the feasibility study was carried out in 2000 by Indian consultants, Consulting Engineering Services Ltd. The cost of study was Rs4,652,180.

The Executive Summary of the feasibility study reports of the three projects I have referred to, are being tabled.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the Valentina-Terre Rouge, may we know from the hon. Minister, how far Valentina-Terre Rouge has helped to decongest Port Louis at Place d'Armes when using the same road, no exit to enter Port Louis, except at Terre Rouge, is it not that decongestion of M1, if any, is congesting M2 at Port Louis?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned the question relates to the feasibility studies and, in fact, all the studies, not only the studies that I have already mentioned. Before this, there had been a series of studies conducted, for example, SOFRETU, BCEOM, IBERINSA, SETRA, Halcrow Fox, all of them were unanimous on one issue, but M1 will be highly congested and the best option would have to find a way and there have been other studies. For example, BCEOM which is now Egis International has come to the conclusion that the best and only option should have been Terre Rouge-Verdun and Verdun-Trianon. We are satisfied at the level of the Ministry that, in fact, a lot of traffic which utilise this particular M1 in the morning and afternoon, are using Terre-Rouge-Verdun. For example, approximately, I do not have the figures, about 20% to 23% of traffic that constituted early in the morning that comes from the North going towards the South is now using Terre Rouge. Similar is the case for the southbound traffic when they are coming towards the North, they do not use the M1, they prefer to use the Terre Rouge-Verdun and Valentina Link Road. Therefore, I can conclude that, in fact, that road is doing its work and we were not wrong in having constructed that road.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister is talking about 20 or 21 percent who are using the Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road. Some of those going to the north are using it. But is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware that when the same persons who went to the north come to the south, they use M2, M1, because there is a huge gradient ramp, and people do not want to use the Verdun-Terre Rouge Link Road?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have yet to come across anybody who voluntarily avoids using the Valentina and Terre Rouge Link Road! I have not come across such a case, because I know that anyone who passes through that road has nothing but praise for the way the road has been constructed.

Mr Roopun: May I know whether the hon. Vice-Prime Minister is aware that there is a heavy congestion at Ebène, and what are the measures envisaged so that we can, at least, cure this jam that we have every morning?

Mr Bachoo: In fact, I am aware of the big congestion that is taking place there. I am awaiting a study which is being conducted internally, in-house by the Road Development Authority (RDA) with the support of consultants, and probably within months we will be taking action, not only there, but at a few other places also where we know we are having bottlenecks. At Wooton, there is the same problem, and I am looking into it.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned a lot of studies on traffic assessment, and surveys which are being done for Road Decongestion Programme. May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the project to have all these roads lumped into the toll road network is now shelved? Therefore, does it mean that all these consultancy studies that have been spent will suffer the same fate as Harbour Bridge, where Rs197 m. were spent, and then the project was frozen?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the question does not deal with these issues. I would like to add up that Government has taken the decision, at least, to temporarily shelve the Harbour Bridge, as all of us know. But when we talk about the Rs197 m., the study does not deal entirely with the Harbour Bridge. The study deals with the entire PPP projects, and there are 16 components in that. So, we have decided that if we are going ahead with those projects, these studies will be of great use to us. For example, today, we are using the studies which were carried out in 2000, in order to construct our roads. So, I cannot say that the work which had been done and the amount of money spent have gone waste. But, out of the 16 projects, I think a handful few will be taken care of under the PPP. As far as the toll road is concerned, Terre Rouge-Verdun and Verdun-Trianon forms part of it, but Government has decided, rightly so, to do away with the toll system.

Dr. Sorefan: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister has mentioned only Valentina to Terre Rouge, but has failed to mention about the Ring Road. May we know how far the Ring Road will decongest M1?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, everybody knows that the Ring Road Phase II is not yet ready, and this question concerns the feasibility study and the Traffic Impact Assessment. I have given, at least, a clear picture that all the studies which were conducted, starting in early 1990s up till late 2000s, have come to the same conclusion; that we are bound to have an alternative

road that would serve the inhabitants of this country, because M1 is highly congested. Ring Road Phase II is coming, and you will have to bear with us.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Roopun: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned *ad hoc* studies effected for the three projects. Do we have a master plan regarding road construction all over the island?

Mr Bachoo: Well, I did not speak of *ad hoc*. I have only spoken of certain places where we have congestion, and we are trying to look at them. But the studies which have been conducted were basically meant to find ways and means for decongestion, and that is why so many studies are available with us.

LA FERME RESERVOIR – STUDY - FINDINGS

(No. B/164) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to La Ferme Reservoir, he will state if any study has been carried out recently to determine if the actual state thereof represent a potential threat to the inhabitants of the locality and, if so, indicate

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- (a) who carried out same;
- (b) the terms of reference thereof, and
- (c) the findings thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, all dams used for water supply in Mauritius, except the Midlands Dam, are very old. With time, rehabilitation works have to be carried out to enhance the useful life of the dams. In this context, the firm Consulting Engineering Services Ltd. (India) was appointed in 1997 to conduct a Dam Safety Analysis Study on all the dams. The Study was completed in 1999, and the Consultant had concluded that there was no major structural instability that would endanger the safety of the dams, including La Ferme Dam. However, the Consultant recommended rehabilitation measures to enhance their lifetime and structural integrity.

Following this report, rehabilitation works had been carried out at Mare aux Vacoas and La Nicolière reservoirs as well as the Municipal Dyke on GRNW which supplies water to Port Louis.

For part (a), Mr Speaker, Sir, meanwhile, the Consultant M/s Arup SIGMA Ltd was appointed in October 2011 for a review and update of the Safety Dam Analysis Report for La Ferme Dam, preparation of bid documents for the rehabilitation works to be followed by construction supervision.

For part (b), Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I am tabling the Terms of Reference of the Consultant, M/s Arup SIGMA Ltd.

For part (c), in its Design Review and Analysis Report submitted in February 2013, M/s Arup SIGMA Ltd has reconfirmed that there was no major structural instability at the La Ferme Dam. However, in order to upgrade the La Ferme Dam to international safety norms, the Consultant has recommended, *inter alia*, the following rehabilitation measures -

- (i) reconstruction of the existing spillway through the provision of an “Ogee” type spillway to improve the discharge capacities;
- (ii) raising the dam by one metre to increase the reservoir storage capacity from 11.52 Mm³ to 14.12 Mm³;
- (iii) strengthen the upstream slope protection to existing embankment;
- (iv) provision of wave wall for freeboard protection;
- (v) 4.5m wide crest throughout the dam embankment;
- (vi) surface water drainage;
- (vii) dam monitoring equipment;
- (viii) anti-seepage measures;
- (ix) new retaining walls to the River Belle Isle to channel flood flows, and
- (x) internal drainage and rock toe on the downstream slope embankment.

My Ministry initiated action as far back as 2007 for the relocation of squatters upstream and downstream of La Ferme Dam prior to invitation of bids for the rehabilitation works.

I am informed that some 130 families have to be relocated in order to release land for the extension and rehabilitation works. I am further informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that the squatters will be relocated on part of State land at Bambous and on a plot of land to be acquired at Beaux Songes for which acquisition procedures are being finalised. A Technical Committee has been set up at the level of the Ministry of Housing and Lands to monitor the relocation of these squatters, and for the provision of basic infrastructure and amenities in collaboration with the National Empowerment Foundation and the service providers.

The rehabilitation works of La Ferme Dam will also entail the acquisition of 15 portions of private lands located near the spillway and the new reservoir boundaries. Some 10 concrete dwellings would be affected by this exercise. In March 2014, the Ministry of Housing and Lands had requested the Valuation Department to assess the value of compensation to be paid to the owners of the land.

Moreover, a plot of State land to an extent of 18 *arpents* 65 *perches*, presently leased to Val Farms Ltd for the running of a fish farm, is also being retrieved by the Ministry of Housing and Lands in connection with the additional submerged area of the reservoir.

The House may wish to note that La Ferme Dam was constructed in 1914 and with time there has been significant development downstream of the dam. The Consultant has also highlighted that the River Belle Isle spill channel, which flows through the densely built up areas of village Bambous, has limited capacity. To mitigate any risk of flooding, the Consultant has recommended an Emergency Action Plan.

The Draft Proposal for the Emergency Action Plan is being examined with the assistance of the National Disaster and Risk Reduction Centre. Thereafter, the Consultant will be requested to prepare an Emergency Action Plan.

As an interim measure pending the finalisation of the Emergency Action Plan, the maximum water level of La Ferme reservoir is being kept at 90% of its maximum capacity, thus providing a buffer of 10% (equivalent to 1.2 million metre cube) to mitigate any risk of flooding downstream of the dam.

Mrs Hanoomanje: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for the information provided. Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister when he thinks that all the

infrastructural works will be completed? And is he aware that each time there is a heavy rainfall, in spite, of the fact that the water level has been brought down, there is a spill way, I would say, jets of water coming from the reservoir and from the leakages in the reservoir, which cause a potential threat to the inhabitants?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The first step will be to start the works and the works cannot start unless the squatter problem has been solved. We are hoping by November to start the works. In the meantime, we have asked local authorities to clear the River Belle Isle to make sure that there is no accumulation of debris.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The squatters which the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has just mentioned, they received a plot of land as far back as 2010 and, up to now, they have not received their contract. So, I would request the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to consult his colleague, the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands because there is an emergency and as the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, himself, has just said, the consultants have proposed an Emergency Action Plan.

The Deputy Prime Minister: The answer is in two parts. Firstly, the Emergency Action Plan applies to a lot of things in the country with the Disaster Reduction Management. That is one issue. The other issue, yes, certainly, I am in close contact with my colleague, the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands and we are seeing to it that things proceed as fast as we can.

Mr Ganoo: I have listened very attentively to the answer of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. So, in view of the elaborate works, planification and investment that are being done with regard to the La Ferme Dam - this question has been raised in the past - doesn't he consider that it is time now to use the La Ferme Reservoir Dam for domestic purposes, in view of the investment that is being brought into this Rehabilitation Project?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is yes. We are hoping to use it for domestic purposes as well for drinking water and for that purpose we need more land - this is the key issue - where we can have a treatment plant attached to the Dam.

SINGLE MOTHERS - ASSISTANCE

(No. B/165) **Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the single mothers, she will state the actions taken by her Ministry to assist them, as at to date.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, irrespective of status, women, including single mothers, benefit from various services provided at the level of my Ministry according to their needs. These services are meant for their social, economic and political empowerment as well as their protection and support.

In addition to the above, my Ministry, under the Special Collaborative Programme for Support to Women and Children in Distress, has provided financial support to the tune of Rs4 m. to NGOs working with some 209 single mothers since 2009.

Notwithstanding the services provided by my Ministry, referrals of cases of women in distress are also made to other institutions depending on their specific needs.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister say whether the Research Unit of her Ministry has carried out any study on the profile of single mothers, so that she can identify the categories of girls who are most at risk to become single mothers and target her sensitisation programme?

Mrs Martin: Actually, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a little bit difficult for the Ministry to compile in terms of the women status as single mothers because we do compile them as to whether they are married or unmarried, but it is not considered that because you are a single mother there is a problem. Normally, what we try to do, as far as possible, is to see whatever support any women in distress needs. This, in fact, is taken consideration and we refer as appropriate.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I beg to differ with the hon. Minister on this issue.

Mr Speaker: No, put your question!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether she is aware that most single mothers live below poverty line and that they find it very difficult to leave their babies and go to

work? Can she tell us whether she has addressed that issue and what she is doing in view of the fact that the Central Statistics Office has published a figure of more than 4,000 single mothers?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned in my answer, as regards the women in distress, including the teenage pregnancies and single mothers as well, the Child Development Unit addresses this problem through a series of awareness campaign programmes and also provision of support services. I also mentioned that we refer the cases to institutions as appropriate. As you know, there are different cases of people and women in distress, and therefore, as appropriate they are referred to different services. For example, the Ministry of Social Security has different schemes which may be beneficiary to single mothers. These include abandoned women, married women and even those whose partners or spouses are serving terms of imprisonment, or the partner is dead or missing or has disappeared. The Ministry of Social Integration also does its part. There are several support institutions which provide for that type of cases. But whenever a case is reported to us, we assist as appropriate and refer also those cases to appropriate instances.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I understand then from the hon. Minister that her Ministry does not have a definite policy for single mothers and that she is not taking into consideration the fact that single mothers formed part of those groups of people who live below poverty line?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned that we cannot stigmatise single mothers and say because they are single, they are necessarily in distress. There are a lot of single mothers out there also who can fare for their children and they are faring pretty well. What we are saying is that we treat every case as appropriate and we refer them. And, furthermore, we will have soon *Les Assises de la Famille*. *Les Assises de la Famille* will take on a series of topics and I suppose the types of families also will be taken into account.

Mrs Ribot: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether at the level of the Ministry there is any training programme given to those single mothers so as to facilitate their employability.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the level of the Gender Unit, for example, there are a series of programmes such as capacity building programmes and courses that are offered at the level of Women Centres. In addition, there is the National Women Entrepreneur Council to whom women who aspire to develop an enterprise can have resort to. As I have said, Mr

Speaker, Sir, there is no specific programme for single mothers as such. There are programmes which are destined to women in distress, whether they be single mothers or not.

Mrs Labelle: I think I heard the hon. Minister mentioning that Rs4 m. have been disbursed to NGOs to help this category of women. May I ask the hon. Minister the number of direct beneficiaries from this disbursement? How many women have benefitted from this disbursement and who are concerned with this programme?

Mrs Martin: Under the special Collaborative Programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, I said that there are four NGOs. Following the approval of projects which they have submitted, there are a total of 209 single mothers who have benefitted from this because they deal directly with the persons who are single mothers and the projects are based directly to benefit these women.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Being given that there is an increase in the number of single mothers, doesn't the hon. Minister think that it is high time for her Ministry and that there are sufficient grounds for her Ministry to set up a multi-sectoral committee to look into this matter?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the last Budget Speech, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned that the Ministry will be holding *Les Assises de la Famille* and amongst the topics which are going to be taken into account would be teenage pregnancy. For single mothers as such, there is, as I said, no specific programme in order not to stigmatise that person according to her status. However, the topic which will be taken will also be followed by an Action Plan.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT UNIT - AUDIT EXERCISE

(No. B/166) **Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Child Development Unit, she will state if an audit exercise has been carried out in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the -

- (a) names of the bidders in respect of the tender exercise launched for consultancy services therefor, indicating the name of the successful bidder, and
- (b) time frame of the audit exercise.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following unsuccessful bidding for an audit of the Child Development Unit, arrangements have been made for same to be included in the National Child Protection Strategy and Action Plan. The development of the National Child Protection Strategy and Action Plan is being financed by the European Union.

The Consultant selected by the European Union will start the assignment in Mauritius on 05 May 2014. The duration of the assignment is 60 working days.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am referring to the hon. Minister's reply on 11 December 2012 where she said that the tender exercise had already been launched in May 2013 to inform the House that 'my Ministry has already taken action' and we are now in 2014, and we have just learned that the consultancy service will be operational as from 05 May 2014. Can the hon. Minister justify such a delay?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have indicated in my answer, we had unsuccessful bidding for audit of the Child Development Unit and, therefore, we have arranged for same to be included in the National Child Protection Strategy and Action Plan and that Action Plan, as I have indicated, after negotiations through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and with the European Union will start on 05 May.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, since 2011, the Ombudsperson for Children, in a report, did propose a series of remedial measures for the restructuring of the CDU. I would like to ask the hon. Minister pending the audit of the CDU whether any of these recommendations has been taken into consideration yet?

Mrs Martin: I thank the hon. Member for her question because, indeed, it gives me the opportunity to say that we did not stay idle. What we did pending the finding of a responsive bidder, we, in fact, made arrangements to improve on the services delivered and, amongst those, we have reviewed the schedule of work of the coordinators who have now specific assignments to streamline operations and we have set up a temporary inspectorate to be able to monitor the Day Care Centres. We have also reinforced the CDU personnel through the recruitment of Assistant Child Protection Officers who have been posted at the CDU and we have also 28 FWPOs who have been posted at the CDU. We have reallocated some tasks devolving on the CDU and pertaining to child development to the NCC, tasks relating mostly to child development such as *École des Parents*, Universal Children's Day, Day of the African Child, 16

Days, 16 Rights' Campaign and the School Child Protection Clubs and through the High-Powered Committees, we have signed several MoUs and these MoUs enable us to have, in fact, better service delivery.

As regards the Child Protection Services themselves, we have also set up a Child Protection Service at Vacoas and we expect, given finances, that more will follow. We have arranged for supervised visits as well, a specific place for supervised visits in Phoenix and since 2011, eight new vehicles have been bought and these vehicles are servicing *inter alia* the CDU for both emergency and follow-up cases.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, everyone knows that one of the weaknesses of the CDU is the lack of staff and vehicles. Can the hon. Minister state what are the solutions that are being proposed to address the problems of staff, especially lack of vehicles?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe I have already said that in the previous answer, but I am willing to say it again. In fact, it is true that we need...

(Interruptions)

Sorry!

(Interruptions)

Yes. I have already said that we had eight new vehicles that had been bought and they are *inter alia* servicing the CDU for emergency services as well and follow-up of cases, but, of course, as you all know and I do agree with the hon. Member that we still need more officers and this year we are hoping to recruit some more with the finances that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has provided us.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the Child Development Unit works in very close collaboration with the National Children's Council, can the hon. Minister say why the National Children's Council has been excluded from this audit exercise?

Mr Speaker: No, this question is not related. Next question, hon. Mrs Ribot!

Mrs Ribot: I would like to ask the hon. Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether the officers of the CDU are now getting a better working environment because this has been pointed out as being very dysfunctional in the Ombudsperson for Children's report more than once.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is another source of concern to us. Of course, we are trying to make do with what we have given the lack of space to be able to accommodate all the services adequately, but what we are trying to do, for example, there is a building that we are trying to renovate to be able to make sure that more officers can go in that building and that is situated in Port Louis. There is another building which the Ministry of Social Security has agreed to hand over to us in a few months in Goodlands and we are hoping to get it soon, to make sure that the officers of CDU be better accommodated. We are trying our best, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CHILD PROSTITUTION – NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

(No. B/167) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to child prostitution, she will state if her Ministry proposes to devise a National Action Plan to address same.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, *Les Assises de la Famille* which will be held this month will take up the issue of child prostitution in its discussions. The outcome will enable us to better understand and act on this concern. An Action Plan will subsequently be elaborated.

In addition, as mentioned in my reply to PQ B/166, a National Child Protection Strategy and Action Plan will be prepared as from 05 May 2014, with the technical assistance of the European Union. The Action Plan shall cater for issues related to child protection.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are a bit at a loss. I would like the hon. Minister to state clearly where and when we are going to see the issue of child prostitution being addressed. Is it in the Children's Bill that is long overdue and that we are expecting for June this year, is it in the National Action Plan on the family, is it in *Les Assises de la Famille* which has been announced in the last Budget and which has not been launched yet? I would like to know which is which?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to clarify for the hon. Member's understanding. I have just said, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, the question relates to the National Action Plan, it does not relate to the Children's Bill. But the Children's Bill will also take into account every need of protection for children including commercial sexual exploitation of children. *Les Assises de la Famille* will take on board several issues which affect the family and the children at the same

time and teenage pregnancy and child prostitution will also form part of it as announced by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development during the last Budget Speech. Action Plans will be subsequently elaborated regarding those things and, in addition, with the support of the European Union, what we have done is that we have taken into account all the child protection strategy as a whole and protection from child prostitution is part of that whole protection strategy as well. So, it's going to, in fact, give us a better overview of the situation and enable us to act better with all the stakeholders on this subject.

Mr Jhugroo: With regard to child prostitution, can the hon. Minister inform the House how many cases have been reported to her Ministry since January of this year and what actions have been taken on her behalf?

Mrs Martin: I have the statistics with me. Since January up to February of this year, Mr Speaker, Sir, one case of child prostitution *per se* has been reported to the Ministry and as every case, that is reported to the Ministry, it has been followed up and supported as appropriate.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Pending *Les Assises de la Famille* and pending the National Action Plan, can the hon. Minister say what are the emergency measures which she has taken to combat child prostitution?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, among the ongoing programmes that we have there is definitely the sensitisation that is being done with the different stakeholders. We also have the Child Watch system which also enables the stakeholders to come and report cases including cases of child prostitution. We have strengthened our collaboration with the Police and other services through the protocol signed under the Working Together Committee to make sure that the actions are streamlined in order to cater for those types of problems as well. Those are among some of the measures which we have taken.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether she could state if a study has been made on the profile of those children engaged in prostitution in the most recent cases. Were they school dropouts? Were they simply not attending school and what is the support that her Ministry has given to those children?

Mrs Martin: The supports given to those children are, in fact, as appropriate, that is, if the child needs to go to the Police, the child is assisted with its declaration and deposition.

Whatever support that is needed, be it follow-up, whether the child has to be placed in a shelter, whether the child has to undergo health care, all these different measures are also taken care of.

SUGAR ACCOMPANYING MEASURES - EUROPEAN UNION - FUNDS

(No. B/168) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to budget support and other funds emanating from the European Union in terms of Sugar Accompanying Measures, he will state the extent and amount thereof –

- (a) disbursed in 2013, and
- (b) not disbursed for any specific reason, since 2008 to date.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, the European Union (EU) has been one of the key development partners in driving the reform programmes in Mauritius. In fact, since 2006 the total EU grants received under the Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol (AMSP) and Sugar Sector Support Programme has been around Euro 212 million, that is, around Rs8.5 billion.

Currently, we are in the second year of implementation of the fifth Government Budget Support which includes funds from the AMSP and the 10th European Development Fund (EDF). The operational modality of disbursement of EU Grants under budget support is linked to the fulfillment of the general and specific conditions and key performance indicators. The EU has consistently commended Mauritius for effectively using grant and assistance received from them.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to highlight that, according to the current Financing Agreement, an amount of Euro 81.9 million has been earmarked for period 2013 to 2015. In 2013, Government has successfully met all the conditions and the KPIs and the full amount of Euro 27.3 million, that is, more than Rs1 billion have been disbursed.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, I wish to inform the House that since 2008, out of an allocated amount of Euro 222.1 million, Euro 12.7 million or 5.7% has remained undisbursed namely -

- Euro 2.7 million for not meeting the indicator in 2008 relating to the *Zone D'Éducation Prioritaire*;

- Euro 10 million relating to Procurement for electricity production.

As regards the Euro 4 million relating to the indicator '*Ethanol Use Framework endorsed by Cabinet*', our disbursement request is still under consideration by the EU.

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister confirm whether the Government had asked for any extension of time with regard to fulfilling the two key performance indicators, namely ethanol use and the invitation for open international tender with regard to a coal power plant?

Mr Duval: As far as ethanol use is concerned, I know that we are waiting for the report by the end of this month, I think, by the end of May, which will then be submitted to the EU and hopefully, therefore, we will be able to get the Rs4 m.

As far as the Euro 10 million for procurement for electricity is concerned, there were a lot of discussions with the EU. In fact, the general tranche was, in fact, redistributed into more specific tranches so that if we miss that indicator, we will not lose the whole 40 million Euros. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, therefore, 10 million Euros have been foregone.

Mr Bérenger: I wanted to be more specific. With reference to ethanol, is there several hundred million rupees – in fact, from what I understand some Rs300 m. – that have stood there to be disbursed, available and that have not been used because of lack of progress on the ethanol issue and, if yes, since when has that sum been dormant?

Mr Duval: The answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the sum has not yet been foregone. There were a lot of discussions with the EU as to whether ethanol should be made compulsory or whether it should be used voluntarily by motorists. Government has always wanted it to be a voluntary use because of the various impacts it could have on engine, etc. What has happened now, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that we are considering the report that is being prepared by General Electric, India; it is about the use of the same ethanol in gas turbines. So, fully when the report comes out, it may show that it is, in fact, economic to use ethanol in gas turbines in which case we are fine or it may say, in fact, that it is not economic to do so in which case also, I think, we are fine because EU will not force us to do something that is not economic.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister has not replied to my question. Since when has that sum - that it is now planned to be disbursed when gas turbine, etc. – been dormant there?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think, it is, at least, a year that we have been waiting for that money.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister has not answered my question with regard to the deadline which I asked because, according to my information, the European Commission has written to the Ministry of Finance to say very clearly that the deadline was 04 March 2014 and that this deadline now having been passed, therefore, Government is not yet entitled to the amount of 14 million Euros under both KPIs.

Mr Duval: There is no doubt, Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the procurement for electricity is concerned, we think that money has been lost. As far as the ethanol framework is concerned, the hon. Prime Minister himself met the European Commission last week and we have also received representations that the requirement is now for submission of a report on the use of ethanol in gas turbines. If it is found, as I have mentioned just now - I can repeat it, Mr Speaker Sir - that the amount has not been foregone, we still have time to submit the report by the end of May.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the CT Power project is concerned - because that is what we are talking about I understand from what the hon. Vice-Prime Minister said - there was a sum that was to be disbursed for Mauritius from the European Union and this sum has not been disbursed because of the non-tendering for the CT Power project. But I heard the hon. Vice-Prime Minister say that part of that sum has been used elsewhere; clearly it is a part which has been wasted, not used. Can I know, therefore, because of this CT Power non-tendering problem, how much the sum that is dormant in this case? What is the value of the sum that is dormant and since when it has been there?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will be clear. There are Euro 10 million linked to the procurement of electricity, that is, the CT Power issue; Euro 4 million is linked to the ethanol project and that is ongoing. As far as the procurement for electricity is concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, you will remember that it is the Environment Appeal Tribunal that allowed the CT Power Project to go ahead. So, the CT Power Project, for which EIA had been refused, was, in fact, reinstated by the Environment Appeal Tribunal. Since that time - of course, this is a decision by the Tribunal - we have proceeded with the CT Power Project. However, I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, despite some 90% increase in the cost of the project, the actual cost to the CEB in terms

of KW/h will rise by about 30%. So, in fact, even considering all this, the consumer, through the CEB, is still getting electricity, Mr Speaker, Sir, at a very good price.

Mr Bérenger: Again, the hon. Minister did not reply to my question. I wanted to know what sum is still dormant. Well, be it at the EIA Tribunal, what sum is still dormant there in reference to the CT Power Project and since when?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will be clear again. No sum is dormant for the CT Power. The 4 m. which is dormant is for the ethanol. Is that clear?

Mr Jugnauth: It is very confusing. The European Union is saying that they are against unsolicited bid. They have written to the hon. Minister to say that they are expecting for an open international tender before they will release this 10 m. euros. Now Government, on the other hand, has publicly stated that they are going ahead with the CT Power project. If I may refer the hon. Minister to the letter that was addressed to him on 20 March, whereby they have expressly and clearly shown their concern about unsolicited bid, therefore, we stand to lose 10 m. Euros. So, can I have some explanation about that?

Mr Duval: That is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. What is the word “foregone”? I have used it, at least, ten times. The 10 m. is gone, because we have not met that particular clause of the contract. The 4 m. Euros, we hope that we will meet. The 10 m. Euros have been foregone, because we have not been able to do so, because the Environment Appeal Tribunal reinstated the CT Power Project.

Mr Jugnauth: Now, it is clear that we have lost 10 m. Euros. Let me come to the 4 m. Euros, now, on the ethanol use framework. Again, the European Union has indicated to the Vice-Prime Minister that the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities and relevant implementing bodies have not taken any concrete measure to implement the ethanol use framework. Again, they are not going to release any money with regard to the amount of 4 m. Euros. So, can I also have confirmation from the hon. Minister?

Mr Duval: That piece I dispute, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have a letter here from the European Union dated 20 March. It says clearly, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have to submit this report so that we can show whether there is a case or whether there is no case in using ethanol in gas turbines. That is quite clear, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Next Question, hon. Jugnauth!

RICHE TERRE - JINFEI/CIN-GIN PROJECT

(No. B/169) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Jinfei/Cin-Gin Project in Riche Terre, he will state if any derogation has been granted to any company or individual to use the roads constructed therefor as racing track for cars and motorcycles.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has not granted any derogation for the use of roads within the JinFei Economic Trade and Cooperation Zone as a racing track for cars and motorcycles. In fact, the roads within the subject site have been constructed by the lessee at its own costs and are under his control.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Commissioner of Police that the lessee has authorised the Moto-Club to organise the Mechanical Exhibitions/Rallies within the JinFei Economic Trade and Cooperation Zone on 25 November 2011 and on 02 March 2014. Necessary Police assistance was sought and obtained on both occasions and no accident was reported during the event.

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Minister agree that this is in complete violation with the conditions of the lease that has been done between Government of Mauritius and JinFei?

Dr. Kasenally: We have not condoned it. We were not informed, but we have informed them of the conditions and that this should not be repeated.

Mr Jugnauth: May I know how the Commissioner of Police was informed about this rally?

Dr. Kasenally: I think the organiser asked for permission from the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Jugnauth: Then, in that case, wasn't the hon. Minister's Ministry made aware or being asked permission, at least, in order that this rally be carried out?

Dr. Kasenally: I have already mentioned, we were not informed and, therefore, we have told them that this is not on.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Minister is saying that he was not informed, but there has been extensive publicity for quite some time and I can table a copy of one of the publicities that was made on the internet about this rally to be held on Sunday 02 March at JinFei, Riche Terre. I can understand if the hon. Minister is not aware, but someone, somewhere must have drawn the attention of the Ministry about this rally. Can I table a copy of this anchorage publicity?

Dr. Kasenally: Well, I have to find that someone, somewhere who has read it and has not informed me.

SWIMMING POOLS – BOILERS

(No. B/170) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the swimming pools, he will state if the boilers thereof are in good working conditions and, if not, indicate the remedial measures taken in relation thereto, including if the *lignes d'eau* thereof have been changed and, if so, indicate if same comply with the accepted norms.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the boilers at all swimming pools of my Ministry are in good working conditions. Only during a recent inspection carried out at the Serge Alfred Swimming Pool, it has been noticed that there is a minor leakage in the heating system. In spite of this problem which is going to be sorted out very shortly, the swimming pool Technician of my Ministry has confirmed that the heating system is operating within the required parametres.

I wish to point out that heating of swimming pools will, as usual, start in May. Meanwhile all necessary servicing and repairs to the plant and accessories are being completed.

With regard to the second part of the question, I am informed that following a recent tender exercise, all the swimming pools have been supplied with new swim lines, that is *lignes d'eau*, which are according to FINA norms. The new equipment have been tested and are found to satisfy the requirements of our swimming pools.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that the new swim lines are meant exclusively for competition purposes while the existing swim lines will continue to be used for training purposes.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, permettez-moi d'être étonné par la réponse du ministre à propos de la chaudière à la piscine Serge Alfred. Selon les informations qui me sont parvenues, l'eau de la piscine n'est pas chauffée selon les normes et le ministre, j'aimerais qu'il nous dise, veut-il nous faire croire que cette information n'est pas vraie ?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, normally, we heat the pools during winter only, that is, as from the beginning of May. In summer, no swimming pools would be heated, but the recommended temperature by FINA is 25% to 28%. Currently, the ambient morning temperature in our pools is 24.5% and reaches up to 26% during the day, except when there is a sudden adverse climatic change. We are expecting to start heating as from beginning of May and we have confirmation that the boiler will provide the desired level of temperature.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in his answer, the hon. Minister said that there are new *lignes d'eau* that have been put in place. Concerning the swimming pool in Pavillon, for example, can I ask the hon. Minister whether in the future, there will be consideration given to solar heaters for the *chaudière*?

Mr Ritoo: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is one of our conditions. We have decided to replace the existing boiler and we will, very shortly, try to find out whether there is any heater system, through the MID Project Fund, so that we can heat water to the required degree.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, en juin 2013, dans une de mes questions parlementaires B/558, j'avais attiré l'attention de la Chambre sur le mauvais état dans lequel se trouve la chaudière à la piscine Serge Alfred, et au lieu d'installer une nouvelle chaudière, l'honorable ministre avait préféré dépenser R 825,000 pour les réparations. J'aimerais qu'il nous dise, va-t-il, encore une fois, dépenser autant d'argent, sinon plus, pour des réparations *piecemeal* ou va-t-il, une fois pour toutes, faire installer une nouvelle chaudière ?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a new boiler of the capacity of Serge Alfred Swimming Pool will cost us around Rs3 m. and above. But the technical reports indicate that the boiler can remain functional for some more years. So, as for its replacement, my Ministry is envisaging, as I just said, to install a solar heating system which is considered to be more energy efficient and cost-effective in the long run. The funding will be through the *Maurice Ile Durable* Scheme. But pending the replacement by the solar heater system, my Ministry will continue with

the normal repairs and maintenance to the existing system, that is, the ballast tank, filter, heat exchanger, pumps, chlorination system, piping system, etc.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, concernant les lignes d'eau, j'aimerais que le ministre nous dise si l'achat a été fait selon les procédures d'appel d'offres, si oui, de nous dire les noms des soumissionnaires, l'offre qui a été retenue et les conditions attachées.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have already stated, the *lignes d'eau*, swimming lines, have been purchased and delivered to all swimming pools and normal procurement procedures have been followed for the tender exercise. According to the report of the Bid Evaluation Committee and that of the Departmental Tender Committee, the award has gone to the lowest most responsive bidder and the goods supplied are according to our specifications and comply with the FINA norms.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, l'honorable ministre ne nous a pas donné les noms des soumissionnaires et l'offre qui a été retenue si j'ai bien compris sa réponse.

Mr Ritoo: In fact, the one who got the contract is *Espace Commerciale Ltée*.

Mr Quirin: Et peut-on connaître le coût?

Mr Ritoo: It is Rs2,086,209 for the six swimming pools.

Mrs Ribot: M. le président, en parlant de dépenses à la piscine Serge Alfred, j'aimerais savoir du ministre si un escalier métallique haut de gamme a été construit à la piscine, quels en sont l'utilité et le coût?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, there has been an *escalier* which has been constructed so that all the officials of the Ministry and even the technicians would not go through all the spectators sitting in front of the swimming pool. This has been done by the workers of the Ministry. But I do not have the amount now, I can submit it later.

SPORTS FEDERATIONS (NEW) - RECOGNITION

(No. B/171) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Sports Act, he will state if his Ministry has received applications for recognition from new sports federations and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof in each case.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the spirit of the *feuille de route* imposed by the International Olympic Committee, I have recently granted full recognition to the Fencing Federation and the Hockey Federation. For recall, one of the conditions of the International Olympic Committee was to thrash out once for all the question of fictitious federations after the visit organised by the IOC of eminent emissaries of respective International Federations. After being satisfied that they meet the requirement of the Sports Act, the application from the Fencing Federation and the Hockey Federation has been cleared on 14 March 2014 and 27 March 2014, respectively. The main conditions for full recognition is that the Federation -

- (i) should be practising a real, specific and ongoing sport;
- (ii) should be affiliated to an appropriate International Federation and have obtained ROA's registration;
- (iii) should have administrative and Technical backup (e.g. Managing Committee, qualified Coach, referees), and
- (iv) should have training structures.

The two Federations satisfied the above conditions, except that they are operating in only two regions with one club in each region. Taking into account the specificities of the two sports and considering that both are at their developmental stage, I have used my derogatory powers under the Sports Act, to allow the two Federations to operate in only 2 sports regions with one club per region for an initial period of one year. During this period, they will have to develop their sports in other sports regions and increase the number of clubs in each region. The situation will be reviewed after one year.

In addition, I have granted provisional recognition to the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation and the Gymnastics Federation on 28 November 2013 and 17 March 2014, respectively. These two Federations met the general criteria for recognition, but at the time of application they were not yet affiliated with their respective International Federations. Full recognition will be granted to these two Federations after consultation with the MOC once they have got their International Federation affiliation.

My Ministry has also received requests for recognition from 12 other new sports federations. These are: Canoe-kayak, Rowing, Netball, Paintball, Sambo, Speedminton, Roller

Sport, Muay Thai, Ring ball, Traditional Jiu Jitshu, Shotokan and Waterski. A certificate of recognition has not been issued to these federations as they have either submitted incomplete applications or they do not meet the criteria required for recognition as per the Sports Act. As and when they produce evidence of full compliance with the Sports Act, they will be recognised as appropriate.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister told us that two so-called federations have obtained their full-fledged registration because he has used his prerogatives and then there are two others who have obtained provisional and so on. Can I know whether these four or two out of four will vote in the next elections for the National Olympic Committee and whether all this saga is not to *truquer les élections à venir* to protect some *petits copains*?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, if these federations comply with the Sports Act, have been given recognition, then the Olympic Committee will have to go through the General Assembly. If the members agree that the federations comply, then they will be allowed to vote.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, selon le *Sports Act* qui a été débattu longuement en décembre dernier, la section 11 (4) (a) stipule que toute nouvelle fédération doit d'abord obtenir un *Provisional Certificate of Recognition* avant d'avoir une *full recognition*. Le ministre, de ce fait, M. le président, peut-il nous dire si cette procédure a été suivie en ce qui concerne les fédérations de hockey et d'escrime?

(Interruptions)

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, provisional recognition is...

(Interruptions)

... granted when the new federation has not yet been registered with the Registrar of Associations and has not yet been affiliated with its relevant international federation. In the case of hockey and fencing both had their International Federation (IFR) Recognition and were registered with the Registrar of Associations. Furthermore, these two applications had to be addressed in the light of the *feuille de route*.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: The Minister informed the House with regard to his previous *prise de position*, but what he has done, what approval he has given, using his discretion, is in contradiction with what he said himself about fictitious conditions. So, can the Minister inform the House and the sports population that all this has been done purposely in connection with the election of the *Commission Nationale Olympique*?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, we had to attend to the Sports Act as per the *feuille de route* where it was clearly indicated that I had to prepare the new Sports Act and, at the same time, the International Olympic Committee agreed to give an extension up to 31 December, provided that the imposed conditions, that is, *trancher définitivement les désaccords autour de l'existence réelle ou non des cinq fédérations*. So, they sent their international representatives together with the officers of the Ministry. They had working sessions and the federations complied with the Act.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, si j'ai bien compris l'honorable ministre, et ce qui est totalement contraire à ce qui est stipulé dans le *Sports Act*, il paraît, d'après l'honorable ministre, que ces deux fédérations, avant même d'obtenir un *Provisional Certificate of Recognition* ont bénéficié de l'enregistrement au niveau du *Registrar*, ce qui est contraire au *Sports Act* ! Je lis rapidement -

(Interruptions)

“Where the Minister is satisfied that the applicant complies with this Act shall issue a Provisional Certificate of Recognition subject to such conditions as he may determine -

- (a) The applicant shall not later than three months after it is granted a Provisional Certificate of Recognition apply for registration to the Registrar of Associations, and where appropriate to the appropriate National Sports Federation and International Sports Federations (...).”

Donc, si j'ai bien compris le ministre, avant même que ces fédérations aient obtenu leur *recognition* du ministère, c'est-à-dire le *Provisional Certificate of Recognition*, ils ont carrément bafoué, et le ministre trouve cela tout à fait normal de leur octroyer le *full Certificate of Recognition*. Je tiens à préciser que le ministre a été à l'encontre de sa propre loi !

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think it is a bit difficult for me to give the whole explanation regarding hockey and fencing. But I will briefly go through it. They were already registered with the Registrar of Associations since 05 February 2008 and 09 May 2012 respectively. They were recognised by my Ministry. As they did not apply for such recognition, they were not recognised. It is only at the beginning of this year that their applications for recognition were received at my Ministry. But, again, I say that they were already registered since 2008 and 2012. After examination of the applications, I was satisfied that both federations were involved in a real, specific and ongoing sport, and were compliant with the provision of the Sports Act, except that they were not operating in the required number of sports regions.

Taking into account the specificities of both sports, given that they are at the initial development stage in Mauritius, and considering the conditions spelt out in the *feuille de route*, I have used my derogatory power, as stated in the letter, and I allowed the two federations to operate exceptionally in only two regions, with one club per region, for an initial period of one year. They will have to promote their respective sports in all other sports regions as far as possible, in order to be fully compliant with the Sports Act, to benefit from financial and technical assistance from my Ministry. The recognition was granted on 14 and 27 March.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the approval given by him, his instructions - the files - were not recommended by the technicians of the Ministry?

Mr Ritoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, j'aimerais que le ministre nous dise qu'elle est la composition du bureau de ces deux fédérations, c'est-à-dire l'Escrime et le Hockey, de même que les clubs qui sont affiliés, et le nombre de licenciés de chacune d'elles?

Mr Ritoo: The President of the Fencing Federation is Aarti Goolrajan Descan, and the President of the Hockey Club is Geetanjali Mawa. With regard to the clubs of the Hockey Federation, it is the Port Louis Hockey Club and Hockey Club of Vacoas, while for the Fencing, it is the Pamplémousses Fencing Club and Port Louis Fencing Club.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Li Kwong Wing!

DOMAINE LES PAILLES LTD – ASSETS

(No. B/172) **Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether in regard to the Domaine Les Pailles Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation, information as to –

- (a) the amount of profit or loss made, as the case may be, since 2010 to date, indicating in case of loss, the reasons therefor, and
- (b) if the assets thereof are being disposed of, and if so, give details thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that, prior to its acquisition, Domaine Les Pailles Ltd has consistently been making losses ever since 1997. The total losses incurred by the company from July 2010 to December 2013 are Rs95 m. For the benefit of the House, I am tabling information on the financial performance of the company.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that due to the unsustainable business model, it has been decided to appoint KPMG as Transaction Adviser for the disposal of DLP's assets. Tenders were launched in 2012 for disposal of the assets of DLP Ltd. Interests were received from six parties, out of which two parties submitted binding bids by the closing date.

I am also informed that KPMG carried out the evaluation of the two binding bids, and recommended Yihai International Investment Management Ltd from China as the preferred bidder. One of the two parties was found to be non-compliant. As a first step, a MoU has recently been signed between SIC and Yihai, which has offered a price of Rs441m. and has agreed to keep all employees on its payroll. I wish to inform the House that this financial proposal is well above the figures submitted by the independent valuation carried out by SIC. Discussions are currently being held with a view to finalising an agreement for the sale of the assets. Besides the sale proceeds, the future owner would also invest some US\$113 m. in the new business.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether we can know who effected that valuation exercise on behalf of SIC?

Mr Duval: Mr Ramlakhan.

(Interruptions)

I can circulate it. There is no problem!

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the exercise of finding a strategic partner or somebody to acquire DLP Ltd. has been going on since quite some time, and not in 2012. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House since when was the first expression of interest to invite for bids done? How many Directors of the Board of SIC have been travelling all around the world to find partners or people to acquire the company?

Mr Duval: I am not aware of any Directors of SIC travelling anywhere around the world to find bidders, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The valuer was Mr Ramrekha, not Ramlakhan. I am sorry about that.

As far as the question of expression of interest is concerned, the information that I have here is from year 2012. So, in 2012, tenders were published in all the big newspapers in Mauritius, on our website, on SIC's website, and since that time, we have been trying to find a buyer.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, in the financial statements of Domaine Les Pailles, what is the assets' worth compared to the valuation that has been made?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the financial statements are published information. The hon. Member is welcome to them.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House what are the main assets of the company in terms of extent of the land, and also whether the casino of Domaine Les Pailles forms part of it, and if not, what restaurants form part of the assets of this company?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, firstly, the assets of the company consist, in this case, of about 78 *arpents* of land; part of it is hilly. It is not the casinos, but all the restaurants. I understand that, apart from Clos St Louis, the other restaurants will be pulled down. These are the assets of the company.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must also say to the House that, at prior request, there is no secrecy clause insofar as the memorandum is concerned. If it is all sold – because it is not yet finished – I will provide all the information and copies of the documents to the House.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether there are any restrictions imposed on what use can be made on the assets of the Domaine Les Pailles, or once he has acquired the company, he can do whatever he wants with the land and the other properties?

Mr Duval: I am not aware of any restrictions, but, obviously, all the other planning restrictions apply, and so do the EIA requirements.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House if the other casinos, apart from that of Domaine Les Pailles, make losses?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say that this question is on Domaine Les Pailles and does not concern casinos. The casinos, as I mention again, is not part of this particular sale.

The Deputy Speaker: This question is not related. Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister informed the House that all employees will be transferred to the payroll of the new company that will acquire Domaine Les Pailles. May we know the number of employees of Domaine Les Pailles?

Mr Duval: I do not have the number, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but there are quite a few. I do not have the exact number. I will be happy to provide the information if it is asked.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/184, B/194 and B/195. Next question, hon. Li Kwong Wing!

NATIONAL RESILIENCE FUND – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/173) **Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the National Resilience Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, for each of the years 2012 and 2013, information as to the -

- (a) amount disbursed therefrom and purposes therefor, indicating the beneficiaries thereof, and
- (b) amount and nature of the deposits and placements made, indicating the outstanding balance and interest received.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Resilience Fund (NRF) has been active in 2012 and 2013 providing support under a number of programmes and projects to assist enterprises. This support is provided through implementing agencies, which then disseminate the assistance to individual enterprises.

Such support takes the form of either advances, which are thus refundable to the NRF or non-refundable grants and subsidies. As a matter of fact, most of the popular schemes under the NRF like the Leasing Schemes (both in local and foreign currencies), the Mauritius Business Growth Scheme, the Factoring Scheme for SMEs and the construction of SME Parks constitute advances from the NRF. Over the years 2012 and 2013, around 60% of the total funds disbursed were in the form of advances in respect of those schemes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling details of disbursements and the number of beneficiaries under the various schemes and projects for the years 2012 and 2013.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the NRF is also used as a Guarantee Fund in order to facilitate enterprises in obtaining the required support which they would otherwise not have had access to. Thus, under the SME Financing Scheme, commercial banks are providing credit facilities such as term loans, import loans, overdraft facilities and finance leases to SMEs at Repo + 3%, currently 7.65% per annum, with a guarantee from the NRF. As at February 2014, more than 2,200 enterprises have benefitted under the SME Financing Scheme for a total amount of nearly Rs3 billion and no loss has been reported by the commercial banks so far.

With regard to part (b) of the question, pursuant to Regulation 5(1)(g) of the NRF Regulations, NRF has invested its funds in deposits both in foreign and local currencies and has made advances to the Treasury. Details of these deposits and advances made as well as interests received in 2012 and 2013 are also being tabled.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the documents to be tabled have not been circulated, it is impossible for me to know what are the sums, but can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform us what is the total amount of funds disbursed out of the National Resilience Fund? Since the disbursement of these funds out of the NRF, we have not witnessed any increase in the economic growth rate and we are seeing not only the growth rate falling, but also unemployment is rising. So, has the NRF, therefore, served its purpose?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has got his figures twisted again, unfortunately. Unemployment is not rising; he has obviously missed the last economic report which shows that unemployment is stable at 8% of the population 2012 and 2013.

I am submitting, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, full details of all the amounts disbursed by the NRF. As far as 2012 is concerned, it's Rs579 m. and as far as 2013 is concerned, it's Rs1.75 billion. I do again mention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that a lot of these are advances which will be returned to the Treasury.

The second thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are very proud that we have had very good growth rates and these growth rates have been commended. I would also remind the hon. Member that recently Mauritius became the most competitive economy in Africa thanks mainly to our efforts to finance SMEs at very, very low cost.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, also I have not heard what is the total amount of deposits and placements made by the NRF. So, will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister not agree with me that these amounts of deposits and placements put in commercial banks have been inflating the level of excess liquidity in the banking system and thereby hampering the central bank in its duty of managing the liquidity of the banking system and, therefore, creating difficulty for the central bank to such an extent that in his letter to stakeholders, the Governor of the Central Bank took to task very severely the placement of such deposits of the National Resilience Fund into the banking system?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do thank the hon. Member so much for asking this question. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the total amount of deposits as at date is Rs4 billion. Of this amount, some Rs300 m. only relate to deposits in commercial banks in Mauritius. The rest of the amount is either deposits at the Bank of Mauritius, itself, where the taxpayer does not get a cent - since 2009, we don't get a cent as interest. The hon. Member himself asked the

question some time back, I hope he has not forgotten that the amount actually was invested overseas, something like 92 million dollars. So, in fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you look at the excess liquidity, I can give the figure, billions of rupees, Rs11 billion as at to date. Of course, it's going to fall soon, but the Rs300 m. is but a drop in the ocean.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask one question. There must be, I suppose, one or two committees that decide which amongst those seeking assistance do benefit, and, secondly, that decides where the National Resilience Fund will invest its surplus. Can we have the names of these two committees and the composition of these two committees?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Resilience Fund is run through regulations which have been published. I can lay a copy for ease of reference here and there it will show exactly how the decision is taken on the various - but it is, in fact, run by a committee. I don't know by how many members exactly, but I can find out the information.

As far as the placement is concerned - it must be in there - I will provide the information as to what is decided. But, as I mentioned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the actual effect on liquidity is grossly overstated.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, out of the beneficiaries of the National Resilience Fund, whether any have been put into liquidation and whether any of them have laid off employees?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can answer a specific question, but given the size of the commitment that we have taken, very little has been lost. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been; obviously, there will have been as in normal course of business, but I must say that it is surprisingly low.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister then what is the purpose of keeping a Resilience Fund with amounts of money sitting idle at the Central Bank? Then, there is no need to have this Fund. It's better to wrap it up and put it back to the Consolidated Fund, but the problem is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why is it that the Treasury has been placing money with certain cash strapped commercial banks when the normal route should have been for these banks to go to the Central Bank as a lender of last resort so that the repo rate and the money transmission mechanism could work effectively. Isn't the hon. Vice-Prime Minister,

through the Treasury, violating this duty of the Central Bank to act as a lender of last resort when the Treasury, itself, is acting as the lender of a first resort to cash strapped commercial banks?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't know if the banks that have been involved are cash trap, I have no idea. But the hon. Member has asked the right question for the wrong reason. The amounts involved are very tiny amounts. We are talking about Rs150 m. here, Rs200 m. there, about Rs350 m. in all. This does not affect the monetary transmission mechanism. It does not affect. We are talking about billions. We are talking about how much money, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, transits through Mauritius; Rs350 billion a year, more than that even. So, we are talking about huge amounts of money and these small amounts do not affect this.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question!

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no point to single out the National Resilience Fund, what we are talking is all those funds that are being parked aside in special funds....

(Interruptions)

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can't hear the hon. Member.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: I think it's reading the question wrongly by imputing that the National Resilience Fund is having a small amount compared to the amount of excess liquidity in the system, but the principle is that money is being taken out, whether through National Resilience Fund or other funds, to the tune of more than Rs11 billion which is parked outside the Budget and partly in the banking system. This is acting in violation of the central duty of the Central Bank to accommodate and manage the liquidity of the banking system.

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again completely off the mark! Firstly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Resilience Fund, 50 m. in Commercial Banks, the Road Decongestion Fund has 50 m. So, we are talking of 400 m. in all. The rest 7 billion or so is with the Central Bank itself and, on top of that, we have talked about the 92 m. dollars which have been invested, which is interesting. So, the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is completely wrong.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister says that the hon. Member is off the mark. Is he trying to convince us that we are setting up a National Resilience Fund, 12 firms

supposedly, to prevent people from losing their jobs and then that National Resilience Fund, instead of doing that, invest in private banks and in the Bank of Mauritius and he finds it normal and tells the hon. Member that he is off the mark? Will he agree that it is this bloody Fund that is off the mark?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is off the mark.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the amount that I mentioned, a big part of it, is in the Bank of Mauritius. Now, since 2009, the Bank of Mauritius does not pay interest on the taxpayer.

(Interruptions)

That does not pay, so, it is idle there. And so, the money must be earned somewhere and that is why it is invested overseas. Small amounts are invested for liquidity purposes in local banks. Those are small amounts. I hope that is clear.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Duval: *To même to ene catastrophe!*

(Interruptions)

What are you saying? I didn't hear!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I want some order in the House!

(Interruptions)

Mr Duval: *Kifer to pé zour mwa?*

(Interruptions)

What is the problem with you? Why are you picking a fight for?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry!

Mr Duval: Why are you picking a fight for?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am on my feet, hon. Vice-Prime Minister! The question has been set by hon. Uteem. Please, respond to the question.

Mr Duval: With pleasure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No, I want some order and please, give the reply to the question asked by hon. Uteem!

Mr Duval: I am being attacked from a sitting position; I have to reply also.

(Interruptions)

Sorry!

(Interruptions)

Don't make me laugh!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please!

Mr Duval: *Calmer toi! Ki to gagner ar mwa?*

(Interruptions)

Fer to travail to aussi, leader l'opposition!

(Interruptions)

SOVEREIGN ISLAMIC COMPLIANT BONDS

(No. B/174) **Mr R. Uteem** (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development

whether, in regard to the sovereign Islamic compliant bonds, such as sovereign Sukuk, he will state if Government will consider the issue and management thereof and, if not, why not.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 2007...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, do not interrupt the hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

Mr Duval: ... considering the growing interest of Islamic banking and finance both internationally and domestically, the Government has taken several important initiatives to introduce Islamic banking and finance in our legislative framework. Namely, the banking legislation has been amended to enable banks to conduct Islamic banking business exclusively or through a window. Fiscal reforms were brought in to eliminate tax disadvantages that would otherwise have materialised in the Islamic mode of finance.

Government is committed to taking Islamic banking and finance, as an alternative mode of financial intermediation to complement conventional banking to higher levels. Mauritius has been among the first countries in Africa to introduce Islamic banking. To date, there are two banks offering Islamic products and services.

Since 2007, the Bank of Mauritius became an Associate Member of the Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB) and was subsequently upgraded to full membership in 2009. Also in 2010, the Central Bank became a founder member of the Malaysia-based International Islamic Liquidity Management Corporation (IILM), a body backed by central banks from the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

With regard to the issuance of sovereign Sukuks, I wish to inform the House that Sukuk bonds do not pay interest but instead entitle investors to a share in the returns generated by an underlying asset, such as property making them Islamic compliant. In 2009, the law was amended to allow Government to raise money through sovereign Sukuks.

However, so far, Sukuks as a means of Government financing has not been issued due to its relatively high costs. According to a study carried out by the Asian Development Bank, the cost of issuing Islamic Bonds even in Asia are still significantly higher than the cost of issuing conventional bonds despite the growth of Islamic finance in countries such as Malaysia and

Indonesia. According to the study in Indonesia, profit rates for Sukuks issued by Government are on average 86 basis points higher than comparable conventional bonds.

Discussions held with experts in this field indicate that the profit rates expected for a Sukuk bond of five years maturity for a country with credit rating similar to ours would be around 150 to 160 points above six months LIBOR. In addition, a significant amount of upfront cost in the form of advisory fees, legal costs and issuance costs would be payable.

On the other hand, financing from our traditional development partners can be obtained at around 40 basis points above LIBOR for loans with maturities of up to 10 years and at 60 basis points above LIBOR for loan maturities of above 10 years and so on. Further, there are no advisory or legal fees involved in traditional sources of borrowing. In addition, borrowing from our development partners are often accompanied by technical assistance, etc.

Moreover, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Sukuks are asset backed. The primary condition for the issuance of Sukuk is the existence of assets on the balance sheet of Government, or any other entity that wants to mobilise these financial resources.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the number of major infrastructure projects planned to be implemented over the medium term, Government is envisaging to consider alternative forms of financing, such as public-private partnerships and issuance of sovereign Sukuk Bonds. Nevertheless, key factors, such as their costs and impact on public sector debt compared to traditional forms of borrowing will have to be taken into account.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware that in a letter to stakeholders earlier this year, the Governor of the Central Bank stated that he had continuously pressed the Ministry on this matter, but no progress has been made, no discussion held and no support provided to agree on a framework for the issuance and management of Sukuk bonds and, as a result of this, his original aim to position Mauritius as a regional financial centre that incorporates a niche market for Islamic finance has been torpid by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the reasons I mentioned in my formal reply because of the cost, and cost is important, interests received is important, interests paid, in this case, profits paid are important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to the taxpayers. That is why we

haven't pursued. That is for the Central Government. Nothing would have prevented some other parastatal bodies or the private sector because the law is here to do so. Obviously, there is, at the moment, a disincentive, but as the House is well aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we will be going - as my colleague, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure also mentioned - for a vast infrastructure improvement programme and that is going to be considered in that respect.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Uteem!

**TELEPHONE OPERATORS - INTERNATIONAL LONG DISTANCE - FRAUD
TRACKING SYSTEM**

(No. B/175) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the proposed setting-up and implementation of a fraud tracking system for international long distance telephone operators, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the ICT Authority that the servers required for the fraud tracking project have already been installed at the premises of the international long distance (ILD) operators and at the Authority.

Currently, the ICT Authority is holding consultations with the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Attorney General's Office to define a protocol for the exchange of information on the ILD operations, with a view to compiling evidence on fraud tracking for admissibility in a Court of Law in Mauritius.

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Minister how many frauds have been detected to date by this Fraud Tracking System and how much money has been paid to Entel today for having implemented this Fraud Tracking System?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: I must tell my friend, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the contract was awarded to Entel; following that award, there was an action which was lodged against that enterprise, Entel Enterprise before ICAC. As a consequence, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, everything had to be stopped because no payment could be effected. The award which Entel received itself was questioned at the level of ICAC. So, we had to wait for the return of ICAC to proceed, but being given that it took some time and, finally, ICAC has found out that the award

given to Entel was in order and then Entel was authorised to proceed with the installation of those servers at the office of the operators and at ICTA also, the regulator. It took some time. To answer that part of the hon. Member's question as to how many frauds have been detected, that's what he wants to know. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my friend will agree with me that...

(Interruptions)

No, no. That system could not be made operational.

(Interruptions)

Let me answer and then we can have...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, through that mechanism, there has been as at date...

(Interruptions)

Because it is not completed yet and that's why there has not been any fraud detected.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Minister did not answer the question. How much money has been paid to Entel and how many frauds detected?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me repeat myself. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given that when we started with that procedure, you know to address the issue of fraud tracking, this is a long outstanding problem which existed from day one and nobody took notice of that situation and that situation has constantly gone on like that. So, in 2009, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the ICTA, at the request of the operators, moved towards a fraud tracking mechanism which in some countries they have set up. When we started with that, there was a tender exercise which was carried out and, finally, in 2010, after the contract has been awarded, there has been that case. Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after so much time has gone on, it has been found out, under the ICT Act, that undercutting is labelled as a criminal offence. As we all know, to prove a criminal offence, we have to prove it beyond all reasonable doubt. Being given that it has taken so much time, by the time Entel installed those servers and by the time the case was completed before ICAC, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they have found out that criminal offence, in itself, cannot be proved beyond all reasonable doubt. That's why now the

ICTA, acting under the advice of the State Law Office, has roped in the MRA to look into the problem.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Deerpalsing! I am sorry! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I give you priority.

Mr Bérenger: The question again, the fact is that this contract has been embezzled to this firm which is not Emtel, which is Entel. There has been massive fraud in that. Millions have been paid to that firm and although the Minister said that a fraud tracking mechanism is working, it is not working and he has just admitted it and a few minutes before he said it is working. We want to know how money has been paid to this French firm, Entel; he must have it, how much money has been paid and whether a single fraud has been detected? None!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned before, being given that the fraud tracking mechanism cannot prove fraud beyond all reasonable doubt, we have to rope in. That's why we say that it has not been operational to address the issue of fraud tracking. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have roped in the MRA which is looking into the issue and to see how we can compare notes. You know the servers which we have at the office of those operators, we can...

(Interruptions)

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

(Interruptions)

I have got no control, there goes the answer. Allow him to answer.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what amount...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been a payment of 1,470,000 USD which has been paid to Entel for the installation. They have already installed, as I just said, those servers to address the issue of fraud tracking. One thing we have to take into account, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have already paid for the installation, but if we are going to

operate it the way that it ought to have been through that mechanism of fraud tracking, the issue of grey market can never be solved. That's why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are, at the same time, roping in, as I said. This is the best way to address the issue of fraud tracking. We can compare figures which those people have declared at the level of MRA with those figures that they have recorded at the level of the servers to make things happen.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is up! I am sorry! The Table has been advised that the following PQs have been withdrawn: B/179, B/180, B/183, B/185, B/186 and B/187.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

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

At 4.29 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.16 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

ELECTORAL REFORM - CONSULTATION PAPER

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to make a statement regarding the consultation process on electoral reform.

As the House is aware, the Consultation Paper, entitled 'Renewing Democracy: Electoral Reform' was presented to the public on 24 March of this year. At that time, I invited all

interested parties to submit their comments on the proposals for reform, at the latest, by 05 May 2014.

To date, a substantial number of responses have been received and there have been published comments from political leaders and others. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have taken the trouble thus far to respond to the Government's invitation.

The publication of the Consultation Paper has prompted a lively and important debate concerning the matters critical to successful reform and I have been tremendously encouraged by the generally positive reception that this initiative has received.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what the events of recent weeks have demonstrated is that the people of Mauritius when consulted, are very ready and able to engage in a mature and constructive democratic dialogue on an issue of crucial importance to the nation.

I wish to give the assurance to the House that the Government will carefully review the submissions made to it and will publish a response to them in due course.

However, as we are nearing the date for all responses to be submitted, I intend to commence a series of detailed consultations on the views and representations we have so far received.

To this end, the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I have agreed to meet on Thursday 17 April and this will be followed by meetings with other interested parties.

In view of the complex nature of the issues, the need for adequate time to assimilate and to review the detailed submissions made to the Government upon them as well as to enable appropriate time for meaningful exchanges and discussions, I will be moving later, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the adjournment of the House until 13 May 2014.

Thank you.

PUBLIC BILL

First Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (Amendment) Bill (No. III of 2014) was read a first time.

The Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr C. Sayed-Hossen) gave notice of his intention not to move the Second Reading and the other stages of the Consumer Protection Bill (No. II of 2014) today.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 13 May 2014 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Now the hon. Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal, hon. Mrs Labelle, will raise the following specific matter, the subleasing of State lands and the present infrastructure thereof at Plaine Sophie.

MATTER RAISED

(5.18 p.m.)

PLAINE SOPHIE - STATE LAND - SUBLEASING

Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise the issue of planters at Plaine Sophie. The group of planters, Mr Speaker, Sir, at Plaine Sophie has been suffering the whims and caprices of their supposedly landlords during the past ten years.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, most of the persons to whom plots of land had been leased, allocated by Government, are subletting these plots of land, claiming up to twelve times what they pay to Government. If they pay Rs1,500 annually to Government, they are claiming up to Rs18,000 and, should the planters voice out some objections, they just get into their fields and destroy their plants.

This issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been raised several times in the House. In reply to Parliamentary Question B/578 dated October 2012, the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security stated, and I quote -

“We have received in the recent past some representations regarding subletting and I have asked administration to look into it.”

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, it must be pointed out that if in October 2012 the hon. Minister stated that his Ministry had received representations regarding subletting in the recent past, this recent past goes back to 2010.

In fact, in September 2010, the Ministry of Agro Industry issued a press communiqué stating that the Ministry had received representations regarding subletting. It was in 2010 and I am tabling a copy of the press communiqué.

In reply to a PQ dated 18 December 2012, the Ministry stated and I quote –

“AREU has already submitted its report and appropriate action is being contemplated.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister further stated in a reply to this PQ that the lands which are being sublet will be retrieved and will be allocated to genuine planters. We are in 2012, but according to my information, this has not been done up to now. In reply to another PQ, the hon. Minister gave the information that 63 lease agreements have been terminated at Plaine Sophie. According to my information, these plots of land have not been reallocated to those who are occupying these plots to those genuine planters. It seems that some whose lease agreements had been terminated have managed to get this lease renewed during these past months.

Not later than last month, Mr Speaker, Sir, a planter who refused to pay the higher rate being claimed, has found all his crops being destroyed. Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to table a photo of this destroyed field. Mr Speaker, Sir, this shows me that the lessee is not a planter. A planter cannot have the courage to get into a field and destroy plants this way. So, I am tabling these photos of this clear field.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will also table a letter from AREU and I quote this paragraph which states -

“As recorded in our food crop statistics as at February 2014, the said plots, 22 at Plaine Sophie were under carrot, bean and cucumber, all at vegetative stage without any symptoms of major pests and diseases.”

In this letter, it is stated –

“At the time of our visit, on 06 March 2014, all the above-mentioned crops were terminated and the plot was found to be cleared.”

It is a copy of a letter from AREU, which I am tabling.

Can we imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, the suffering of this planter? It is not the first time that this planter finds his crop being destroyed. In the past, this planter installed irrigation system, which was destroyed because he was refusing to pay increased rent.

Several planters have been aggressed and one of them, while going to the Police, was unable to give a statement because the agreement was not in his name. More examples can be given, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I will stop here and take the second part of my concern, that is, the infrastructure at Plaine Sophie. But, before doing so, let me make a brief recap of the situation.

In August 2010, the planters sent a petition regarding subletting. In September 2010, the Ministry of Agro Industry issued a press communiqué, inviting those who were cultivating land which was not leased directly to them to express their interest. Through PQs, we have learnt that AREU had submitted a report of a survey on land occupancy in 2012. We have learnt that 63 lease agreements have been terminated, but as at April 2014, genuine planters are still waiting to be allocated plots of land that they have been occupying during the past ten years and are being aggressed and are seeing their crops being destroyed.

I will say a few words, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the infrastructure at Plaine Sophie. Mr Speaker, Sir, I can't really understand why planters can't be provided with a proper access road. The access road is in a most deplorable state. I am tabling a photo of the access road. No need to say the difficulties that planters go through to get to their fields. When we look, Mr Speaker,

Sir, at the Food Security Fund Strategic Plan 2008/2011, at page 6 under land preparation, we can read –

“The following area requires urgent land preparation”.

And the areas that are mentioned are the land of SIT, Rose Belle and Plaine Sophie. It is being said that there will be 45 *arpents* which will be under this plan of land preparation. 45 *arpents* of ex-tea land for the first potato season of 2009. Land preparation will be undertaken by the Project Implementation Committee of the Sugar Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if we are to prepare 45 *arpents*, can we do so without a proper access road? We are in 2014, how many *arpents* have been prepared for potato cultivation? Has this project been implemented? I fear not, Mr Speaker, Sir. What facilities the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, is offering to planters at Plaine Sophie? Regarding irrigation, there is no facility, bad access road, no proper irrigation system, in 2014, planters are still taking water by their own means from rivers, filling drums and carrying it to their plantation. This is the situation that planters of Plaine Sophie are facing right now.

I conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, by humbly submitting the following request to the hon. Minister. Firstly, the genuine planters be allocated the plot of land that they have been occupying during years. This can be done quickly, since all necessary reports regarding land occupancy are available according to statement made by the hon. Minister. Secondly, a proper access road and irrigation facility be provided at Plaine Sophie, and finally that a time frame be given for these requests.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney-General (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for raising the issue of infrastructure and also the issue of subletting of State lands at Plaine Sophie.

State lands under the control of my Ministry are allocated for agricultural purposes through formal Lease Agreements. The Agreement, among other conditions, clearly stipulates that the lessee should not sublet the whole or part of the land leased. Lands actually are being

retrieved by my Ministry in case of non-compliance with conditions of the Lease Agreement, not only in Plaine Sophie, but wherever it appears to be so in Mauritius generally.

As regards State lands at Plaine Sophie, there are 158 planters occupying some 330 *arpents* of land. Out of the 158 planters, 114 hold a Lease Agreement, 29 hold only a Letter of Intent, while the remaining 15 neither possess a Lease Agreement nor a Letter of Intent and are thus illegally occupying the lands. As pointed out in the House during a reply to a previous PQ, put by the hon. Member following representations on cases of subletting, officers of my Ministry have carried out field verification and also undertaken ground truth.

There are a total of 64 planters on 69 plots of land who have been found to be subletting their lands. Out of the 64 planters, 44 were holders of a Lease Agreement while the remaining 20 had only a Letter of Intent. The Lease Agreements of the 44 planters have been cancelled and the Letters of Intent for the 20 planters have been withdrawn.

After cancellation of the Lease Agreements and withdrawal of the Letters of Intent, planters had appealed against the decision of the Ministry for retrieval and cancellation. Officers of my Ministry had to again counter verify the information to decide on the way forward on the appeal which was made to the Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, dealing with cases of subletting of land is always a complex and sensitive issue. This is the reason why cases of subletting of lands at Plaine Sophie have been a recurrent feature for the past 15 years. It is not something new. There has been subletting of lands leased to planters for the past 15 years or so, Mr Speaker, Sir. We even have had cases of squatters, that is, those who neither possess a Lease Agreement nor a Letter of Intent, who are themselves subletting State land.

It is only now that my Ministry has taken bold steps and initiatives to remedy the situation. The reallocation exercise will start probably by next month - this year. I must make it clear today that reallocation does not mean that when we are retrieving for those who held a Lease Agreement or those who had a Letter of Intent will be automatically given to those who were in occupation by subleasing the land, because there are set criteria. Just because of the fact that they were in occupation of the subleased land does not mean that they are going to be allocated. They have to pass the test, there is a lot of demand for State land in that region, and there are a lot of genuine planters. If, for example, one planter who is subletting land from

another lease holder is the owner of 10 or 20 acres of land, he is already settled as a planter. There is no reason for us to go and give him more because he was subletting land; because subletting, in itself, he was also as if a party to the breach of the conditions. So, all these have to be looked into, Mr Speaker, Sir.

As regards infrastructure at Plaine Sophie, at the request of the planters, the existing track road which was in a bad state - and this does not date back to yesterday, Mr Speaker, Sir - was rehabilitated by a new reinforced concrete wheel track of 1.3 km. The project was completed last year, that is, in November 2013, at a cost of nearly Rs4.2 m. This has been done. It was in a deplorable state for a long, long time. We had two projects; one at Plaine Sophie, and another one in Vacoas, which has been inaugurated already. This one has been completed, but since its completion, we have received some representations from planters of the region. They said they are facing some difficulties during period of heavy rainfalls despite the fact that we have made the infrastructure.

Accordingly, following a site visit carried out by officers of my Ministry, it has been decided that the following additional works will be undertaken shortly -

- (i) lay-by will be extended by a further 1 metre wide with crusher run;
- (ii) areas in between the wheel track adjacent to all lay-by will be filled with stones and crusher run, and
- (iii) wheel track curves will be extended further to provide for an adequate turning radius for heavy vehicles used for some planters.

So, at the end of the day, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have done a lot as far as squatters are concerned, we have done a lot as far as retrieving lands which were being sublet. It's a long process, it's complicated. A lot of work has been done. These lands are going to be reallocated to genuine planters, not necessarily those who are in occupation now; it will be given to genuine planters, and as far as infrastructure is concerned, this is the first time ever that we have put so much. It is the first time that we are not giving direct help or extension service directly to the planters. We are giving them good infrastructure, which, at the end of the day, makes their lives a bit easier, which, at the end of the day, enhances also the production of food crop in this country, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Thank you.

At 5.35 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 13 May 2014 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

RODRIGUES - MAURITIUS QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY - RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

(No. B/176) Mr F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Accreditation and Recognition of Prior Learning for potential candidates from Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Qualification Authority, information as where matters stand, indicating the -

- (a) number of applications -
 - (i) received, and
 - (ii) accredited as at to date, and
- (b) name of the Recognition of Prior Learning Facilitator for Rodrigues.

Reply (The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology): I am informed by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority that as per section 5(a) (e) of the Mauritius Qualifications Authority Act 2001, one of its functions is to recognise and validate competencies obtained outside the formal education and training system for certification purpose.

I am informed by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority that it has received 121 applications from Rodrigues for Recognition of Prior Learning.

The candidate is required to pay a fee of Rs2,000 on submission of his application, Rs4,310 at the time of Portfolio submission and a payment of Rs1,500 for registration as Recognition of Prior Learning Facilitator.

Given the cost implications, the Mauritius Qualifications Authority has solicited the financial assistance of the National Empowerment Foundation to sponsor the applicants. The Commission for Training for Rodrigues has also been contacted to sponsor the registration of Recognition of Prior Learning Facilitator.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Recognition of Prior Learning facilitators registered for Rodrigues are Mr Jean Noël Cupidon and Ms Annmaide François.

RODRIGUES - VULNERABLE FAMILIES - HOUSING UNITS

(No. B/177) Mr F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the construction of social housing units for vulnerable families in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Empowerment Foundation, information as to -

(a) the work progress thereof, and

(b) if the beneficiaries thereof are facing difficulties for the completion thereof and, if so, the remedial actions taken, if any, in relation thereto.

Reply: With regard to the construction of social housing units for vulnerable families in Rodrigues, I am informed by the Foundation that, out of a first batch of 324 beneficiaries, 228 beneficiaries have already been supplied with building materials. Out of these 228 beneficiaries, 4 have already completed the construction of their housing unit and the construction works on another 158 housing units are nearing completion. The remaining 66 housing units are at different stages of construction.

Out of the remaining 96 beneficiaries, 40 are receiving building materials this week and the remaining 56 will be supplied with materials by mid-May 2014.

The second batch of 126 beneficiaries is expected to receive building materials as from June 2014.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that there has been some delay in the provision of building materials to some beneficiaries due to the following factors which are outside the control of the Foundation -

(i) there was an acute shortage of cement as a result of the Mauritius Pride ceasing its operations to Rodrigues. To address the situation and not to cause

any hardship to its beneficiaries, the Foundation had had to intervene with the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd to ensure an adequate transportation of cement to Rodrigues on the Mauritius Trochetia;

- (ii) the inclement weather conditions prevailing in Rodrigues in December last, did not facilitate access to the sites of some beneficiaries for the delivery of the building materials, and
- (iii) the supply of sand on the market was seriously jeopardised as a result of the rough sea conditions.

I am now informed by the Foundation that the situation has returned to normal and that the delivery of building materials is now ongoing.

I wish to reassure the House that the Foundation is closely monitoring the situation.

RODRIGUAN PATIENTS - SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE SCHEME

(No. B/178) Mr F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the Subsistence Allowance Scheme under the National Savings Fund for Rodriguan patients transferred to Mauritius for treatment, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to -

- (a) the number of applications received therefor, indicating the number thereof which are pending;
- (b) amount of money disbursed thereunder, since the implementation thereof to date;
- (c) if the payment procedures of the allowances will be reviewed, and
- (d) if the administration of the scheme will be transferred to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to enable the timely payment of the allowances.

Reply: I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Third Member for Rodrigues that the Subsistence Allowance Scheme is operated by the National Solidarity Fund and not by the National Savings Funds.

In February 2013, I sought the approval of Government regarding the payment of Subsistence Allowance by the National Solidarity Fund to Rodriguan patients referred to Mauritius for medical treatment in Government hospitals. Government approved a Subsistence Allowance of Rs200 to be paid on a daily rate with the following criteria for assessment -

- (i) treatment is not available in Rodrigues Government hospital as certified by the Commission for Health;
- (ii) the household income should not exceed Rs16,500 per month, and
- (iii) the maximum payment is Rs10,000 representing 50 days treatment.

With regard to part (a) of the question, as at to date, the National Solidarity Fund has received, 206 applications, out of which 46 applications are under process. I am being informed that delay for processing is due to non-submission of documentary evidences such as medical certificates, certification from Commission of Health and Social Inquiry Report from the Commission for Social Security.

With regard to part (b) of the question, a total amount of Rs507,800 has been disbursed by the National Solidarity Fund as at to date.

With regard to part (c) of the question, the payment procedures were reviewed in November 2013. An initial disbursement of Rs1,000, representing 5 days of treatment refundable by the National Solidarity Fund, is being made by the Commission for Social Security to patients prior to leaving Rodrigues. Thereafter, the remaining payment of Rs200 per day of treatment is being effected by the Fund on submission of medical certificate and discharge certificate.

Moreover, my Ministry is having consultation with the Commission for Social Security with a view to further streamlining the procedures.

With regard to part (d) of the question, the administration of the Subsistence Allowance Scheme by Rodrigues Regional Assembly is not being contemplated as this will further delay the

payment of the allowance in view of the fact that the patients are being treated in Mauritius and the medical and discharge certificates are issued and forwarded to the National Solidarity Fund by the Ministry of Health in Mauritius.

**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SECURITY, NATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND REFORM
INSTITUTIONS - ENGINEERING ADVISER - APPOINTMENT**

(No. B/179) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether she will state if an engineering adviser has been appointed by her Ministry and, if so, indicate -

- (a) since when;
- (b) the terms and conditions of appointment thereof, and
- (c) the projects that the latter has supervised.

(Withdrawn)

**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU HOSPITAL - D.Y. PATIL MEDICAL COLLEGE - CLINICAL
FACILITY**

(No. B/180) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the D.Y. Patil Medical College, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as to the arrangements made between the College and the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital for the use thereof as clinical facility for the post-graduate medical students of the College.

(Withdrawn)

RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY - DEATH - POLICE SCRUTINY

(No. B/181) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the Residential Care Homes for the Elderly, she will state if consideration will be given for the

advisability of amending the legislation to provide for each death occurring thereat to be subjected to Police scrutiny prior to the disposal of the body.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. B/156)

POINTE AUX PIMENTS – ELDERLY & DISABLED - RECREATION CENTRE

(No. B/182) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the recreation centre for the elderly at Pointe aux Piments, she will state -

(a) when the project was designed, and

(b) the cost thereof.

Reply: I would like to put the record straight.

On 4 August 2009, while the second Recreation Centre at Belle Mare was nearing completion, my Ministry made a request to the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the vesting of a portion of land in the northern region for the setting-up of a Recreation Centre for the Elderly and Disabled.

Furthermore, on 20 February 2010, during a function hosted by the Senior Citizens Association of Triolet at the Social Welfare Centre, the hon. Prime Minister announced the setting-up of a third Recreation Centre for the Elderly and Disabled in the north of Mauritius. Subsequently, in March 2010, a further request was made to the Ministry of Housing and Lands for vesting of land in my Ministry.

On 21 October 2010, an extent of 6A 50P of land at Pte aux Piments was vested by the Ministry of Housing and Lands in my Ministry for the construction of a Recreation Centre for the Elderly and Disabled.

The final Drawings and the Bid Documents were received on 17 June 2011 and upon receipt of approval of the Central Procurement Board, tender for the construction of the Centre was launched on 19 August 2011 by my Ministry.

Works under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping started in April 2012.

The Centre was inaugurated by the hon. Prime Minister on 05 March 2014.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the cost of construction works amounted to Rs155.8 m. inclusive of VAT & contingencies.

LOÏS LAGESSE TRUST FUND - EMPLOYEE - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/183) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether she will state if she has received representations from an employee of the Lois Lagesse Trust Fund in respect of her employment contract and the problems she is facing thereat and, if so, indicate the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

(Withdrawn)

MEDICAL CLINICS - FOREIGN MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

(No. B/184) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the foreign medical specialists who occasionally visit Mauritius to practise in private medical clinics, he will state the conditions with which they need to comply.

(Withdrawn)

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME - FUNDS

(No. B/185) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Youth Empowerment Programme, he will state the number of –

- (a) private companies involved therein, indicating the amount of money granted thereto to pay the salaries of the youth employed thereunder, and

- (b) young employees engaged therein, indicating the number thereof who have been subsequently recruited by the private companies on a permanent basis.

(Withdrawn)

HOUSING EMPOWERMENT SCHEME - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/186) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the Housing Empowerment Scheme, he will –

- (a) state the number of people who have benefitted thereunder, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the present rate of credit/equity ratio applied by the banks in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

HOTELS – APPAVOU GROUP - LIQUIDATION

(No. B/187) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the Appavou Group of hotels, he will state –

- (a) the total amount of money that it owes to Government, if any, giving details thereof, and
- (b) if a profiling of the potential buyers thereof has been undertaken by his Ministry, following the liquidation procedures initiated in respect thereof.

(Withdrawn)

SC & HSC – STUDENTS - ABSENTEEISM

(No. B/189) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate, he will state if it has been established that there is a high rate of absenteeism amongst the students who will sit therefor, since the beginning

of the first school term this year and, if so, indicate the measures he proposes to take in relation thereto, if any.

Reply: I am informed that for State Secondary schools, the rate of absenteeism for students attending Form V during the first term is 14.8% and for Form VI it is 24.4%. This rate compares quite favourably with those of previous years, as follows -

Form V (Term I)

2011-17.7%

2012-18.0%

2013-18.9%

Form VI (Term I)

2011-26.2%

2012-29.7%

2013-29.3%

As regards Private Secondary Schools, I am informed by the PSSA that the rate of absenteeism is being compiled.

Absenteeism is a cause of great concern for my Ministry. This issue has been one of the topical subjects which has been widely discussed at the “*Assises de l’Éducation*” held in October last year where stakeholders have voiced their concern regarding its incidence, especially at the level of secondary schools.

Following these discussions, a Working Group comprising representatives of my Ministry and trade unions within the secondary sub-sector, has been set up to make recommendations on measures to be taken with a view to curbing student absenteeism.

Several proposals have been made for implementation in the short and medium term, namely -

- (a) to amend the relevant legislations, under the Education Act, Education Regulations and PSSA Regulations with a view to controlling absences of students, particularly at HSC level;
- (b) to include requirement of minimum attendance of students in the criteria for promotion to the next class;
- (c) to define a clear policy for authorised and non-authorised absences of students from schools;
- (d) to request every school to have a well-defined School Attendance policy, which lays out the responsibilities for the school staff, the parents and students;
- (e) to include Improvement of attendance rate at school level as a key area in the School Improvement Plan;
- (f) to review the term 'date' in the School Calendar, and
- (g) to regulate additional tuition at secondary level, with particular regard to the tuition hours.

Notwithstanding the above proposals made by the Working Group, as I already informed the House in a reply to an earlier PQ, my Ministry has already taken several measures to combat absenteeism in secondary schools, namely -

- (a) an SMS-based system, to control truancy, is in place and successfully functioning in all State Secondary Schools. Private Secondary Schools are being encouraged to introduce same and I am pleased to inform that a number of private secondary schools have recently joined the SMS-based system of reporting absenteeism;
- (b) close monitoring of attendance at school level and schools have been requested to take corrective action where appropriate;
- (c) schools have been issued with policy guidelines for planning the work in such a way that the curriculum spreads over three terms;
- (d) rectors have been requested to reflect the attendance level of students on their Student Leaving Certificate;
- (e) the Quality Assurance and Inspectorate Unit of my Ministry which has been reinforced will also monitor the situation with a view to improving same;

- (f) Government has introduced an allowance of Rs750 per child per month to those children coming from families earning less than Rs6,200 per month and who are registered on the Social Register of Mauritius. This allowance is being paid to families who send their children regularly to school and with an attendance rate of 90 percent or more over two consecutive months;
- (g) the policy for free transport to students has contributed to improving attendance at schools, and
- (h) as regards Private secondary schools, with a view to curtailing absenteeism of students, a new component has been introduced in the Comprehensive Grant Formula, namely a Performance Grant which is, *inter alia*, related to student attendance. According to the formula, the higher the rate of attendance for Form V and Form VI Upper students, the higher will be the grants payable to the school.

I wish to add that in order to render the school more attractive, my Ministry has put in place a plethora of activities which enhances the student engagement and commitment to attend school. Thus, students are very keen to participate in different activities organised at school and zonal level, such as, the Model United Nations (MUN) Conference, Green School projects like rainwater harvesting, composting, tree planting, waste segregation at the level of MID clubs set up in all schools. Regular topics of interest are addressed during the Activity period such as healthy lifestyle, civic education, promotion of arts and literacy among others. The introduction of tactile tablets at the level of Form V – and very soon to Form IV students – has revolutionised the teaching-learning process in schools. The motivational environment created will be enhanced further.

I must stress on the fact for students competing for Scholarship at HSC level, there are regulations with regard to the requirements for attendance. Head of schools, when making entries of students competing for scholarship, take responsibility in this matter.

However, once entries for examinations have been made and paid for, it may be difficult and indeed illegal to debar any candidate from taking the examination. The MES does not have such authority.

Finally, it is considered that parents along with Rectors, Educators and PTAs should all contribute towards inculcating a culture of regularity and attendance in our children which will serve them throughout their life.

ROSE HILL - ROAD CONGESTION

(No. B/194) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to Rose Hill, he will state the immediate actions he proposes to take, if any, under the Road Decongestion Programme, to alleviate the acute problem of road congestion thereat which is causing undue hardships to the road users thereof.

(Withdrawn)

URBAN RENOVATION PROGRAMME - PROJECTS

(No. B/195) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the projects identified for implementation under the Urban Renovation Programme, he will give details thereof and indicate, in each case, the implementation schedule therefor.

(Withdrawn)

CAMP LEVIEUX - POST OFFICE

(No. B/199) Mr R. Issack (Fourth Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to Camp Levieux, he will state if consideration will be given for a post office to be provided thereat and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the Mauritius Post Limited that the Mauritius Post Limited has no project for the time being to open a Post Office at Camp Levieux.

There are around 3,100 households in Camp Levieux and the inhabitants are being presently served by neighbouring Post Offices of Rose Hill and Stanley which are providing a wide range of postal and non-postal services.

Mauritius Post Limited is, however, considering appointing an agent to offer an agency service at Camp Leveux. The Company also proposes to purchase a mobile van to service this locality.

**MINISTER OF SOCIAL SECURITY, NATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND REFORM
INSTITUTIONS – INDIA - VISIT**

(No. B/200) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the Dr. D. Y. Patil Medical College in Maharashtra, she will state if she paid a visit thereto when she was on overseas mission in India in 2009 and, if so, indicate in relation to the said mission, the –

(a) composition

(b) total costs, and

(c) duration thereof.

Reply: In 2009, I proceeded to India on a two leg Official Mission from 25 January to 04 February 2009 which comprised -

- (i) firstly of an exchange programme from 25 to 31 January 2009 in the context of an MoU signed in September 2008 for a period of 3 years between the Social Welfare Division, which was at that time under the purview of my Ministry, and Mahila Unnati Kendra (Manasi), an Indian Based NGO in Pune. The aim of the Exchange Programme was to attend the Handicraft Development Workshops and Entrepreneurship Programmes for Income Generation for Empowerment of Women, Children, Disabled, Elderly and Community leaders of vulnerable groups. The members of the delegation has had the opportunity to visit different Empowerment projects for women and training workshops where Crafts and Textile items were marketed. A training workshop was also organised for the Dress Making staff on clay works and crafts.

I wish to inform the House that a first Exchange Programme was held in 2008 when a ten-member delegation headed by the President of MANASI, former Mayor of Pune, came to Mauritius and met several small women entrepreneurs and exchanged views on

Social Development issues. They also conducted a four-day skilled development programme for 25 staff of Dress Making Section (on Warli Art, Choli and Salwar Making). MANASI also participated in the National Craft Fair in Mauritius together with Women Association and small entrepreneurs and exposed various craft items.

- (ii) The second part of my mission was to attend, following an official request made on 07 January 2009 by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service to receive on behalf of the hon. Prime Minister the award of the Honorary Doctorate of Science, Honoris Causa at the 3rd Annual Convocation Ceremony organised by Padmashree Dr. D. Y. Patil University, in Mumbai on 04 February 2009. I was also informed by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service that I will be accompanied by the then High Commissioner of Mauritius in New Delhi for this function.

I wish to inform the House, the distinction was conferred to the hon. Prime Minister by H.E. Shri S.C. Jamir, Governor of Maharashtra who was the Chief Guest for the event. Following the conferment of the award on the hon. Prime Minister, I presented the apologies of the hon. Prime Minister who could not attend the ceremony due to his official mission abroad. I, thereafter, had the privilege to read the Acceptance Speech on behalf of the hon. Prime Minister.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the composition of my delegation for the Exchange Programme from 25 to 31 January 2009 is being tabled. For the second part of my mission, that is, my participation at the 3rd Annual Convocation Ceremony, the delegation comprised myself, the then High Commissioner of Mauritius in New Delhi as requested by the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, the Officer in Charge of the Mauritius Consulate in Mumbai and the then Regional Director of the Board of Investment. I was also accompanied by my spouse.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the total cost of both parts of the mission amounted to Rs674,393.57 as follows -

- (i) an amount of Rs449,934.07 representing cost of air tickets and subsistence allowance at prevailing rate was met by MOFED for myself and the Government Official accompanying me;
- (ii) moreover, an amount of Rs77,459.50 for air tickets and subsistence allowance was met by my Ministry under its Training Items for the Government Official working at the Social Welfare Division, and
- (iii) whereas a total cost of Rs147,000 for the other staff was met by their employer.