



FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION
TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER 2009**

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS (*Oral*)

MOTION

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

BILLS (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

QUESTIONS (*Written*)

MAURITIUS

Fourth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 26 of 2009

Sitting of Tuesday 27 October 2009

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 Trade (Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Measures Bill) (No. XVIII of 2009).

B. Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment -

-
- (a) The Annual Report 2008 of the Sugar Insurance Fund Board.
 - (b) The Annual Reports and Audited Statements 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 of the Employees Welfare Fund (In original).
 - (c) The Finance and Audit (Regional Economic Zones Development Fund) (Revocation) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 121 of 2009).

C. Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources -

• The Annual Report 2007-2008 of the National Library.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL & MR YUSUF ELLAHEE – STATEMENTS - INQUIRY

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the public comments made by the Honourable the Attorney-General, in relation to Police brutality at a Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate meeting on 20 September 2009 and those made by one Yusuf Elahee in the Hebdo on 04 October 2009, in relation to the Honourable the Attorney-General, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if inquiries have been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the number of statements recorded as at to date; and
- (b) if any arrest has been effected or any radio recordings seized as at to date and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there were no public comments made by the hon. Attorney General on 20 September 2009. However, on 28 September 2009, the hon. Attorney General, at a meeting held at Unity House, Beau Bassin, made a statement regarding Police brutality. In his statement, the hon. Attorney General is alleged to have said that mostly members of a particular community are subjected to Police inquiry and to Police targeting.

An inquiry into the matter by the Police started on 01 October 2009.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that to date, statements from 31 persons have been recorded. These persons include Police officers, journalists and personnel of the Unity House. Police inquiry is still in progress and I am advised by the Commissioner of Police that it will be concluded in the days to come.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am advised that the Commissioner of Police has sought and obtained from the Independent Broadcasting Authority on 06 October 2009 recordings of statements made by the hon. Attorney General, that is -

- on 28 September 2009 on Radio Plus
- on 29 September 2009 on Radio Plus
- on 30 September 2009 on Top FM
- on 01 October 2009 on Radio Plus

Police inquiry is still ongoing. No arrests have been effected so far.

As regards to the alleged statement made by Mr Yusuf Ellahee, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, the Police, after having taken cognizance of the statement, found no ground to open an inquiry into the matter.

Mr Bérenger: I am very surprised by the last comment made by the hon. Prime Minister that the Police found no reason to inquire into the statement made and reported in 'L'Hebdo' of the given date - statement made by Mr Yusuf Elahee who said that if the Police attempted to arrest the hon. Attorney General, *il y aurait des cadavres*. Does not the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that this is totally seditious and a direct threat to the Police?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Police did inquire into the matter and they decided that there is not enough ground for doing anything else because it is well established in our political folklore, sometimes people say: *si to touche mon zenfant mo touye toi!*

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan himself has said that so many times.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, order! Order, please! I am calling the House to order from both sides, please! Let the hon. Prime Minister answer the question!

The Prime Minister: I was saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is very common in our political folklore, so many times people have said - hon. Bhagwan himself has said this in the past - *bizin marche lors mo cadavre!*

(Interruptions)

Yes, he has!

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order, please!

The Prime Minister: If it is X, Y, Z, I will *tire coute balle ou bien marche lor mo cadavre*. This is the political folklore. Mr Speaker, Sir, if this were to be done, then they will have to arrest so many people in this country.

Mr Bérenger: I am really shocked by the attitude of the hon. Prime Minister concerning such a serious matter that involves the Police and security, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are informed that the Police has started an inquiry since 01 October and that 31 persons have been questioned to date. Has the hon. Attorney General given a statement? Has he been asked a statement by the Police, if yes, when and is the hon. Prime Minister prepared to tell us that so many statements are not an attempt de *noyer le poisson dans l'eau?*

The Prime Minister: Either one or the other, Mr Speaker, Sir! Either the Police do the enquiry and interview as many people! Now the hon. Member does not want people to

inquire from what he is saying. They have to take statements from people and not having yet interviewed the hon. Attorney General does not mean they would not interview him, it is up to them. I do not want to prejudice the enquiry, but the enquiry is going on and it will take the course that it has to take.

Mr Bérenger: We all know how provocative, irresponsible and dangerous the statements made by the hon. Attorney General were and the reactions that that provoked. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us why there has been no arrest to date and confirm that the Police themselves requested that the hon. Attorney General be arrested?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware that the Police themselves said that hon. Attorney General has to be arrested, but they sought an appointment with the Commissioner of Police, then they made the statement that they made and the enquiry is going on.

Mr Bérenger: Will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that this is a very serious matter when the three Heads of the Police Federation meet the Commissioner of Police, apparently, to get his green light to go and make statements against the hon. Attorney General of this country and this is an arrestable offence? Does the hon. Prime Minister agree with that course of action?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, precisely, what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has just said, they went to see the Commissioner of Police and sought permission to make the statement. It is a fact that the Commissioner of Police allowed them to make the statement. If he did not want to, he would have said: “no, I don’t want you to make the statement.” But, in fact, things are following its course.

Mr Bérenger: I think I heard the hon. Prime Minister correctly, that the Police have impounded recordings. I tried to catch every word which was being said. Can I know how many recordings have been impounded and of emissions on what date?

The Prime Minister: From my record, what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is four recordings; one on 28 September 2009 on Radio Plus, one on 29 September 2009 on Radio Plus, one on 30 September 2009 on Top FM and one on 01 October 2009 on Radio Plus.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Attorney General has made repeated statements to the effect that when the hon. Prime Minister came back, he met the hon. Prime Minister and he was satisfied with his explanations. Is it the case that the hon. Prime Minister had decided to revoke the hon. Attorney General and changed his mind after having obtained so-called explanations?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as soon as I came back from New York, that is, on Thursday 01 October, I summoned the hon. Attorney General into my office for an explanation. I had to have an explanation. It is elementary also that I gave a fair hearing to whoever you think there is something wrong. I am saying what was said during the conversation. The hon. Attorney General agreed that he perhaps should have expressed himself differently. He was not saying all Police officers. In fact, if you see the phrase that he said - he said whatever he said - and then he said: this is not like this anymore. He was not saying...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: No, he says that: he was not saying all Police Officers.

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, let us be fair to people also, even to people in the Opposition. We all know that there are bad apples in every profession, be it lawyers, be it Police officers, be it accountants, be it doctors, be it politicians. We have bad apples in all these groups.

(Interruptions)

I take an example. Recently hon. Gunness himself raised a PQ. Right so! Don't get worried! I am saying rightly so! He asked a PQ on a Police Officer in Bel Air who, when an elderly lady went to complain that she had been raped, he went and said...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: It is! It can be also! He said: why don't you go home, take a shower and sleep it off. He is a bad apple obviously, this is completely unacceptable. Not only in Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that this happens, in every country, that have bad apples. In the UK, Mr Speaker, Sir, more blacks are subject to random search and arrest.

(Interruptions)

No, no, it is a fact! Even high level Police officers in the UK have complained to the Commissioner of Police about discrimination in the Police Force itself. Even in France, minorities allege that they feel targeted. There is a recent case in Germany, it only happened yesterday or the day before yesterday, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

No, but I am saying that there are bad apples and that is what he said!

Mr Bérenger: From what I understand, the hon. Prime Minister is calling the hon. Attorney General a bad apple. I can interpret what he is saying in no other way, Mr Speaker, Sir. Apparently from what I have just heard, the hon. Prime Minister was more or less satisfied before taking his decision not to revoke the hon. Attorney General. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether what he promised us in the recent past, that is, full enquiries would be made on two other incidents involving the hon. Attorney General, one the Subutex affair...

Mr Speaker: No, hon. Leader of the Opposition...

Mr Bérenger: I want to know whether the records are complete.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Can I do my work, please? This question relates to one particular issue. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to come back...

(Interruptions)

But it is not the Attorney General, it is a particular incident which is involved. I request the hon. Leader of the Opposition to come with another question if he wants to clarify this matter.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is in presence of the full inquiries which he had promised us in these two incidents?

Mr Speaker: I said the question is irrelevant, I am sorry.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure everybody is quite shocked by the attitude that is being taken. The hon. Prime Minister has referred to the UK and so on. Can he give me one other country where the hon. Attorney General is in the situation where he is, where Policemen have made statements with the green light of the Commissioner of Police against the hon. Attorney General? Can he give me any other country where that has taken place?

The Prime Minister: I just gave examples where, in fact, in the UK the Commissioner of Police himself has been attacked for being racist and by no more than the Deputy Commissioner of Police himself. I will just remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition to look what he said himself.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: On the same issue, after attacking the Attorney General, he said: « *Les descendants d'esclaves subissent de manière générale plus de discrimination et de brutalité policière que les autres composantes de la société qui ont un passé (...)*. He is more or less saying the same thing.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will agree with me that it is the way the statements were made, the tone, purpose clearly and not a statement of fact made in another context and the reactions that it provoked? Will he agree with me that it is totally different?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order please! Order! Order please!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Is he saying now that there is no Police brutality in this country?

Mr Bérenger: If the hon. Prime Minister read the statement he has just read, I said that all communities are affected and I gave the example of Mr Ramlogun and others. That is what I said and I added the comment which is made. I think it is the first time that the hon. Prime Minister puts a question to the Leader of the Opposition and I have answered.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order please! Order!

The Prime Minister: I have just quoted what the hon. Leader of the Opposition said. Let me repeat it: "*Les descendants d'esclaves subissent de manière générale plus de discrimination et de brutalité policière que les autres composantes de la société.* »

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Prime Minister answer!

Mr Bérenger: It is not what the Prime Minister thinks, to correct on that, Mr Speaker, Sir, and it is not a truth which we have discovered now. But I have never tried, like the Attorney General did, to exploit and create a communal problem in this country as in 1999.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Bhagwan, please! Hon. Attorney General, please! I know it is a very sensitive issue, please cooperate with me!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, being given that he has been obviously not capable of quoting any other country where a Minister of Justice is in the situation where he is, where Policemen, with the green light of the Commissioner of Police, have made statements that he has committed an arrestable offence - and still he is in his post, not revoked, I find that shocking - that he should not be the Attorney General, those enquiries are taking place, that he should be made to step down immediately?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: Let's keep our calm! I would have thought the other way round, Mr Speaker, Sir. Here is an example of a country where the Police decide they will make a statement against the Attorney General, they go and ask the Commissioner of Police who gives them the green light and they do so as an enquiry is going on and it is about to finish from what the Commissioner of Police tells me. On the contrary, I would have thought this is an example of how things should be done.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, has the hon. Prime Minister been made aware that following this irresponsible statement of the Attorney General several Police officers have been aggressed whilst in the performance of their duty?

The Prime Minister: I am not going to put all the sins of Israël on top of his head. If somebody aggresses a Police officer it is because of the Attorney General.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Hon. Bhagwan, you have put your question, you have got the answer, please keep quiet!

(Interruptions)

I am calling both of you to order!

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Bhagwan, please! Now I will have to take actions if this continues! I have been very calm and I am asking the hon. Members to cooperate with the Chair!

Mr Dulloo: In view of the fact that, as Legal Adviser of Government and of the nation at large, the Attorney General has constitutionally the duty and responsibility to intervene in bipartisan matters, including in determination of questions as to membership of this House and in important judicial matters like conduct of members of the Bar, irrespective of their political belonging, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether as Head of Government and as leader of the House, he should ensure that the Attorney General should in the first place not engage in high profile partisan political activism; secondly, that he should not undermine the institution of this country especially the Police and Police officers, and finally if he has got any evidence whatsoever, he should, on the contrary, take action and refer the matter to the competent authorities, including the court?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously, we all knows that the Attorney General is a member of a political party. He has his views also. But in this case, if I take what hon. Dulloo is saying, there is a Police enquiry going on, we will have to have the evidence, and let the enquiry finish and then we will see what happens. But he seems to have a short memory, what about the case of Ashock Jugnauth who was condemned for fraud and corruption? He went and campaigned for him.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Burty David, please!

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Attorney General ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please, let me listen to the question!

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Attorney General also stated, and I quote –
“Si je mens, qu’on me fusille.”

Does that mean that the Government encourages and believes in death penalty?

(Interruptions)

Mr Dulloo: The main question, Mr Speaker, Sir, and my supplementary question are as regards the conduct and behaviour of the Attorney General. Mr Ashock Jugnauth was a candidate as he was legally entitled to under the Constitution and I am questioning the behaviour of the Attorney General as per the Constitution. Therefore, may I ask, for the sake of our institutions, whether the hon. Prime Minister, as Head of Government and Leader of the House, should not ensure that at least the Attorney General be perceived to be above party politics?

The Prime Minister: Hon. Dulloo has forgotten his question himself, Mr Speaker, Sir. He said members of the Bar. Mr Ashock Jugnauth is, as far as I know, still a member of the Bar. He was condemned for fraud and corruption and he campaigned for him.

Mr Dulloo: The hon. Prime Minister is wrong. He was judged as a Member of Parliament, not as a member of the Bar.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I am on my feet! Order! Please sit down!

Hon. Bhagwan: Will the hon. Prime Minister give a firm undertaking to the House that there won't be any interference in whatever way as far as the Police enquiry is concerned?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no lesson to learn from the hon. Member. My record speaks for itself. Unlike you, so many times I have taken actions against my own Ministers. Give examples!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, in case the Attorney General finds that there is Police brutality, does not the Prime Minister think that it is the duty of the Attorney General to refer the case to the hon. Prime Minister who is in charge of Police?

The Prime Minister: He was referring to the case of Jean Marie Richard. That is why he made the statement.

(Interruptions)

I did not say anything. I did not cause any prejudice to the case; I just mention the case. Where is the prejudice?

Mrs Perrier: Le Premier ministre dans sa réponse certifie que les déclarations faites par l'*Attorney General* sont vraies. Est-ce qu'il ne pense pas que cela constitue un blâme sur son action en tant que Premier ministre responsable de la Police pendant quatre ans et trois mois?

The Prime Minister: I can make a statement, but I don't have the brain to give the brain to her to understand what I said. I never said it was true. She is now, as usual, distorting the facts and causing disinformation. I never said it was true.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, we all remember how much the country suffered in 1999, and who were responsible directly for what happened to this country. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, after saying that I am shocked by his attitude and behaviour today, whether, at least, he'll give the guarantee to the country that he will not allow the then guilty, now Attorney General, to do damage to the country like was done in 1999?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there was a judicial enquiry into that and there is a question later on purporting to that. There was a judicial enquiry. Let's respect the institutions! Look at what the judicial enquiry said! There were cases that were taken on appeal and let us look at what was said then. But, I can say, Mr Speaker, Sir, and, as I said, the record speaks for itself. If I am satisfied that there is a *prima facie* case, I have never, never in my life hesitated to take action.

Mr Speaker: Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister! The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question No. B/1037 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister has been withdrawn and that Parliamentary Question No. B/1025 will be answered by the hon. Minister of Agro Industry.

**INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING AUTHORITY – COMPLAINTS
AGAINST MBC**

(No. B/1015) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the complaints which have been lodged at the Independent Broadcasting Authority against the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, since January 2006 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, a list thereof, indicating in each case the -

- (a) name of the complainant;
- (b) nature of the complaint;
- (c) date thereof, and
- (d) outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, 17 complaints against the MBC have been lodged with the IBA since January 2006 to date.

Incidentally, during the same period, 23 cases have been lodged against the private radios.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a statement giving all the information requested by the hon. Member as provided by the Director of the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Prime Minister state if any actions are being taken to ensure proper follow-up of the outcome thereof?

The Prime Minister: As I said, I'll give all the information. In certain cases, Directors have been sued, in other cases the matters were set aside.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to the IBA, last time, in a reply to a Parliamentary Question which I asked, I made a statement that the IBA is a *bouledogue sans dent* and the Prime Minister accepted that this was the case. May we know if the hon. Prime

Minister is coming with amendment to the IBA Act and also as proposed by the Chairperson of the IBA recently?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been saying the same thing when I was in the Opposition. In fact, I myself had complained against the MBC.

(Interruptions)

I know the saga. I went to complain. The IBA thought I was right and, then, one day later, sent me another letter to ignore the first one. I have all this information. But, as I said in the past, I am looking at media law in general; this is imminent. We still have some discussions left to be done. There is another question, but the preliminary report of the eminent lawyer, Jeffrey Robertson, is already in my possession. We had further discussions. He sent somebody else to have a look and then we are going to have further discussions until we want to fine-tune the law before we bring it to the House.

Mr Bhagwan: Being given the urgency of the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir, complaints which are sent to the IBA are useless. I can say 'useless', because there is no follow-up. We agree on that. Can the hon. Prime Minister, at least, give us a timeframe as this is urgent? I am coming with a new PQ next week. The way things are happening at the MBC, people are discouraged to go the IBA. Can he, at least, give us a timeframe when this amendment will come to Parliament?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Member is aware that there was a complaint that the MMM itself had an unfair treatment following a broadcast of a press conference and the IBA has given a directive to the MBC to correct it.

Mr Bhagwan: Nothing happened!

The Prime Minister: In my case, it was worse; a directive was given and then changed.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I am sorry! The hon. Prime Minister is answering and you are standing up. Next question!

**METROPOLITAN (SOUTH) POLICE PROSECUTIONS OFFICE
- SHORTCOMINGS – MEASURES**

(No. B/1016) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Metropolitan (South) Police Prosecutions Office, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the Magistrate of the Port Louis District Court, Division III, has submitted any report to him in relation to shortcomings thereat and, if so, the remedial measures that have been or will be taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that he received a letter, dated 24 July 2009, from the District Magistrate in charge of the District Court of Port Louis in relation to shortcomings of the Metropolitan (South) Police Prosecution Office.

I wish to state, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I, myself, am much concerned about such shortcomings. I have taken note of the remedial measures taken by the Commissioner of Police.

In fact, the Commissioner of Police has assured me that he has taken this opportunity to issue a Circular on 25 July 2009, to request Divisional Commanders to ensure that such shortcomings do not occur in Courts in their respective Divisions, while at the same time requesting them to master the 'Guidelines for Prosecuting Counsel' which was issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions one month earlier, that is, on 24 June 2009.

The Commissioner of Police has also on 27 July 2009 instructed all Deputy Commissioners, Divisional Commanders and Branch Officers to visit Prosecution Offices and Court Rooms under their responsibilities with a view to providing an efficient and effective prosecution service and policing in Court.

In addition, a Chief Inspector of Police has been posted to the Metropolitan (South) Prosecution Office for overall administrative supervision and coordination with the Judiciary and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Additionally, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr Bruneau, has had several meetings with the District Magistrate with a view to ensuring that the measures taken are being adhered to.

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that, according to this report, very often, Police Prosecutors' files are forgotten at Line Barracks on trial dates? Another point mentioned in this report is that Prosecutors posted at Division III come to court unprepared and one of them even fell asleep on two occasions in court. On, at least, two occasions, detainees have escaped from Police custody and one even entered the Magistrates Chambers. One last point I want to mention from this report is that warrants are not executed and have to be constantly extended. May we know whether actions are being taken to solve the remarks being made by the District Magistrate?

The Prime Minister: We take the remarks very seriously, Mr Speaker, Sir. As I mentioned earlier, I, myself, am very much concerned with such shortcomings which are quite unacceptable. This is why I said in my answer that the CP took this opportunity to issue a Circular on 25 July 2009 to request Divisional Commanders to ensure that such shortcomings do not occur in courts. We had discussed this in the past. In fact, you see this kind of failures happened not just there, but in some other cases. I always say, Mr Speaker, Sir, whenever somebody takes a job, he or she must do it with diligence. You get paid for a job, you must do the job. It is in fact your duty to do the job. So many cases are struck out because procedures are not being followed, 'X' has not done what should have been done, etc. It is either one of the few things, apart from what the Commissioner of Police has said he is doing. We are doing it, in fact, but we should do more training for them. That is why he is telling them to do all this. I don't know whether some of these things are done deliberately or whether it is done in a slipshod fashion with a 'I could not care less attitude'. We have to provide for more training. Therefore, it will take more time, it will take money. I have asked the Commissioner of Police to list the names of the Prosecuting officers who show gross negligence or repeat the same mistakes, because I think if there is no sanction you will have the same thing. In one hundred years' time we'll see the same thing happening. We have to take sanctions and we have to be ruthless in taking sanctions.

Mr Bérenger: Clearly the hon. Prime Minister has not contradicted hon. Jhugroo who gave a list of the shortcomings which the hon. Prime Minister referred to. Can I ask him whether he is aware of three others which are perhaps even more serious, - three additional 'shortcomings', if that is the word - denounced by the District Magistrate -

'Prisoners are not brought to court in spite of court orders. Court orderly and one of the officers from the escort team, seen by me, loitering with prisoners and their relatives. There is a disparity in the stand adopted by Police in granting bail.'

I was really shocked when I got hold of this report from the District Magistrate. Is the hon. Prime Minister telling us that action is being taken on all those counts?

The Prime Minister: As I said, action is being taken on all those counts but, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the end of the day, the wine depends on the vineyard. We try to improve them. We are saying that we are going to take sanctions, we are going to take a list of the possible prosecutors who failed. There are some cases in court just now and the same thing is happening. We will have to provide more training. It is quite unacceptable. I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, but we will have to take the action that we can take.

Mr Bérenger: I wish to congratulate the Commissioner of Police. He received that report from the District Magistrate on 24 July 2009 and - nearly immediately - on 27, wrote a letter entitled ‘Shortcomings at Prosecution Offices’, targeting all area commanders. I congratulate the Commissioner of Police, but is the hon. Prime Minister aware that, in the same letter, the same Commissioner of Police says -

“I instructed area commanders in January last...”

that is, January 2009

“...to submit a reorganisation plan of Prosecution officers in their respective Divisions.’

But these reports have not been submitted yet. So, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister that he will see to it that the Prime Minister obtains results that time?

The Prime Minister: Yes, but to obtain results, Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot have my hands tied. If I had my hands free – that is why sometimes I ask for additional things – I would have sacked them one by one straightaway, but, unfortunately, I have to go through the system. The procedures are like this. That is why I think ...

(Interruptions)

If the Opposition would agree with me, please give me additional powers to do it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Jugnauth: In the light of the shortcomings of the Police Prosecutors, and so that justice must be really done, would the hon. Prime Minister consider nominating more counsels to appear before the district courts on the side of the prosecution in order to help to

alleviate the workload of prosecutors? Because they appear in so many cases, and it is impossible, humanly speaking, for a prosecutor who is not qualified as a barrister, to handle so many cases. That is why I understand there are so many shortcomings.

The Prime Minister: This is what we are doing because, in fact, before this happened, I also talked to the Commissioner of Police, as I said. This is why he says he has taken this opportunity to issue the circular, because this is one of the problems that we have. We need more training, and we need more people. But we need to train them before.

Mr Bhagwan: I drew the attention of the Prime Minister in a similar question as far as interference from the Attorney General's Office is concerned regarding the stand of Police Prosecutors in court. There have been many cases at the district court of Rose Hill in the past, and I asked the Prime Minister to go and inquire. He gave the assurance that he would instruct certain people outside – at least, one is here - not to interfere directly as far as the stand of Police prosecutors in court cases is concerned. Can I reiterate to the Prime Minister – he has just used the word 'sack' – our request that nobody from his Government should interfere, as far as the stand of Police Prosecutors in court cases is concerned, especially the Attorney General?

Mr Speaker: No, hon. Bhagwan! In the last part, you are imputing motives against a Member of the House.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to give a firm undertaking to the House that he will give instructions to anybody on his side not to interfere?

Mr Speaker: Sorry! The hon. Member should remove the name. When he said the Attorney General's Office, I kept quiet.

Mr Bhagwan: I remove the words 'Attorney General'. I ask the Prime Minister to remove the Attorney General. From here!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, not only I can give the guarantee to the House that I have done so, but I have also spoken to the Commissioner of Police. I have told him to make sure that his officers know that there is nobody who is above the law. I will not hesitate. They should not think that a Minister or a hon. Member is above the law and, as I said, the record speaks for itself.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister the number of Police Prosecutors presently exercising? He also mentioned that there was an inquiry, which was going to be carried out on those who are found lacking in treatment of cases. Can we know when actually this inquiry is scheduled to start?

The Prime Minister: I didn't say there is an inquiry on the Police Prosecuting Officers. I said I have asked the Commissioner of Police to look at this carefully. We must have a list of those who are repeatedly doing such mistakes, whether deliberately or not, and we have to know what action we will take against them.

Mr Dulloo: The hon. Prime Minister is agreeing with hon. Jugnauth that prosecuting counsels be appointed. May I ask him, therefore, that he should ensure that prosecuting counsels are selected by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, but by no other office, least of all, the Attorney General's Office?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member, I suppose, does not realise. On my request, we have separated completely the Attorney General's Office in the last Budget. I don't think it is proper. We have separated it; they have separate budgets; everything is separate.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Some time back, we raised the question of the Police inquiring on the Police. Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether, following this report that he has just received, it is the Police who is inquiring on the Police or is it somebody from his office, or is it the Commission for Human Rights?

The Prime Minister: In fact, in that case, we don't have to have the Police inquiring. The facts speak for themselves where there have been mistakes, and there have been great gaps in whatever they were doing. These are factual. So, we are not inquiring into that as such, but we are looking at the facts.

CCTV SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM - CONTROL ROOM - POLICE OFFICERS & SECURITY & SAFETY EQUIPMENT

(No. B/1017) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Control Room of the CCTV Surveillance System, situated at the Police Information and Operations Room, at the Line Barracks, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number of Police officers posted thereat, indicating the number thereof in each shift, and
- (b) if security and safety equipment are available thereat.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the main control room of the CCTV Surveillance System, based at the Police Information and Operations Room, that is, at the Line Barracks, operates on a 24/7 basis.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that seven trained Police officers are posted at the main control room, and they work as CCTV operators on a three 8-hour shift system. At least, therefore, two Police officers are on duty at a time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the hon. Member that the main control room at the Police Information and Operations Room is a restricted area, and access by authorised staff to the CCTV Room is effected through two security checks, as follows -

- (a) primary access control at the main entrance of the Police Information and Operations Room through a personal access code, and
- (b) secondary access control at CCTV main control room itself through another access code.

In addition, there is a surveillance camera at the main entrance of the Police Information and Operations Room, which enables the monitoring of the movement of any person accessing or leaving the main control room. The monitoring of the staff posted at the Main Control Room is also effected by a camera available inside the sub-control room at Flic-en-Flac.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been assured by the Commissioner of Police that adequate security arrangements exist at the main control room.

Mr Bérenger: We are talking about CCTV Surveillance System, which works through cameras. Information has reached me that some of those CCTV surveillance cameras are dummies, are fake cameras, including the ones near Roche Bois. First, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether this is so? If that is so, have the Police been guilty of that or any other authority? If it is another authority, who has been guilty of that? Because I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will agree with me that this is very dangerous. If that is true, it creates a false sense of security when we are dealing with dummy cameras.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I should say to the hon. Member that, even in other countries, including the UK, they have these kinds of arrangements. People don't know; they increase the number. Even on the main motorway when you go from London to the airport, you have this.

(Interruptions)

They give the impression it is full, but it is not. But let me assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that, in fact, we are putting cameras in all these areas. I think there is another question on this, including the areas of Port Louis.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister in how many places do we have dummy cameras?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has been Prime Minister; he knows.

Mr Bérenger: In how many places? Not where!

The Prime Minister: I don't want to give details. In fact, wherever there are, these are being replaced.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Order! Order!

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there are enough Police officers posted in the CCTV room in one shift, to view 16 monitors for eight consecutive hours?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we feel there are enough. It is an 8-hour shift, as I explained, and this is the same in other countries; they get trained, and they do it. Not only they do it there. As you probably know, they also do it at Flic-en-Flac.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Duval, enough now! Please, no more interjections!

Mr Dulloo: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister that since those CCTV cameras are supposed to be for information, also preventive and enforcement purposes, should not the public be given adequate information and warning that those cameras are there and that we should not cheat on them, make believe and take them by surprise as is normally the case elsewhere, that adequate warning is given for preventive and enforcement purposes?

The Prime Minister: This is a fair point that hon. Dulloo has made. In the UK, for example, they warn you that the camera is further on. Here, we haven't done that, maybe we have to look at this.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the Prime Minister now that he has confirmed that there are dummy cameras ...

The Prime Minister: No, I didn't!

Mr Bérenger: No! The Prime Minister compared with London which he knows well.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I compared with other countries, but I am not confirming anything and, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I advise people if they try to do something that they should not do ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, fairly he confirmed and it is a fact, if you go there it is an empty box. It is not difficult to check. I will ask the hon. Prime Minister whether those dummy CCTV cameras were installed by the Police or by some other Authority - the Tourism Authority?

The Prime Minister: No, in fact, they were doing some improvement of the area.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I can't hear the answer. Order!

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether any footage has been used so far in any prosecution and whether any of these officers have deposed in court as the maker of that footage?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the list here. In fact, the hon. Member would be surprised to know that there has been a dramatic - I really use the word 'dramatic' - decrease in these kinds of larcenies and misdemeanours.

Mrs Martin: The hon. Minister mentioned in an answer to my colleague hon. Jhugroo that the number of Police officers is quite sufficient. May I ask him concerning such an exercise as surveillance where constant attention is required if it is possible that the number of officers, especially who operate during the late hours at night, be increased specially during week-ends, where the increased traffic at night can give occasion to a crime to be committed and since the CCTV requires constant attention during late hours at night it might be a little bit difficult for only three officers to be monitoring all those CCTV cameras?

The Prime Minister: There has been no complaint as far as I know about this, but I can pass this to the Commissioner of Police, because at Flacq it is done by private companies that have installed it precisely because we want to have the same standard as we have in other countries, but we can look at this.

Mr Jhugroo: Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there is any review of the tapes and, if so, can we know by whom?

The Prime Minister: Review of the tapes, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a long procedure. If the hon. Member wants me to give him the answer, I will give him, but this is a long procedure. They have a system, what is called, the digital water marking, where you can prevent any tapping or alteration of the tapes. The access to the system itself is logged automatically and nobody who has no permission can look at them. There is a hardware fire wall built-in in that system, that is, to prevent any third parties to look at it. The extract of the images which is the hon. Member's main question is done through strict supervision. It is done by the officer-in-charge of the communication branch and, as I said, he cannot even tamper with it because there is, what is called, a digital water marking system in it.

ECROIGNARD – POLICE SERGEANT - DEATH

(No. B/1018) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the incident which occurred, on or about 30 June 2009, at Ecroignard, in the course of which Police Sergeant, K. H. lost his life, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried thereinto, and, if so, the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a group of persons had conveyed Police Sergeant B.H also known as K.H to Flacq Hospital on the 30 June 2009 at around 00 40 hrs. The doctor who examined him certified that he had already

passed away. As it was a suspected case of murder, the Government Medical Officer referred the body to the Police.

On the same day, at 11 00 hrs, an autopsy was carried out and the Police Medical Officer certified that death was due to “crushing of the chest”.

The Flacq CID initiated an enquiry and several statements were recorded on 30 June of 2009. This resulted in the arrest of one Mr T.K.H. On the same day a provisional charge of “Murder” was lodged against him before the Flacq District Court and he was remanded to Police cell. On the 21 July 2009, he was remanded to jail, he asks for bail but the Police objected to his release.

On the 26 of August 2009, upon the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the provisional charge of “Murder” lodged against Mr T. K. H was reduced to “Manslaughter”. On the same day, he was allowed bail before the Flacq District Court and was released upon furnishing one surety of Rs50,000 cash and a surety of Rs100,000 as security and a recognizance of Rs300,000. Furthermore, he has to report daily between 06 00 hrs to 18 00 hrs at Bel Air Police Station.

The enquiry in the case has been completed and the case file referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions on 31 August 2009.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister, being given that that person has been granted bail, whether he had previous convictions?

The Prime Minister: Yes, in fact, he had. He was interdicted in the past - that was in 2007 - and in 2008 he was prosecuted before the Intermediate Court under 3 counts and he was sentenced to 9 months’ imprisonment. On the same day, he gave notice of appeal and that appeal was pending before Supreme Court until his death on 30 June.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he finds it normal that that person has been granted bail?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry we are making a mistake. I thought the Leader of the Opposition was asking about the late Police Sergeant. In that case, Mr Speaker, Sir, the person who has been arrested, there is nothing in the file that said that he was condemned by the court.

Mr Bérenger: Doesn’t the hon. Prime Minister find it shocking? He understood me wrongly. In his file the Police have prepared information on the victim and there is no

information on the accused. Does he find that normal? According to information we have, he has previous convictions and he has been granted bail by the Police and the same Police do not give the information to the hon. Minister.

The Prime Minister: No, he has not been granted bail by the Police, Mr Speaker, Sir. Police objected to bail, but he was granted bail later on by the Flacq District Court.

Mr Guinness: If I have heard the Prime Minister well, the provisional charge has been changed from murder to manslaughter. Can the hon. Prime Minister give us the reason?

(Interruption)

The Prime Minister: As Member of Parliament, he should know that it is the DPP. I cannot go and tell the DPP what to do.

Mr Speaker: This is a matter for the DPP.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister to check whether the charge was brought down by the DPP from murder to manslaughter? When that was done, did the Police keep on objecting to bail or did the Police withdraw its objection to bail although manslaughter is manslaughter?

The Prime Minister: What I have here, Mr Speaker, Sir, is upon the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions, on 26 August the provisional charge of murder was reduced to manslaughter. On the same day, he was allowed bail before Flacq District Court and was released upon furnishing one surety and so on. But originally, what I have here, I am saying it - the Police had objected to bail on 21 July.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will not agree that, too often, the Police reduce the charge from murder to manslaughter, in a way to see to it that the inquiry is ended soon and there is prosecution, and that this is too common a practice?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bodha, I must tell you that this is a matter at the discretion of the DPP. Once the DPP has taken the decision, how can the Prime Minister answer for the DPP? Last question!

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether, when the Police was called on that particular site where there was the incident, they reached on time? When they came, the family said that the guy was on a JCB. Why didn't the Police seize the key of that JCB? First, I would like to know whether they came on time and, if ever they came, why they left the key of that vehicle.

The Prime Minister: By the time the Police came - the Police came as soon as they heard; they have to travel to come there - he had already used the excavator and damaged the house, and was proceeding in doing the same again.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/1020, B/1021, B/1022, B/1023 and B/1054 have been withdrawn. Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! The hon. Minister of Local Government has made a request to me to be given the opportunity to reply to Parliamentary Questions addressed to him out of turn, as he is taken up with the workings of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum hosted by the Government, which is being held in Mauritius. The House finds no inconvenience. I propose to accede to the Minister's request. Hon. Lauthan is not here. Parliamentary Question No. B/1044 will be replied by the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment. Hon Dayal!

QUARTIER MILITAIRE - SWIMMING POOL

(No. B/1049) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moke) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the plot of land already identified and earmarked by the Moka/Flacq District Council for the construction of a swimming pool at Quartier Militaire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council, information as to where matters stand.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a plot of land of the extent of 8354m² at Quartier Militaire had already been vested in July 2001 in the Ministry of Youth & Sports for implementation of this project, which has been included in the strategic plan of the Local Infrastructure Fund.

I am further informed that a meeting was held on 16 October 2009 at the level of my Ministry with all parties concerned, namely the Ministry of Youth & Sports and the Moka/Flacq District Council on the way forward, and it has been decided that a geo-technical survey be conducted in the first instance, so as to verify the suitability of the identified site for this project. A quotation is being launched by next week in this respect.

BEAU VALLON VILLAGE HALL - NEW BUILDING

(No. B/1055) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he will state if Government will consider the advisability of constructing a new building to house the Beau Vallon Village Hall.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the Member to the reply I made on 18 April 2006 to Parliamentary Question B/308 on this issue.

I am now informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that a plot of State land of the extent of 743 m² at Beau Vallon has been vested in April 2007 in it for the construction of a village hall.

I am also informed that, in view of the fact that new village halls will be constructed in the villages of Old Grand Port, Petit Bel Air and Camp Diable during financial years 2009 and 2010, the project for the construction of a new village hall at Beau Vallon will be implemented in financial year 2011.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dowarkasing! Parliamentary Question B/1062!

Mr Dowarkasing: In fact, this question, Mr Speaker, Sir, was addressed to the Ministry of Environment. I don't know how it has been changed to Ministry of Industry and now to Ministry of Local Government.

MIDLANDS VILLAGE - INDUSTRIAL PARK

(No. B/1062) **Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Industry, Science and Research whether, in regard to the project for the construction of an industrial park along the highway leading to Mahebourg in the boundaries of the Midlands village, he will state if his Ministry has given clearance therefor.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed that an application has been received on 22 September 2009 at the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit from Société Masmil & Filature de Riche Terre Ltd. for an Environment Impact Assessment license for the division of a plot of land of the extent of 21 hectares 1404 m² at La Vigie, Midlands, into 64 lots for industrial purpose. The application is still under consideration at the level of that Ministry.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the development that is supposed to take there, is the hon. Minister satisfied that this portion of land fits in the national strategy guidelines 2006 of the Ministry of Housing and Lands?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will check with the relevant Ministry.

CINQ ARPENTS- MAIN ROAD- RESURFACING

(No. B/1071) **Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the main road at Cinq Arpents is almost impracticable due to the fact that it has not been tarred since many years and, if so, will he state if remedial measures will be taken.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed by the Municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix that a tender exercise has already been launched on 20 September 2009 for the complete resurfacing of Cinq Arpents road, and works are expected to start before the end of this year.

BAMBOUS CEMETERY- EXTENSION

(No. B/1085) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Black River District Council, information as to if the inhabitants of Bambous have made representations for the extension of the cemetery in view of the difficulties they are now facing for the burial of their relatives.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Black River District Council that no representation has been received from the inhabitants of Bambous for the extension of the Bambous cemetery.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask hon. Minister if he would be kind to liaise with the Black River District Council? Because there are several complaints that families are now finding it difficult to find a plot of land to bury their near and dears.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, I will be kind enough to do that.

SHOPS - 24/7 CONCEPT - OPENING HOURS

(No. B/1044) **Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the implementation of the concept of 24/7, he will state if Government proposes to amend the appropriate legislation to liberalise the opening hours of shops, supermarkets and other shopping centres.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Mr J. F. Chaumière): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQ B/1044. As the House is aware, the Finance Act 2005 has repealed the Shops Act, and the opening hours of shops are, therefore, no longer regulated.

LIVESTOCK FEED FACTORY- CLOSURE

(No. B/1045) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the Livestock Feed Factory of his Ministry, he will state if the closure thereof is being proposed and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Richelieu Livestock Feed Factory has ceased its operations since 15 October last, because it has become no longer economically viable for it to continue manufacturing livestock feed.

In fact, the following factors have motivated Government to decide on the closure of the factory -

- (i) the factory set up in 1943 has been operating with very old machinery which frequently broke down, thus necessitating high annual maintenance costs;
- (ii) the operations were labour-intensive, and 73 persons, half of whom were in the age bracket of 56-60 years old, have been working in the factory in very difficult conditions;
- (iii) productivity was very low in that only 7,000 tonnes of feed were manufactured annually, for a total national demand of 120,000 tonnes.
- (iv) costs of raw materials have increased substantially from Rs35 m. in 2007/08 to Rs85 m. in 2008/09.
- (v) cost of production, both for cow feed and pig feed, was higher than the selling price of similar products manufactured by private companies;
- (vi) the livestock feed was distributed free of charge at an additional cost of Rs4,000 per tonne.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to add that the price of livestock feed manufactured by Richelieu Livestock Feed Factory has not been revised since 1994, despite substantial increases in the price of raw materials over the years. For the past 15 years, the price of

cow feed has remained at Rs2,500 per tonne and that of pig feed at Rs3,900 per tonne. Those prices included a subsidy element of Rs1,500 per tonne for the benefit of breeders owning up to 20 animals. For comparison purpose, the selling price of cow feed and pig feed marketed by the private manufacturers were Rs10,425 and Rs12,500 per tonne respectively.

My Ministry is encouraging the development of the dairy and livestock sector and, in that context, necessary measures are being taken to accompany and empower the breeders

-

- (i) the subsidy on livestock feed has been increased from Rs1,500 to Rs2,000 per tone, and will benefit some 1,400 cow breeders and 500 pig breeders;
- (ii) arrangements have been made with the two local manufacturers of livestock feed to ensure a regular production and supply of the feed to the breeders;
- (iii) a Pasture Development Scheme is being introduced to reduce dependency on concentrates and to encourage planters and breeders to produce high quality fodder. In that context, a grant of Rs17,000 per *arpent* will be given to interested planters and breeders owning up to 25 *arpents* of land;
- (iv) the production, preservation and commercialisation of fodder by entrepreneurs is being encouraged;
- (v) land has been earmarked under the 1000A scheme of MSPA land, specifically for fodder production;
- (vi) a scheme is being introduced for small breeders to import animals of genetically superior breed, to increase productivity of meat and milk. Under this scheme, the breeders will be given a grant of Rs30,000 and a loan of Rs40,000 at 3% interest rate, repayable over a period of five years plus a moratorium of one year;
- (vii) breeders are being encouraged to regroup to benefit from economies of scale, and arrangements are being made with the two big producers, namely Golden Cream Ltd and SKC Surat Co, to facilitate purchase of milk from the small breeders;

- (viii) in parallel, assistance will be given to cooperatives societies and groups of breeders to set up mini manufacturing units to produce feed rations.
- (ix) two pasteurization units are operational, and two others are in the process of being set up to encourage the breeders.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his reply, but can he say whether, since the closure of that Livestock Feed Factory he has had meetings with the small breeders to know what procurement difficulties they are getting? He just mentioned that there have been meetings with those who would supply, but yet there have been regular shortages and has he had meetings to discuss with the small breeders about those shortages in producing the necessary material?

Mr Faugoo: We had lots of meetings with the breeders prior to making arrangement for the proper supply after the closing down of the factory. So far, there has been no complaint, Mr Speaker, Sir, neither from the suppliers nor from the breeders.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just said and, again, in his statement, he is saying that he is encouraging small breeders to breed goats, cows and pigs so that the country can become self-sufficient in meat, but can we know whether the closure of this factory is not in direct contradiction with his proposed policy, because we know that there is a Food Security Fund and could not this fund be used to subsidise the livestock feed which was required?

Mr Faugoo: How can it be in contradiction, Mr Speaker, Sir, when I have said that this was not sustainable economically? On the other hand, we are using funds from the Food Security Fund to enhance this sector. We have already moved from 2% production of milk locally to 4% today and we are targeting to reach 10% by next year and in two years time we are targeting to produce 14% of milk locally. This is an indication, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dulloo: I don't know whether the hon. Minister is aware that since the 1980s private companies were putting pressure on Government to close down this Livestock Feed Factory. He has talked about what is sustainable economically, accompaniment and empowerment of the small livestock breeders. May I ask him whether this Livestock Feed Factory was not a very important element in sustaining the small cow breeders by making subsidised livestock feed accessible to them and whether he should, on the contrary, have considered putting up a modern factory there as has been considered over the years? There was a project to this effect. What has he done to that project?

Mr Faugoo: In fact, the operation of this factory should have been reviewed years ago, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are not only closing down, we are closing down because we cannot sustain. We cannot accept that the price of feed on the market by private companies is lower than the cost of production of that particular factory at Richelieu.

Secondly, as I said in my answer, we are putting up in specific areas, modern and small factories to produce cow feed and we are empowering the farmers and the breeders to manage their own feed factories, Mr Speaker, Sir. I enumerated a list of incentives which are being given to all these breeders.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether there was any negative report from the Audit Department, or there was any recommendation to close the Livestock Feed Factory?

Mr Faugoo: I have already enumerated a list of reasons as to why it has to be closed down, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has received any complaints from the small breeders regarding the high prices they have to pay for the livestock feed?

Mr Faugoo: This is why, My Speaker, Sir, I said that we reviewed the subsidy which is being given to the breeders, we have raised it and we are also working with the breeders and co-operators to put up some factories, small units so that they can be empowered to produce their own cow feed.

Mr Dulloo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that this Livestock Feed Unit in the Ministry has got wide expertise and experience in producing the proper type of livestock feed for the small breeders, whether for pigs, cows or other breeders and, therefore, by one-go he is getting rid of all those expertise and experience that have been supporting those small livestock breeders so far?

Mr Faugoo: We had meetings with the technicians of the Livestock Factory and the private sector and they have given the guarantee that they are going to furnish the same kind of cow feed, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: After the closure of this Livestock Feed Factory, is the hon. Minister aware that livestock feed is being sold on black market has gone even on black market now? People have to purchase their livestock feed in black?

Mr Faugoo: This is not true. On the contrary, there was abuse before, Mr Speaker, Sir, because ...

(Interruptions)

Let me answer! Because of the subsidy and the distribution network, there was abuse in the system, Mr Speaker, Sir. They were abusing on the price as they were supplying breeders who were not entitled to receive cow feed.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can confirm what my colleague just said. From 25 September to 06 October, there was absolutely no livestock feed on the market. There was a shortage. At a time when the Government is providing a stimulus package to other sectors of the economy, *les petits éleveurs sont encore plus vulnérables*. Can the hon. Minister say whether this measure that he has taken *va amener la disparition des petits éleveurs*, everything to the detriment of the small breeders and that, now, the big operators who are producing milk and others in the sector, are the ones who will benefit from this measure?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is doing politics. As I said, these measures are being taken to enhance the production of milk locally. Already, there was a mechanism where the small breeders were selling their milk to AMB at Rs15 a litre. Today, with the actions that we have taken, they are selling at double the price already. This is only one example and with all the schemes that we have put up, this is going to enhance the sector and encourage the breeders to carry on with them.

Mr Speaker: A last question, hon. Dulloo!

Mr Dulloo: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the existence of this Livestock Feed Factory within the Ministry was acting as a price regulator by providing subsidised livestock feed, this was preventing private operators/companies from allowing the prices to skyrocket and this is what would happen right now?

Mr Faugoo: As I said, My Speaker, Sir, this is temporary. We are giving subsidy. We are putting up under a scheme some factories where they will be empowered to produce their own cow feed. This is only a sort of make shift arrangement which will be phased out with the coming of the small cow feed manufacturing units.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I have one last question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: No, sorry, we have to limit to the number of supplementary questions once the matter has been sufficiently discussed!

NPIP II- LAND CONVERSION TAX

(No. B/1046) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether he will state if the Land Conversion Tax has fully been paid on the portions of land which were excised from the NPIP II and which were exempted from the payment of the Land Conversion Tax by a Committee, chaired by the Chairperson of the Irrigation Authority and, if so, indicate -

- (a) the total amount paid by each person concerned;
- (b) when the payments were effected, and
- (c) for which extent.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that the land excision approved by the Board of Irrigation Authority was not restricted to NPIP – Phase II, but covered all the gazetted irrigation zones. But, more importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the practice of excising land from irrigation zone started in November 2003 despite the fact that the Irrigation Authority Act makes no provision for land excision/land conversion. This practice has perpetuated over the years and was only stopped in February 2008 following written instructions from my Ministry.

In order to ensure that this practice does not recur, my Ministry has taken the following measures -

- (i) the issue of a press communiqué in July 2009 to inform the public that the Irrigation Authority has no power under the Irrigation Authority Act to excise land and all applications for land conversion should be addressed to my Ministry;
- (ii) the Irrigation Authority, at my request, issued a similar communiqué in August 2009 and placed a notice at its head office to inform the public of the procedures to be followed for land conversion.

Moreover, I have personally instructed that an enquiry be carried out to ascertain whether the Irrigation Authority was still entertaining requests for land excision. Accordingly, My Ministry requested the Internal Control Unit of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to carry out the enquiry and to also conduct an audit of the books

and records of the Irrigation Authority with a view to drawing up a full list of all persons whose land had been excised by the Board of the Irrigation Authority.

The Internal Control Unit has submitted its report on 15 October 2009 this year. The report reveals that the Board of the Irrigation Authority has approved the excision of land from irrigation zone from November 2003 to February 2008. There has been in all some 275 cases of land excision for a total extent of 396ha.

My Ministry proposes to write to all the land owners concerned to request them to apply for a land conversion permit in order to regularise their situation. The Land Conversion Committee will examine the applications with a view to determining whether a land conversion permit is required and/or land conversion tax is payable.

Mr Speaker Sir, it is worth pointing out that the hon. Member who has put the question was herself the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources when the practice started in November 2003.

(Interruptions)

Mr Faugoo: She can confirm ...

Mr Speaker: There is no need. The hon. Member has the right to put questions.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad that the hon. Minister said this because I am sorry to say that the hon. Minister in his haste *de renverser la vapeur* is totally confused. He is confused about the role of the Land Management Committee.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is making a statement; she must put her question.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister say whether he is confused about the role of the Land Management Committee? Can he say whether he is confused about the role of the Irrigation Authority? Can he say whether he is confused about the role of his Ministry because when he mentioned 2003, can he say whether, as he confirmed himself, there was - to quote his own words - "misunderstanding, misinterpretation of the law, no mandate for the Chairman of the Irrigation Authority"? Can he confirm what were the terms of reference of the Land Management Committee in 2003 or whether the terms of reference of the Land

Management Committee has been purposely amended by the Chairman, the actual Chairman, since his appointment?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I could have been confused with the confusion in the mind of the hon. lady. But I am not! I am talking of facts, Mr Speaker, Sir. The conversion which has been given since 2003 is not by any committee. It has been approved by the full Board of the Irrigation Authority. This is on record, this is a fact and I am stating only facts. If this is not clear to her, I can repeat again. All the excisions and conversions have been given so far since 2003 by the Board and not by any subcommittee. Now, there is a subcommittee which studies the requests and these requests are sent to the full Board, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is a fact, which I am saying. They have, at least, on 30 occasions since 2003 to January 2005, in 30 cases given conversions, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is, therefore, not the doing of the actual Chairman of the Irrigation Authority; it is something which started back in 2003 and continued up to January 2008 where we stopped it. We have made sure that this does not happen because this is illegal.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I'll say, Mr Speaker, Sir, where the confusion is. Can the hon. Minister say as to why the new Chairman, when he was appointed, I think, in 2006, why he changed the terms of the reference of that land Management Committee so as to insert in it excision of land? Why did he change that? That was not done in 2003.

Mr Faugoo: Because they were doing something which they were not mandated to do already since 2003. By doing so, in fact, the Chairman mandated that committee, gave them the power to study cases and requests and come forward to the Board, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is what happened. It is a fact. Can they deny that this did not happen in 2003? This is exactly what he did; in fact, he corrected the wrong that was being done since 2003. But I must admit that he was also wrong, because this was not allowed according to the law.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is only confirming what I have just said. That he has given the powers to the Irrigation Authority to excise land, whereas last time under the same PQ he said that the Chairman did not have any mandate. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether in the list that he just said he has received, the audit report, whether the names of the Chairman and some members of the Land Management Committee appear thereon?

Mr Faugoo: In the list, there is a name of Beechoo, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I do not know whether it is the Chairman's name or it is some other Beechoo.

Mr Speaker: We will continue with the supplementary questions after lunch time.

At 12.56 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.33 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member have more supplementary questions, I understand.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have two more questions on this issue. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, from the time he has received the report and the list on which the name of Mr Beechoo appears, that is, from that time till now, he has not had time to check if it pertains to the one and same person, that is, the name of Beechoo which is on the list and the name of the Chairman of the Irrigation Authority?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I had time to go through the report and I had time to check whether it pertains to the Chairman of the Irrigation Authority. I have been told no, he is not the person. Yet I have to confirm it.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The Minister, before lunch, said that he does not know whether he is the one and same person. Now, can the hon. Minister say whether his Ministry gave instructions to the Chairman of the Irrigation Authority to change the terms of reference of that Land Management Committee?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have stated certain facts. All the answers – the main answer and those subsequent to the questions put to me - have been given. I have stated facts as a staff list by the internal control unit and by the management of the IA. All excisions were approved by the Board of the IA not by any subcommittee whatever the name it can bear. This is the first thing I have said. Secondly, I have said that I have given the extent of the land excised since November 2003 and it was a bad practice which started under the previous regime and which we stopped as from last year. This is also a fact, it is on record. I have also stated how we are going to move forward to recuperate whatever tax ought to have been paid to Government. We are going to go case by case and ask them to come and apply and where applicable we are going to ask them claim the tax payable. Now on the issue of the Land Management Committee, it exists from before 2005. It has certain mandate. It has certain terms of reference. One of the terms of reference was changed at the level of the IA. It has nothing to do with the Ministry. We were not aware of this. And this is where when we

were made aware that there were cases of conversion and excision, we decided to write and give instructions to IA to stop that practice, a practice which started in November 2003.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister to say why, in a previous PQ, he spoke of misunderstanding and of the Chairman having no mandate to do things? I have another question. Can he say whether one of the recommendations that have been made by the audit inquiry is that the Board has acted contrary to the provisions of the SIE Act?

Mr Faugoo: I don't know where the confusion is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I said the Chairman had no mandate. He does not have the mandate even today because it is illegal under the Irrigation Act and under the SIE Act. It is illegal. They cannot excise land which is agricultural land. It is so simple. They have been doing it since November 2003 which was illegal and that illegality continued in 2005, 2006 and 2007 which we put a stop to it. It's so simple. And I have said again this is going on 'the Chairman', it is not the Chairman, it is the Board. He is the Chairman of the Board; the Board has approved. This is black on white, this is factual. I don't know where the hon. Member is confused.

The Deputy Speaker: We will take a last question!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, the hon. Minister is talking of land excised altogether. My question relates to the NPIP II which is different. Land excised altogether from the irrigation zones is different. Land excised under NPIP II which is funded by BDA and ADB is different. This is where I say there is confusion. These are two different matters; it is not the same matter.

Mr Faugoo: How can it be two different matters, it is agricultural land whether it falls under project II or project I or any area which has been proclaimed agricultural land in the island. How can it be two different lands? It is land in one phase or second phase, but it has been approved by the Board. It is an agricultural land. What is important is that no approval has been given by any subcommittee wherever the land is. Whether it is NPC II or I or any region it has been given by the Board. Can I be clearer than this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Next question, please!

QUARTIER MILITAIRE - RIVIERE FRANÇOISE – ROAD REALIGNMENT

(No. B/1047) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if Government will consider the advisability of realigning the road from the Rivière Française, Quartier Militaire roundabout to St Julien d’Hotman.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Road Development Authority will, during the next financial year, appoint a consultant to carry out a technical study for the upgrading and rehabilitation of Higginson Road from Quartier Militaire to St Julien d’Hotman over a length of 10.6 kms.

DAGOTIERE TO ALMA – LINK ROAD

(No. B/1048) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if Government will consider the advisability of negotiating with the Mon Désert Alma Sugar Estate for the acquisition of part of the link road from the NHDC of Dagotièrre to Alma which is 202m long and 6m wide with a view to alleviating the hardships caused to the road users of the neighbouring regions.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is empowered under the Land Acquisition Act to acquire lands for the implementation of Government projects. This exercise involves payment of substantial compensation by Government. Hence, prior to initiating the acquisition procedures, my Ministry should receive a formal request from the Ministry or Department concerned indicating the availability of funds, suitability of the site and the time frame for the implementation of the project. According to records available, no official request has yet been received for the construction of a link road from the NHDC of Dagotièrre to Alma.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, Mon Désert Alma has given the right of access but no authorisation to construct the road. Therefore, I would like to ask the hon. Minister if he could liaise with his colleague, the Ministry of Local Government and the relevant Authorities just as in the case of Flacq, Argy to La Porte, Constance La Gaité has given authorisation to construct the road on certain conditions - in fact, only 202 m. long road and people have to walk or drive a distance of 5 to 6 to kms. May we know if this could be done here also as it has been done in Flacq?

Dr. Kasenally: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

- Chavii Security Guards Ltd. Rs16,240,800
- Special Security Guards Ltd Rs11,350,320

As regards part (b) of the question, after both technical and financial evaluation of the bids received, all 58 CEB sites were awarded to Brinks (Mauritius) Ltd, the only responsive bidder, for a period of one year as from 01 June 2009.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, because from the figures that he has just mentioned, I can see, for example, the lowest bidder is Rs11 m., whereas in the case of Brinks (Mauritius) Ltd, it is Rs26,454,664. Therefore, it is a difference of nearly Rs15 m. Can I know how can it be that it is the highest tenderer which has been awarded the contract?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have replied already to this question. The others were not responsive. And I'll say one thing. I also looked at the figures to see which is the highest. I also looked at the previous security services and in 2006 or thereabout it was about Rs24 m. In 2008, it was Rs26 m. So, this present figure of Rs26 m though appearing relatively high is not. But I repeat the main problem has been the evaluation...

(Interruptions)

If the hon. Member is interested, I'll lay a copy on the Table of the Assembly.

(Interruptions)

Later, I am thinking back. Sorry! I will be only too happy to give him a copy of how it was done.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the composition of the Evaluation Committee and the Chairperson?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the evaluation team was made up of three persons; one is a Principal Engineer, the other one is the Senior Accountant and the third one is a Communications Officer. It is chaired by the Principal Engineer.

Mr Lesjongard: May I ask the Deputy Prime Minister on what grounds were the other bidders not found responsive?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The criteria were laid down in the selection process and the criteria as laid down were non-financial and financial and marks were given accordingly. It was on company profile and experience, site management and organisation, methodology and management approach, manpower policy, recruitment and screening mechanism training, supervision and monitoring mechanism, logistics, equipment and facility. As I said, I will only be too happy to submit the complete evaluation criteria and lay it on the Table.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister table a copy of the Minutes of proceedings of the Board when this decision was taken?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I can't say that I can, but I'll find out from the Board. This is a copy of the evaluation, I lay it on the Table.

Mr Gunness: Can I get it from the Deputy Prime Minister whether he is prepared to lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the Evaluation Report which has been prepared?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Here it is in my hand. I have just said, I have offered it even before the hon. Member asked.

MRA – STATE LAND – BENEFICIARIES – FRAUD & TAX EVASION

(No. B/1051) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to if beneficiaries of State land have been involved in cases of fraud or other forms of tax evasion, since July 2005 to date.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) that since July 2005 to date, investigations have been carried out into 26 cases of under declaration of income by land developers by the investigation unit of the former Income Tax Department and the Fiscal Investigation Department of the MRA. In this respect, claims for a total amount of Rs56 m. , including penalties have been issued. I understand that out of these cases, six of them are still under appeal.

I am further informed that specific information precisely on beneficiaries of State land, who have been involved in cases of fraud or other forms of tax evasion, as requested

for, is not compiled in the MRA data base. However, MRA in its efforts to make all taxpayers pay their fair share of tax liability, tracks all under collections of income tax irrespective of whether such declarations are in respect of development on freehold or State land.

I am also informed that MRA monitors closely all major real estate development projects to ensure that the promoters fulfil their obligations under the tax laws administered by the Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the complex schemes that have been devised by certain promoters to sell bungalows and apartments to non-citizens through mechanisms that might not be in accordance with the Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act, I wish to reassure the hon. Member that the MRA is examining closely those projects to determine whether there has been any case of tax evasion. On the regulatory side, as the House is aware, we have brought a number of amendments to the legislation in the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 to prevent the use of such schemes in the future.

Moreover, a committee has been set up to take stock of projects where there are presumptions that disguised 'sale' of immovable property to non-citizens have been effected with a view to determining the most appropriate course of action against such practices.

Mr Guimbeau: Will the Minister table the names of those involved in those cases of fraud and tax evasion?

Dr. Sithanen: I can't.

Mr Guimbeau: Why not, Sir?

Dr. Sithanen: You have to protect the privacy of individuals. You'll be surprised if these names are made known.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I won't be surprised. That is the reason for which I am asking for the names.

Dr. Sithanen: You know that the law does not allow me to do this.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Minister request the MRA to initiate an audit trail on the bank accounts of all those who have benefited from State land and *Pas Géométriques* and then transferred it to a promoter? I want to know whether the Minister can request the MRA to have an audit trail on those accounts.

Dr. Sithanen: I wish this could be done. But, as you know, this is a country where there is the rule of law. We know under what circumstances we can have access to the bank accounts of individuals; and these are extreme circumstances. So, there must be a *prima facie* case of what has happened first. That is why we have set up a committee in order to investigate some of these colourable devices that have been used to circumvent the Non-citizens (Property Restriction) Act. It is a difficult subject, and that is why we have set up a committee. The MRA is doing its work.

Mr Guimbeau: It is the duty of the MRA to enquire into such cases as well. Is it the case?

Dr. Sithanen: The MRA cannot, on its own, go to the bank and look into the bank accounts. This is forbidden by the law of this country.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister explain to me why names cannot be revealed when there is fraud or other forms of tax evasion? It should be published. People should know those who are doing tax evasion or fraud.

Dr. Sithanen: We will have to change the law, my hon. friend. What we are saying is that, for the moment, a person, even if we disagree with him, is deemed to be innocent until proof, evidence is given against him. This is a country where there is the rule of law, and this is the way that it is being done. We know many cases where basically that has happened, but there is a process which must be respected.

Mr Dowarkasing: Can I ask the Vice-Prime Minister whether he has checked if we can use the provisions of the Data Protection Bill to get those information?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't know what information the hon. Member is talking about.

(Interruptions)

Then, we have to go to the court. First, we have to make a case. It cannot be a fishing expedition. Even though I am not very happy about certain things, there is a process which we have to respect. First, we have to satisfy the Judge that there is sufficient case for the information to be released.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question! Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Can I have some order, please! For some reason, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications is not in attendance. What I suggest is that we go to the next question, and then we will come back to this question as soon as he arrives. There must be some good reason for his absence.

**BYRON, BRADLEY & GRAND BOIS COLLEGES – REDEPLOYMENT
SCHEME**

(No. B/1053) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne & GRSE) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the three colleges scheduled to be closed down in 2010, he will now state if the redeployment of the scheme of the teaching and non-teaching staff thereof has already been worked out and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, in reply to PQ B/850 on 14 July 2009, I informed the House of the situation with regard to the three colleges, namely Byron College, Bradley College and Grand Bois College. Before going any further, let me reassure the hon. Member that, in the event of the closure of any school, arrangements will be made through MEDCO in line with the existing redeployment scheme for the teaching and non-teaching staff to be redeployed on no less favourable terms.

With regard to Bradley College, in July this year, a *mise en demeure* was served upon the PSSA and the Ministry by the Management of Bradley College contesting the decision of the PSSA and requesting it not to implement its decision to withhold the registration of the school as a grant-aided private secondary school as from January 2010 and onwards. Bradley College on the other hand has good infrastructure and industrial relations are not a perennial problem. In the case of Grand Bois College and Byron College, we have also noted that they have admitted a good number of pre-voc students exceeding the threshold for the prevocational stream, and many come from deprived areas.

My Ministry has examined the matter and observed that recommendations were made for closure of schools on ground of a shortfall by a relatively low number of students in the mainstream while in the pre-voc stream it exceeded the threshold. In line with our policy for an all-inclusive education system, we should not penalise schools which have admitted students in deprived areas especially where the school is situated in an isolated area and closure of same can cause social problems. It was concluded that in the event the school is made to close down, this may cause undue hardship and prejudice to the pre-voc students.

Taking into consideration the social implication of such a step, it was decided that the matter would be reviewed.

Accordingly, a Technical Committee comprising representatives of my Ministry, the PSSA and the Management Audit Bureau has been appointed to review the existing criteria for payment of grants.

Pending the review of the criteria for payment of grants, we have given one additional year moratorium to Byron College and Grand Bois College. As regard Bradley College, it is expected to continue its operations and will be subject to normal assessment by the PSSA.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister for facts? Is it a fact that the regulations gazetted have been gazetted by the PSSA which, under the law, has the responsibility of setting the conditions whenever a school will close down and the PSSA has not amended those regulations? Is it, therefore a fact that the Ministry is in contradiction with the law, with the regulations prepared and gazetted by the PSSA?

Dr. Bunwaree: There is difficulty there, but we are saying that we are reviewing; we have appointed a technical committee. But all these will be put in order once we have the technicalities, it is not going to take too much time. The problem is that these three colleges have been given a warning for one year which is lapsing this year. We are extending that moratorium for two colleges essentially. For Bradley, why there is *deux poids deux mesures en quelque sorte*? *C'est parce que pour* Bradley College, there is no industrial relation whereas in the two other colleges, the industrial relations are there and this poses another problem. So, if not, all the three would have been in the same boat.

Mr Guinness: It seems that the hon. Minister is changing the policy because previously it was, for stoppage of grant, 150 for the mainstream and 25 for prevocational. The hon. Minister himself answered questions in 2008 where he announced that it will operate in 2009 and in 2010 there will be stoppage of grants and pupils would be redeployed. Can the hon. Minister inform the House, for example, in the case of Byron College, how many pupils does the college have in the mainstream?

Dr. Bunwaree: As to the last assessment, in the mainstream it is 180 and 47 in the pre-voc sector. As I am saying Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the figures have changed because more of the pre-voc are being admitted.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again I think that the hon. Minister will have to be clear. We are all for education, we all care for the deprived area. Is the hon. Minister

aware that in 2009 Byron college has only 10 pupils actually in Form I. According to regulations, since it has less than 15 pupils in Form I, it should not have gone for pre-vocational. Is the hon. Minister aware of that?

Dr. Bunwaree: I am aware of that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In certain cases the colleges are placed in such locality that the closing down causes social problems. This also had to be taken care of. There is a technical committee working on that and we will come to a decision.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we take the Flacq region there are many colleges, namely, the MGI, the Rajcoomar Gujadhur SSS, the Darwin College, the Eastern College, the Modern College and so many other colleges. The point that the hon. Minister is trying to make does not stand. According to my information we have 103 pupils in the mainstream. The hon. Minister himself last year stated that grant will be stopped and pupils are to be redeployed?

Dr. Bunwaree: What I have stated I am going to state again. I state that there is a technical committee working on that. As we have decided to set up this technical committee, we have not taken actions and actions will be taken soon.

Mr Guinness: Has the hon. Minister looked into the industrial relation in that particular case? For example, is he aware that, I think 9 former Rectors have been sued and there are actually court cases against Rectors?

Dr. Bunwaree: As I said there are industrial relation problems. All these are being looked into. This is a very important and we are following very closely.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question!

Mr Guinness: Can I ask the hon. Minister if he personally intervened in that particular case?

Dr. Bunwaree: Personally, I brought it to Cabinet and decision was taken to set up the committee and to review the conditions.

The Deputy Speaker Sir: Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Bhagwan!

‘MAURITUS, C’EST UN PLAISIR’ LOGO – PROJECT COST

(No. B/1052) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the new brand identity logo of Mauritius, “Mauritius, C’est un Plaisir”, he will state –

- (a) the cost of the project and
- (b) if he has received indications of the response thereto from professionals and the public.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, please accept my apologies for my late arrival. I thank the hon. Member for this question, which provides me an opportunity to deal with some issues raised by our branding exercise.

It is a popular misconception that branding is merely comprised of the creation of a logo and accompanying strap line. This is so because the logo and the strap line are the most visible elements of the strategy, while in fact these components of the Brand Strategy do not represent more than 5 % of the whole project.

Indeed the preparation of a brand strategy is a complex exercise and quite a long process. It entails various stages and involves substantial qualitative and quantitative research, both in Mauritius and overseas.

For our country branding exercise, we have been quite fortunate to have selected Mrs Fiona Gilmore of Acanchi Limited, a world renowned specialist in country branding, following an international tender exercise carried out by the Central Procurement Board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Central Procurement Board invited bids on 8 February 2008 from a short list of 15 firms with international experience in nation branding. Of these 8 firms submitted their bids to CPB.

Subsequently, the Central Procurement Board set up an independent Bid Evaluation Committee and approved the recommendations of the Bid Evaluation Committee to award the contract for the branding of Mauritius project.

Acanchi Ltd is a British company specialised in country branding with extensive know-how and experience in the field. It has an impressive track record having worked on similar assignments in various countries and regions namely Hong Kong, Bahrain,

Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Wales, Northern Ireland; Belfast; Zambia; Isle of Man, the Blue Mountains of Australia; and we understand that the firm is presently elaborating the brand strategy for Rwanda and Israel.

The total cost of the project as entrusted to Acanchi Ltd is Rs38.9m. The House will note that the highest bid amounted to Rs78.6 m.

The brand exercise consisted of four stages namely:

- i. Internal & external exploratory research
- ii. Development of hypothetical concepts
- iii. Research and exploration of the hypothetical concepts
- iv. Finalization of the brand proposition and brand positioning & sub-positioning strategies

Apart from the logo and the strap line, the Consultant has had to produce several other deliverables namely:

- i. Report on quantitative and qualitative research
- ii. Report on hypothetical positioning concepts
- iii. Photographic Country Portrait
- iv. Recommendations on brand proposition and umbrella positioning strategy.
- v. Report on Mauritius Brand Icons
- vi. Report on Micro initiatives to inspire citizen advocacy
- vii. 3000 copies of Brand Blueprint
- viii. Visual Identity Guidelines
- ix. Seal of quality – Made in Mauritius, Made with care
- x. Development of a website
- xi. Marketing Plan
- xii. Cascade and launch workshops

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, elaborating a country brand strategy is an expensive exercise, best left to specialists. For example, Australia has earmarked a budget of 20 million dollars to re-brand the country, out of which 4 million dollars is formal branding exercise. India will, Mr Speaker, Sir, spend USD69 this year alone to support the Incredible India brand. For Canada, just for its seal of quality, the country has earmarked 32 million dollars.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, concerning the signature logo, using Pieter Both mountain as an icon, I note with that this has been well

accepted. However, in regard to the strap line, there has been some negative comments in the media. These comments are far from unusual and are expected. They are often the result of misunderstanding of the strategic intent of the branding process and misconception as to the nature of a branding exercise.

I would like to mention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the case of the most successful country brands worldwide, namely Incredible India. When it was launched in 2002, it was subject of severe and persistent criticisms. It is known today in 2009, but 7 years later, and despite its success, vehement criticisms are still being made towards Incredible India. The same can be said for the Truly Asia strap line for Malaysia.

Similarly, in the case of South Africa which has come up with 'it's possible' as strap line, it has also been subject to severe criticisms. In the travel trade, for instance, the question is being asked whether it is possible to travel safely in the country after the spate of violence.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, any judgment based on taste will bring about both positive and negative comments and it is normal in these circumstances to receive some negative comments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, however, we have had very positive feedback from the industry stakeholders as well as from the public. I note with great pleasure that firms and Mauritians generally are adopting the new visual identity in their day-to-day conversations and activities.

Many local firms have been enthusiastic about the new logo and strap line and have contacted my Ministry to request permission for the use of the logo.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to make mention that the Director Philately of CASCO Ltd, UK, (formerly known as CROWN AGENTS who are the international specialists in stamps designing and production for around more than 50 countries around the world) has sent a special note of appreciation for Mauritius brand identity logo which he considers to be particularly eye-catching.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to inform the House, that Fiona Gilmore, Chairperson of Acanchi Ltd., after taking cognizance of the comments made in the press, has responded by stating that she strongly believes that "*C'est un plaisir*" is the most appropriate

strap line in that it fully embodies the essence of the brand strategy, and the core values underlying Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Acanchi has put forward a number of arguments justifying the rationale behind the proposal that “*C’est un plaisir*” be used as strap line as follows –

- The French strap line with the English title, Mauritius, depicts the multi-cultural and multi-linguistic ability of the people.
- “*C’est un plaisir*” is in itself multi-faceted in that at a simple level, it is an expression of service that comes at the end of having given or done something. But it is also the feeling that investors and visitors in Mauritius have expressed. That “it is a pleasure” to deal with Mauritians either through a call centre, or in a hotel or shop, or to deal with professionals in our offshore sector. That “it is a pleasure” for foreigners to invest and to reside in Mauritius, for example, witness the success of the Integrated resort scheme.

“*C’est un plaisir*” is, therefore, easily applied to all sectors of the economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, finally the Branding of Mauritius project has potential to generate substantial socio-economic benefits. However, it is a long term investment and will certainly bring concrete results in the future.

However, we are only at the beginning of our journey and we should allow the Brand values to percolate through the population.

This initiative is of national interest and the branding of a nation does not belong to a Government or to a political party.

I agree that not everything in Mauritius “*c’est un plaisir*”. There are many areas where improvements are necessary. The strap line “*c’est un plaisir*” not only reflects the core values and the personality of the Mauritian nation but it is also partly aspirational and should be accepted on that basis. It is a commitment to a better future and the belief that we can make our country, a place that we can be proud of.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this has cost nearly Rs40 m. of taxpayers money...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bhagwan: *Cela a été un mauvais départ.* We are not against branding. I will ask the hon. Minister what was the cost of that launching ceremony at Citadel and whether that was well organised, because from our opinion there was a lot of *gâchis, qui a été mal répercuté au niveau international. Je veux savoir quelles ont été les répercussions au niveau des professionnels du secteur touristique. Il y a des firmes locales dont les compétences n'ont pas été requises.*

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as local firms are concerned, we have asked local advertising companies to create partnerships, with overseas potential bidders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the second thing is that, in fact, it is quite usual to have criticisms. I have taken examples of the best brands. It will always give rise to criticisms, to attacks. This is part of life and part of branding.

Thirdly, actually, they are the best people in the branding business. We can all have our opinion. This lady is a specialist, and that's her role. This is what she does for so many countries. They are happy...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can understand that if there are problems, the Opposition would act as an Opposition. But they just want to criticise. It does not matter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

(Interruptions)

To understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, what makes Mauritius tick, there is another research which is in the brand book. This brand book will be available everywhere and to understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, what makes Mauritius tick, how to make it good, how to improve and also produce...

(Interruptions)

Of course, it is easy to criticise! *L'art est difficile, la critique facile!* The Opposition, the then Government when they were saying that during Budget they were going to do the branding exercise. Zero! Nothing came out of it!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: The figure of Rs40 m. is a lot of money! Does that include all the money that went into branding exercise, that is, authorities, parastatals everybody that put in money? Does that figure include all expenditure that went into this?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the figure is the amount paid to Acanchi.

Mr Bérenger: The amount paid, but has Government looked into how much money has been put by the Local Authority, by the Ministry, by other bodies in the branding exercise?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the branding exercise concerned only what has been paid to Acanchi. There is also the salary of the coordinator.

Mr Bérenger: It is clear that this has failed – it is not too late. *Il faut revoir* the whole copy. The best commentator, before going further asked Government *de revoir sa copie*. Can I ask whether Government *est en train de revoir sa copie* concerning this branding exercise?

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I would not accept that! It is normal that the hon. Leader of the Opposition should say that. We have a lot of demands from the private sector to use the logo, in fact, because we are managing the logo at the moment. If you were to go on the internet, you will see that a lot of people are using “*C’est un plaisir*” as their profiles. I must say that people who live outside Mauritius love the logo more than us.

Mr Bhagwan: I have a question about the cost of this launching ceremony. It is not clear. Has that firm subcontracted work to the local Mauritian community?

Mr X. L. Duval: I can’t understand the hon. Member. As far as I know...

(Interruptions)

Mr Guimbeau: According to my information, the final logo has been modified in the last minute in Mauritius. Can the hon. Minister confirm this information?

Mr X. L. Duval: There are some arguments as to the colour scheme, not the logo, but the signature itself. We are talking about two things. One is the signature “Mauritius, Pieter Both”, then there is the colour scheme, the colour range and then there is the strap line. The colour range was finalised at the last minute.

Mr Guimbeau: Was it found there or was it modified here?

Mr X. L. Duval: The wording is from Acanchi.

Mrs Perrier: Le ministre est d'accord avec moi que la politique du gouvernement est de promouvoir une clientèle touristique haut de gamme. Est-ce qu'il pense vraiment qu'on peut enfermer les richesses de l'île Maurice dans le mot 'plaisir' - 'Maurice est un plaisir' ? 'Plaisir', d'après le dictionnaire, signifie euphorie, satisfaction, bien-être, contentement, libido, désir, planer, savourer, volupté, jouissance. Est-ce que ce logo s'adresse vraiment à cette clientèle ? Est-ce que ce n'est pas réductif et équivoque?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, had I wanted to choose the logo myself, I would have done it, I would not have called on specialists to do it, but they have provided the justification for it in that '*C'est un Plaisir*' reflects a generosity of spirit of Mauritians. When you say "thank you" to somebody anywhere in a shop, in a hotel, the person would say *c'est un plaisir*. This is part of it. It is a service quality which transcends all whether it is a call centre, whether, in fact, you are addressing yourself to a lawyer or whatever. This is it. And the second part is the fact that international investors feel that, once they have dealt with Mauritians, they are actually pleased with Mauritius. These are the two things. One is the service and the other one is the business and visitor satisfaction. I mean we can all have fun, it is fine, it is all right. This is what they are here for I suppose. But let's think of branding a country like Mauritius. You have all the religions and cultures in the world. You don't have only tourism like Maldives or Seychelles, but you have seafood, textiles, sugar, call centres and banking. You have everything. It is such a complex country. It is not that easy to say one little thing. This strap line is what we are talking about and it is only the strap line that everybody is complaining about. Nobody is complaining about the brand book or Mauritius logo.

If we get back to the strap line itself, Mr Speaker, Sir, it has to reflect all these things. It has to work for the industry, for the offshore sector as it has to work for tourism. It is easy to say this or the other, but when you look at the whole complexity of Mauritius, you will find that branding a country like Mauritius is far more difficult than many other countries.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether what was proposed to him was only one slogan or did he have to make a choice out of several?

Mr X. L. Duval: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the firm Acanchi came up with that on about 10 or 12 of the short list itself – you are talking about the slogan – but they themselves chose “*C’est un Plaisir*”.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would perhaps like to ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister something about the strap line itself. It is actually in two languages. Is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister using ‘Mauritius’ as an English word and “*C’est un Plaisir*” as a French phrase? Are we, therefore, to understand that the strap line nearly targets only francophone countries or otherwise? What is the rationale behind those two?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I talked about religions and also of languages. We speak so many languages. They wanted to reflect the fact that Mauritius is bilingual and so they chose ‘Mauritius’ and the French, but you can use the logo without the strap line or you can use it in the English version “It is a pleasure”, but the recommended version is the French strap line.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that it is very difficult to capture the essence of Mauritius in a few words, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether we can have a list of the proposals which were made among which “*C’est un plaisir*” has been chosen?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is from Acanchi. I’ll ask them if there is. I am not going to present myself as an expert in branding, otherwise I would not have paid Rs40 m. to somebody else and we would have done it in our Ministry. At the same time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to rely on specialist, otherwise what is the point of taking a specialist. There is no point in it if we don’t rely on what a specialist does. She has done it for about 20 countries before. We’ll try it and if it really doesn’t work – and I hope everybody plays the game. It is much easier to destroy something than it is to create a brand. A brand is not created like that. It has to be created and, hopefully, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we’ll get the whole nation and also the Opposition on this. We are talking about the Rs40 m. that we paid. I agree that’s a lot of money if you look at it in Mauritian rupees, but compared with Australia which will pay \$4 m. It is on their website. It is a fact that it costs a lot of money for branding, but it also can bring a lot of benefits. For instance, if our nation branding works well, we can make Mauritius a more pleasurable place to live in. That’s a great thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Not only to welcome our visitors, but for ourselves too. So, that’s a positive thing to look at. Let’s give it a try! It may not work out. I have no

crystal ball to see that it will work in six months or a year's time. I hope it works, because we have the courage to do it. So, let's see whether it works! At least, one thing I can see is that the logo itself is beautiful, the brand book is there, the photographic picture of Mauritius is there and I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from feedback that we have got from overseas the strap line will work - at least, for the market that we want it to work.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I insist on that question, because it is the Vice-Prime Minister who said that the firm concerned made a number of proposals and recommended the one that has been picked? Give us a chance! Give the number of proposals! Let's have a look at it! Because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Vice-Prime Minister has said, we'll see, it might not work. I think the country, having paid Rs40 m., is entitled to see the range of proposals.

Mr X. L. Duval: I have got no problem to give it to the hon. Leader of the Opposition personally or to the Leader of the MSM also. Because, in fact, I must say, to be frank, I did ask the lady to meet the Opposition Members to make sure that she could express herself. That wasn't possible, but she is coming back and she can meet and talk. It is up to them.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will speak to her, and she is happy with that. I have got no problem at all. I am happy that there is a question here; I am happy that there is a national exercise, I am happy that there is criticism. The worst thing was that there would have been nothing at all and people would just have ignored it. But we are going to continue in good faith, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to give a national brand to this country so that in this whole information world where people are swamped with information, little Mauritius can come up a little bit more on the radar.

The Deputy Speaker: I am happy to have given ample time for questions. So, we can go now to the next question. Hon. First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien!

CHILDREN DAY CARE CENTRES - REGISTRATION

(No. B/1054) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the children day care centres registered with her Ministry, she will state the number thereof, indicating the -

- (a) registration conditions, and
- (b) steps taken to ascertain that they operate according to acceptable standards.

(Withdrawn)

MON TRESOR MON DESERT SUGAR ESTATE – LINK ROAD – COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

(No. B/1056) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he is aware that the Mon Trésor Mon Désert Sugar Estate is the owner of the road linking the villages of Des Places and Carreau Esnouf and, if so, will he state if his Ministry intends to compulsorily acquire that portion of land to enable the tarring of the said road.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the road linking the villages of Des Places and Carreau Esnouf belongs to Mon Trésor Mon Désert Sugar Estate.

As I have indicated in my reply to PQ No. B/1048 my Ministry is empowered under the Land Acquisition Act to acquire lands for the implementation of Government projects.

In his reply on that same issue to PQ No. B/1025 in July 2008, the Minister of Environment and National Development stated that the procedures were underway to declare the abovementioned road public following which consideration would be given to its upgrading.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as at date, I have not received any formal request for acquisition of the abovementioned private road linking both villages.

Once a formal request is made to my Ministry, I will initiate acquisition procedures on a fast track basis. Subsequently, the portion of land will be vested in the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands to put it at the disposal of the Grand Port Savanne District Council for eventual tarring and maintenance.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House who actually should make the request with the Ministry for the compulsory acquisition of the land?

Dr. Kasenally: I don't make a request. Other Ministries make the request. The procedure is as follows: the parent Minister makes a request to my Ministry and before they do that they have to ensure that they have funds for implementing their project and then it goes through my planning division and the procedure is set in motion to acquire it either by negotiation or failing that by compulsory acquisition.

LA CONFIANCE, BEAU BASSIN – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/1057) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a football ground at La Confiance, Beau Bassin, he will state where matters stand, following the negotiations carried out with the Médine Sugar Estate.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that three *arpents* of land have already been acquired from the Medine Sugar Estates Company Ltd under the 800 *Arpents* Scheme for the construction of a football ground at La Confiance, Beau Bassin.

The land has been vested in the Ministry of Environment & National Development Unit for the construction of the football ground.

I have been further advised by the NDU that the project is estimated to cost Rs5 m. and that funds have already been earmarked by them in this financial year. Tenders are expected to be launched soon.

Mr Allet: M. le président, comme vous le savez, ce projet de La Confiance était *long overdue*. Depuis très longtemps, les jeunes des régions de Maingard, Dupérré et Dr. Reid avaient besoin d'un terrain de football. Etant donné que le projet est dans la phase de 2005-2010 et que nous sommes à la veille de 2010, est-ce que, d'après vous, on pourra avoir le terrain pendant la période où ce gouvernement est encore là, avant les élections?

Mr Ritoo: As the hon. Member knows, this project forms part of the 5-year plan of the NDU, 2005-2010. However, I'll impress upon my colleague, the hon. Minister of Environment and National Development Unit to give this matter urgency.

Mr Bhagwan: I refer to PQ B/214 concerning the same project which was replied on 06 September 2005 by hon. Bachoo, the then Minister of NDU. He replied that nearly Rs671,000 were spent for levelling of ground and the project was going to be implemented. Now, it is nearly four years and we are on the eve of the election. Now that the Minister of Youth and Sports is replying, can we have a firm commitment that this project will be implemented? Having it in a plan, four and a half years have elapsed, and we have a parliamentary question which was replied here.

Mr Ritoo: As I informed the hon. Member, I will impress upon my colleague, the hon. Minister of Environment and National Development Unit, to give this matter urgency.

CANOT – FOOTBALL GROUND - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1058) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a football ground at Canot, he will state where matters stand in relation to the negotiations being carried out with the Médine Sugar Estate.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that Government has already agreed to the acquisition of a plot of land to an extent of 3 Arpents at Canot from the Médine Sugar Estates Co. Ltd for the construction of a football ground.

The Land Conversion Unit of the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security has recommended the conversion of the site which is located near the residential area of Canot.

Besides, I am informed that the Ministry of Housing and Lands is liaising with the Médine Sugar Estates Co. Ltd for the Provision of an access road from the site to the Black River Road.

As soon as the issue regarding the access road is resolved, the Ministry of Housing and Lands will initiate action for the acquisition of the land which will ultimately be vested with my Ministry for the implementation of the project.

Mr Allet: Vu qu'on a échangé, à trois reprises, le terrain à Canot, j'aurais aimé demander au ministre s'il peut arranger une descente des lieux en tant que député de l'endroit avec ses officiers pour aller voir où cela se trouve.

Mr Ritoo: I have no objection.

MONT ROCHES/ BARKLY/CHEBEL BRANCH ROAD - EXTENSION

(No. B/1059) **Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if he will consider the advisability of extending the road leading from Mont Roches, Barkly, to the Chebel Branch Road.

Mr Bachoo: Sir, I am informed that the extension of the road from Mont Roches, Barkly to Chebel Branch Road is in the township of Beau-Bassin/Rose Hill. The access, which passes through the land belonging to Médine Sugar Estates, is a water-bound road of length 1.2km from Cyril Fanny football ground to Chebel Branch Road.

The project is estimated at Rs50m. and will require land acquisition. The Ministry of Local Government has been requested to consider the project in the next financial year.

Mr Allet: M. le président, étant donné que le propriétaire de Médine est très généreux quand le gouvernement demande des terrains pour le football et autres, il y a une grande demande des habitants de Mont Roches, Barkly, surtout qu'il y a un lieu de culte à Mont Roches qui est très demandé, est-ce que le ministre peut faire une demande à Médine ? Si je comprends bien, il y a un projet de développement dans cette région pour la propriété de Médine. Si on fait une demande, je suis sûr que Médine va nous aider.

Mr Bachoo: I'll try to approach the Sugar Estate, but I would like to inform the hon. Member that a link road will be constructed from the Police quarters of Belle Étoile to Chebel main road and for that purpose land acquisition is already on. I'll look into that.

Mr Bhagwan: Je ne veux pas être méchant, mais je veux savoir qui est le PPS de cette circonscription. Il y a eu tellement de changement. Je vous dis honnêtement, si vous me demandez qui est le PPS, je ne sais pas, je ne l'ai jamais vu. I am making a plea to the hon. Minister that after four and a half years, at the eve of the general election, people of Beau Bassin can see, at least, the face of the PPS who is paid from public funds.

(Interruptions)

BEAU BASSIN/PETITE RIVIERE – LOW COST HOUSING UNITS

(No. B/1060) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he is aware that there is a high demand for low cost housing units in the Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to information available from the NHDC, the demand for low cost housing across the whole island, as at 22 October 2009 stood at around 24,800. Furthermore, such demands seem to be higher along the Port Louis-Mahebourg corridor.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is true to say that there is a high demand for low cost housing in Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière. However, it is important to mention that there are equally other high demand areas, if not higher, for low cost housing across the island. I am sure everybody is aware of this. I am informed that 1930 applications for low cost housing units from families residing in Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière, have to date been registered at the NHDC, as follows -

Beau Bassin	1575
Petite Rivière	208
Richelieu	84
Albion	45
Gros Cailloux	18

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government has constructed 533 low cost housing on 6 sites across the island namely Bambous: 78; Chebel: 54; Henrietta: 156; Ville Noire: 70; Rivière des Anguilles: 91 and Rose Belle: 84.

The allocation of these housing units to eligible beneficiaries, including the 54 units at Chebel, will be completed by the end of this month. Furthermore, the contract for the construction of 550 low cost housing units over 11 sites, namely Petite Rivière: 36, Glen Park: 60, La Tour Koenig: 39, Camp Diable: 60, Plaine Magnien: 60, Grand Bel Air: 50, Britannia: 45, D'Épinay: 60, Cottage: 60, Calebasse: 60 and Roche Bois: 20 has already been awarded and works have already started.

This Government has, under the Integrated Social Development Project, carried out by the National Empowerment Foundation operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment, constructed some 198 housing units at La Valette, Bambous, to very low income family earners at a total cost of some Rs200 m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, demands for housing units are higher in regions when there is practically no land available for further housing development. Thanks to the vision of our Prime Minister, 2000 *arpents* of land are being made available to Government by the MSPA out of which 1000 *arpents* will be devoted to social housing projects. The hon. Member may wish to know that Chebel is one of the 12 sites already identified so far. Technicians of my Ministry are, in consultation with other stakeholders, finalising social housing project proposals.

Mr Allet: M. le président, je suis d'accord qu'on a construit 200 maisons à Chebel, mais est-ce que le ministre peut voir avec la NHDC et faire un *survey* ? Parce que quand on a construit des *low cost houses* et vous bougez les gens de la région où ils sont habitués- les enfants sont à l'école et ils travaillent dans la région - pour aller à Beau Vallon ou Rose Belle, cela change complètement leurs vies. Est-ce que le ministre peut envisager de faire un *survey* pour voir s'il y a un problème de terrain et s'il y a une demande de donner une priorité. Je suis sûr que le ministre des finances va nous aider.

Dr. Kasenally: We will never move people from Beau Bassin to far away. There is a policy decision. The *sine qua non* criteria to be eligible are that all applicants should be the owner of a house and applicants should have the repayment capacity for the purchase of the house. The monthly repayment should not exceed 25%. For the sake of transparency, eligible applicants are thereby earmarked to a point based system.

As far as the catchment area is concerned, inhabitants of the area where the construction is being carried out, score higher so that they get it.

As far as the catchment area is concerned, the inhabitants of the area where the construction is being carried out, score higher so that they get it. All people outside, for example, people from Rivière du Rempart cannot aspire to have social housing unit in Beau Bassin. We try, as far as possible, to get them nearer but we cannot build a house next door to where they are staying. You could have imagined the problems, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Soodun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister just mentioned 1000 acres of land. I would like to know where these 1000 acres of land are located.

Dr. Kasenally: 1000 acres have been given for social housing. In fact, I mentioned in my reply where they are about and it is all over Mauritius. I can give the details to the hon. Member afterwards.

Mrs Martin: The hon. Minister mentioned the catchment area as one of the priority criteria which make people eligible to obtain a housing unit. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he considers it fair for those who do not live in the catchment area, but who are also aspiring for a home where there is no construction being made in any catchment area where they live? They are members of the MHC and they respond to all the criteria except for the catchment area. Is it fair to them that they apply and they don't get the house?

Dr. Kasenally: The catchment area is in fact quite wide. I must point out that is not immediate; for example somebody living in Curepipe can aspire to come to Henrietta if no unit is available there. It is a bit flexible, but we do not want somebody from Mahebourg to come to Curepipe. That is why these portions of land are spread all over the island.

Mr Allet: M le président, quand mes mandants viennent me voir au sujet des maisons de la NDHC je trouve qu'ils sont très *confused* avec les officiers de la NHDC. Certains disent qu'il leur faut faire un versement de R100, 000 et d'autres disent que cela doit être R60, 000. Ce sont des gens pauvres qui ont beaucoup économisé et lorsqu'arrive le moment pour eux d'acquérir leur maison, on leur dit qu'il faut payer cash. Je peux vous dire que pour ces 57 maisons livrées récemment à Chebel, il y a eu beaucoup de problèmes. Je compte sur les bons offices du ministre et j'espère qu'à l'avenir on pourrait remédier à cela.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody is asked to pay cash. What happens in certain circumstances is that, as I have said, they should be able to make a deposit of at least 10%, it comes at about Rs50,000. What has happened recently is that some poor people have been having grant from non-governmental or charitable institutions which have been helping them. Nobody is compelled to pay cash. This information is erroneous. However, instead of going to the NHDC, I find that the hon. Member is very active these days in the problem of housing. I think the best thing to do is that he comes to my Ministry and I can have my officers to explain to him all the details about where the sites are so that he can help his *mandants*.

Mrs Martin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming back to my former question, does the Minister consider that normally all the housing units are constructed within the catchment areas where all the people who aspire for a home will be covered by the different catchment areas and, if so, can he say whether those persons who live closest or those who live furthest will have priority?

Dr. Kasenally: Those who live closer will have priority and that is why, as I have explained, it is not possible to have them in the immediate catchment area. Some people will have to make a movement about a couple of miles. As I explained, people from Curepipe are being considered for Henrietta and they will be considered for the new Glen Park social housing scheme.

Mrs Perrier: Le ministre vient de dire qu'il n'y a pas de *cash payment* à faire, mais est-ce qu'il est au courant vraiment que pour les dernières maisons livrées par la NHDC, ceux qui avaient le plus d'argent à déposer, c'est-à-dire, jusqu'à R100,000, avaient droit à ces maisons ? Est-ce que ces maisons n'ont pas été faites pour des personnes dont les salaires ne dépassent pas R7500 ?

Dr. Kasenally: In fact, it is between Rs7, 000 to Rs10, 000. Some people have been there for a very long time despite the fact that they are earning Rs7 000 or Rs10, 000. As I have said, there are relatives and these people have been saving and they are putting Rs100, 000 and NHDC cannot prevent them but, they still fall in the bracket of Rs7000 to Rs10, 000. These people are considered as anybody else. If somebody comes in and their relatives bring in more money, the NHDC considers them; it does not give them priority but considers them.

Mrs Perrier: Comme le nouveau député de la circonscription No. 20 vient de découvrir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Would you come to the point please, hon. Member!

Mrs Perrier: Pour les personnes qui ont R7, 500, je vois difficilement comment ils peuvent réunir R 100,000 dans le contexte économique actuel. On peut à peine joindre les deux bouts avec R7, 500 de salaire par mois parce que c'est le seuil de pauvreté qui a été identifié par le gouvernement lui-même.

Ma deuxième question concerne la réponse que le ministre a donnée par rapport à la liste, il n'y a aucune mention de la région de Rivière Noire. Or, à une question précédente de

l'année dernière, il avait été mentionné que pour le village de Rivière Noire seulement il y avait plus de 125 demandes de maison, or dans votre liste il n'y a aucun terrain alloué pour la région de Rivière Noire.

Dr. Kasenally: First of all, I will answer to the first question about the criteria of Rs100,000. The NHDC does not require that everybody pays Rs100, 000. The minimum is 10% and it is about Rs50, 000. Once they pay that, they are eligible and I think that there is a committee which meets and looks into this case. As far as Rivière Noire is concerned, I think we have constructed a fair amount of houses in the region of Bambous, some of the people can get it. As I said, there are 198 which the National Empowerment Fund has constructed and there are still some vacancies for which they can qualify if they make the appropriate application.

The Deputy Speaker: I will allow two last questions!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will come back to this question of deposit. Can the hon. Minister liaise with the officers of the NHDC because what happens in fact is that when the choice has to be made and a decision has to be taken, the NHDC gives priority to applicants who can afford more deposit and hardship cases where applicants who are very deserving and who can come up with a 10% deposit are excluded to their own disadvantage. It is only the applicants who can offer double the sum like Rs100, 000 are chosen. So, there is an injustice to deserving hardship cases even when they can offer the 10% because other applicants who can offer Rs100, 000 are chosen to the detriment of the deserving cases. This would seem to be the principle criteria.

Dr. Kasenally: No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, there is only 5% of the number of housing units which are allowable for people who can make extra deposit; the rest is according to the criteria of 10%, that is, Rs50, 000. Only 5% is in fact given. I am prepared to be transparent and equitable and lay on the Table of the House the list of people who have been given. We cannot satisfy everybody. I think there is pressure, there is counter pressure but, I, as Minister, have to ensure that there is transparency, equity and fair accountability, as far as these houses are concerned. It is very important, and I think that buying a house is perhaps the most expensive item for any couple anywhere, not only in Mauritius.

Mr Bérenger: It is a very serious matter; we are talking about social housing and equal opportunity, especially for those who do not have money. The hon. Minister said that the NHDC gives priority to those who can pay Rs100,000, but that they are all treated

equally. It cannot be both. Now, he has said 5% of the units - supposedly - are reserved for those who can pay. Will the hon. Minister agree that this is in total contradiction with the concept of social housing? Those most in need should get priority, and not those who can pay a Rs100,000/Rs150,000. Can I ask the hon. Minister when was that decision taken?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: When was that decision taken?

Dr. Kasenally: As I have said, these people who pay extra money have to satisfy the criteria. They should make a deposit of, at least 10%. But if somebody is poor, and his repayment capacity is limited, the minimum is 25%.

Mr Bérenger: When was that decision taken?

Dr. Kasenally: I think it was taken before I became Minister. I think it has been there for a long time. But, let me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please allow the hon. Minister to reply. Thank you.

Dr. Kasenally: It is not the exclusion of those who deserve it. It is because the NHDC has to accept. As I have said, people are helping their relatives to buy, but they still fall under the criteria. If they do not satisfy the criteria, they will not be given a house.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question! Hon. Allet.

Mr Allet: Etant donné que ces gens pauvres ne sont pas vraiment au courant des critères pour l'acquisition d'une maison NHDC, je voudrais demander au ministre de demander à la NHDC s'il serait possible de faire une campagne d'explication à travers la radio - maintenant, nous avons plusieurs radios - ou à travers la télévision, afin que cette couche de la population, ces pauvres, puissent savoir ce qu'il en est.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the NHDC staff does interview each and every applicant, telling them exactly what are their rights and what are the procedures.

**PRE-PRIMARY/PRIMARY/SECONDARY/TERTIARY – SCHOOLING
RATE**

(No. B/1061) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether he will state the schooling rate at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels respectively, indicating the measures taken as at to date to enforce compulsory education.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the schooling rate is generally measured by the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), which is the proportion of enrolment at a given level (i.e. pre-primary, primary, secondary or tertiary) to the population of that corresponding school age. The GER for 2008 is as follows; I am adding pre-primary although the question was not put -

- pre-primary level - 94%
- primary level including repeaters - 101%
- secondary level, covering academic and pre-vocational - 74 %
- tertiary level - 41%

Education is compulsory up to the age of 16. However, it is also a fact that, while we have almost 100% enrolment at the primary level, it is in the secondary sub-sector that a drop-out is significantly seen. It must be kept in view that compelling parents by legal means to keep their wards in schools will imply the imposition of fines upon parents who may already be low-income earners. Consequently, enforcement of legal action will unduly penalise parents. However, increased motivation and incentivisation would yield better dividends than the enforcement of the law.

It is in this context that my Ministry has initiated, in collaboration with other institutions, namely the National Empowerment Foundation and IVTB, a series of measures, with a view to facilitating and increasing access to education -

- (i) Under the Eradication of Absolute Poverty (EAP) Programme, some 500 children have been identified and admitted to pre-primary schools. This has an incidence on their transition to primary level.
- (ii) The Second Chance Programme, currently being implemented by the IVTB in Mauritius and Rodrigues, has extended the possibility for youngsters below the age of 21 and who are not attending any formal training or are not in full time employment, to be equipped to participate in an economic activity. This

training programme covers life skills management, basic literacy and numeracy, and advanced literacy and numeracy.

- (iii) Under the Special Needs Education Programme, my Ministry is also keen on the mainstreaming of many of those children who do not attend school because of physical impairments of some kind. This is also part of the inclusive education process. Hence, relevant technological support as well as infrastructural additions, in a move towards discouraging those with a disability from dropping out of school.

Finally, I would like to inform the House that, as part of the computerisation process of the Ministry, we are developing the School Administration and Management System (SAMS) which will facilitate, *inter alia*, the tracking of learners as well as those dropping out at the grass root level.

The following measures are also being taken to increase the enrolment rate at the tertiary level -

- (i) providing a greater diversity of programmes;
- (ii) providing opportunities for students who do not have 2 'A' levels to enroll for higher education through foundation programmes;
- (iii) setting up of the Open University of Mauritius;
- (iv) creation of more infrastructure to accommodate students;
- (v) increasing enrolment of publicly-funded tertiary education institutions, and
- (vi) establishment of brand name overseas institutions or their affiliates/centres/branches in Mauritius.

However, I wish to point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, that, while we are making every effort to increase access at tertiary level, yet, we are committed towards maintaining a quality education at that level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is also to be noted that the measures introduced in the last two Budgets of this Government, namely the provision of scholarships and Government Guaranteed Loans under the Human Resource Knowledge and Arts Development Fund, have enabled the democratisation of access to tertiary education.

The policy adopted by this Government for the maintenance of free education, free transport facilities and supplementary food programme, as well as provision of textbooks for needy students, are all contributing towards increasing enrolment levels.

Mr Dowarkasing: I thank the hon. Minister for his reply. Let me come first to the primary sector. The hon. Minister has stated that the percentage is 101%, including the repeaters. Can we know the percentage without the repeaters?

Dr. Bunwaree: It is between 98 and 100; more towards 100 than towards 98. But as for the exact figure is concerned, we'll have to look into it and come to the House.

Mr Dowarkasing: Therefore, my next question is: if we retain the figures of 98 or 100, it means that we have more than 4% to 5 % of the children who are attending pre-primary and getting direct access to primary education. Has something been done in that area?

Dr. Bunwaree: I mentioned a list of measures that are being taken. In fact, we believe it is a very important thing at all levels, be it pre-primary, primary and secondary. But, according to us, the most important part is at pre-primary and tertiary.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just want to know from the hon. Minister whether any special measures have been taken to address the issue in the poverty and extreme poverty zone, where eventually we can see children loitering on the streets during daytime and not attending schools.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, this is what I have mentioned. The EAP Programme is, in fact, that. One difficulty is to identify, especially at pre-primary level, where are those children. As the hon. Member is saying, we do find children here and there. We are even using the possibility of surveying through the children who are in primary and secondary schools, asking them who are the younger children who could be in their residence and who are not attending schools. A survey is being carried out, so that we can identify them. But we have all the possibilities to get them on track and get them to school, provided we know. I appeal to all Members of the House and all stakeholders to try to help us to identify these children. In many cases, they are not identified.

Mr Dowarkasing: I am just putting this question because I think it is very important. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for years - and the hon. Minister will agree with me - the schooling rate at the primary level has remained more or less 94%-95%. It goes around an average percentage. We are still missing 6% of children into our primary schools and that has gone for years. If you go for statistics you will see for 5, 6, 7 or even more years this situation is prevailing. This means that maybe the measures we are taking are not addressing the issue.

Could we know what new measures can be envisaged in order to get everybody on the school bench?

Dr. Bunwaree: I beg to differ, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I explained that we are giving the gross enrolment ratio. But if I take the enrolment at pre-primary age 3 and 4 years, in 2004-2005, for example, it was 84.9% and in 2009, it is 91%. So, we have improved significantly and we are going to continue to improve. We have taken certain measures, we are going to continue along these lines.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The Minister has just mentioned with regard to the tertiary sector the Government Guaranteed Loan. Can he say up to now, from the time this scheme has been put in place, how many have benefited from this Government Guaranteed Loan?

Dr. Bunwaree: I have already answered to this question previously, but I don't have the figure. But I did mention that for the loans, people must come forward to apply for the loans. We are trying to mediatise further so that people be aware that this facility exists.

Mr Guinness: With regard to the policy of constructing pre-primary classes in the premises of primary schools, has this been stopped or are we going ahead with that? I don't hear any pre-primary classes being constructed in the premises of primary schools.

Dr. Bunwaree: We are going forward, but there is a survey which is done regularly. One thing I can say is that we have not stopped, but we have to do it judiciously.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question from the hon. Third Member of Curepipe and Midlands!

Mr Dowarkasing: Thank you, Sir. From his reply the hon. Minister has stated that he does not favour the enforcement of the law. May I know from the hon. Minister whether any parent has been taken to court due to the fact that they are not sending their children to school?

Dr. Bunwaree: Not to my knowledge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

SUGAR INSURANCE PENSION FUND - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1063) Mr S. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Sugar Insurance Pension Fund, commonly known as the Commarmond Fund, he will state the names of the beneficiaries thereof, indicating the amount of money standing in the Fund as at to date.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the Sugar Industry Pension Fund.

In this respect, I wish to refer the House to the reply to PQ B/771 given by my colleague, the then Minister-in-charge of Finance.

As stated in that reply, although the Pension Fund was established under the Sugar Industry Pensions Fund Act 1955, it is a purely private initiative. It was established to provide financial benefits to contributing members being employees of the sugar industry or directly concerned with the sugar industry and to the heirs of those employees. Such benefits are as those approved by the Board.

I am informed that the management of the Fund's assets is vested with a management company which is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Fund.

Furthermore, as it is a private Pension Fund, it would not be appropriate to disclose the names of its beneficiaries. However, the 2008 Annual Report of the Sugar Industry Pension Fund Board gives a five year summary on its financial performance, including contributions received from its members. In this respect, the Report indicates that, as at 31 December 2008, it had 1,570 contributing members as opposed to 3,460 three years earlier on. I am also informed that the beneficiaries are pensioners and contributing members in the category of staff, artisans and labourers.

As per its financial statements ending 31 December 2008, the net assets of the Fund available for benefits amounted to Rs 3.4 billion.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister of Finance when an actuary exercised last done to look into the long term viability of the Fund?

Dr. Sithanen: Usually it is done every five years, but what I understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that, because of the extreme volatility that has happened in the world financial market, they have had one done every year to ascertain regularly its fund value and determine if it can honour its obligation. This is the information that I have.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I remember the last time I put the question to the Minister of Finance concerning the end-of-year bonus in the case of the beneficiaries of this Fund whereby for this end of year they will not be paid end-of-year bonus, and I even asked the Minister to look into the possibility of intervening financially since at that time we

are talking of stimulus package. If in this case we can help at least the Fund to pay these beneficiaries their end-of-year bonus.

Dr. Sithanen: This is a private Fund. Second, they give a bonus which is not a thirteen-month. It is an end-of-year bonus which is related to the financial performance of the Fund. I inquired vis-à-vis the Fund and I am told that for this year they lost money. They lost money for a very simple reason. All Pension Funds in the world probably have lost money because part of it is in bond, part of it is in equity and part of it is in bank deposit and in bank deposit interest rates have come down, for equity the price has come down and for the bonds also the market has been quite volatile. So, this is the main reason that they have given, that they are not in a position to pay a bonus, but should the situation improve, obviously they will consider it.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table had been advised that PQs B/1068, B/1070, B/1074, B/1075, B/1077 and B/1080 have been withdrawn. Next question please!

LE RÉDUIT - RAIN WATER DRAINAGE SYSTEM

(No. B/1064) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware of the problems being caused by the absence of a rain water drainage system at Le Réduit, and if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the problems of absence of rain water drainage system at Reduit which was brought to my attention by hon. Suren Dayal and subsequently by hon. Jayen Cuttaree.

A contract for resurfacing and upgrading works along Soobramaney Avenue, Réduit, has been awarded on 23 of October 2009 and works are expected to start soon. I am informed that the road works are expected to alleviate and solve the drain problem.

Another drain project along Soobiah Avenue, Réduit is being designed by the Consultant of the National Development Unit. Once all the clearances and way leave issues have been cleared with the Authorities concerned, the contract for the execution of the project shall be allocated forthwith.

Mr Dayal: Can I ask the hon. Minister if he can state to the House the estimated cost of the project and when it is estimated to be completed?

Mr Bundhoo: The estimated cost of the project is almost half a million rupees. The started date is scheduled somewhere around 05 November this year and God willing, climate being in our favour, it should be around 20 December 2009.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10(2)

The Deputy Prime Minister: 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.

Dr. Sithanen rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE LABOUR WELFARE FUND

– FACT FINDING COMMITTEE

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Mr J. F. Chaumière): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the context of the reply I made to PQ No. B/989 on Tuesday last on the subject of the Fact Finding Committee set up by the Board of the Export Processing Zone Labour Welfare Fund (EPZLWF) to establish the facts regarding allegations of irregularities at the Fund, the hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River and the Third Member for Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East made mention of a first committee chaired by the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund Board member representing the Ministry of Industry to carry out the same inquiry. I undertook to look into the matter.

I wish to inform the House that the only inquiry carried out into the allegations of irregularities mentioned earlier was through the Independent Fact Finding Committee set up in May this year. There was no previous inquiry on these allegations.

The earlier Committee chaired by the representative of the Ministry of Industry to which reference was made by the hon. Members is, in fact, an *ad hoc* Committee set up by the Board in 2007 to look into representations made by another officer of the Fund regarding, essentially, the payment of certain allowances to him. That Committee consisted exclusively of Board members and comprised, besides the Chairperson, one member representing employers and two members representing workers. The Chairperson of that Committee, Mr

Moolaye, as mentioned by the hon. Members, and one of the two representatives of workers, namely Mr Atma Shanto, are no longer members of the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund Board following its reconstitution in January this year.

However, I am informed that the report of this *ad hoc* Committee is being finalised and will be submitted shortly to the Board.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the Trade (Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Measures Bill) (No. XVIII of 2009) was read a first time.

At 4.15 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.55 p.m with Mr Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Second Reading

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Mauritius Land Transport Authority Bill (No. XIV of 2009).

Question again proposed.

Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am very honoured to take the floor on this very important piece of legislation as, in fact, announced by the hon. Minister who introduced the Bill in the House. I think he is right. It is a very, very important piece of legislation, and we have also to see what has been done elsewhere. In fact, there is the Land Transport Authority in Singapore, which has done an excellent piece of work and helped to shape modern Singapore.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question is: what is the Bill intended to provide the legislative framework for? It is intended to provide the legislative framework for a huge task, which is the shaping of Mauritius of 2050 and beyond. I will consider, first of all, the town and country planning aspect of it, that is, infrastructure, land use, and I will consider, in the second part of my speech, the legal implications.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the number of vehicles in our country today is about 350,000. Out of these, about 80,000 private cars come to Port Louis from the upper Plaines Wilhems every day. In fact, I have gone through the reports of Halcrow and Richmond, and I am quoting some of the figures which have been mentioned there. There are about 70,000 to 80,000 private cars and, if they are carrying two persons, it means that they are carrying 150,000 people every day.

The rate of growth, as mentioned by my colleague, hon. Dowarkasing, is I think about 4% every year, and the number of households in Mauritius is 350,000. What is the degree of penetration of private cars per household, if you were to take about 100,000 private cars? It means that a third of households in Mauritius have, at least, one car. What is the aspiration of the Mauritian household, just like the aspiration of any other household elsewhere? It's to have a private car. It is a question of status, but it is also a question of facility and practicality. That is, it is the car which has shaped the town and country planning rationale of most cities in the world. Cities are designed with the rationale of the car. If we have about 100,000 cars today, in 2050, it would not be a surprise if the number of private cars would have doubled by then. These are the figures we have to consider when we see that we are setting up an authority to handle these problems and these challenges. The number of accidents in Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is 13,000, which is about 1,000 per month, about 30 per day, which is more than one every hour. We have one of the highest per capita rates of accident in the world.

Let me also continue with the other figures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The number of casualties is 160 deaths, that is, about 14 per month, one every two days in Mauritius. The cost of accident in Mauritius is Rs4 billion. I asked a question, and the Deputy Prime Minister, who was then the Minister of Public Infrastructure, put it at Rs4 billion. The private sector did a survey, and put the cost of congestion at Rs4 billion. These are the figures which, in fact, reflect the Mauritian reality. To this, I am going to add that Government is spending, as subsidy, about Rs700 m. in the free public transport for students and the elderly, and about Rs600 m. for the Bus Recovery Fund, if my figures are right. These are the figures we have to deal with. But another figure, which is staggering, is that, for the next 50 years, we may have to spend about Rs60 billion to Rs70 billion to shape up Mauritius, to give it the infrastructure that we need as a modern country. This authority that we are setting up today has this huge challenge and formidable task to shape this, and we have also a certificate of urgency.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we design cities with the rationale of the car, we want to have the car but, at the same time, it's a contradiction, because when we design a city with a car, it is always at the expense of the inhabitants of the city. If you take New York, Paris, Mauritius or Port Louis, we never have enough parking space. We never have enough parking space in any modern city. So, what do we do? Do we continue with the rationale of the car or not? If we continue with the rationale of the car, we have to design the city according to the car.

Now, let's imagine Mauritius in 2050! Mauritius in 2050, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will have a conurbation of more than a half million people starting from Curepipe coming to may be Pamplemousses and, on both sides of the motorway, you will have huge skyscrapers, business parks, cyber cities, shopping malls. From Phoenix to Pont Colville Deverell, we are having a shopping area, because Bagatelle Shopping Mall and the motor city will put an end to the land which was available. So, we are having hyper markets and shopping malls starting from Phoenix. When Le Continent was built as the first commercial hypermarket, we never thought what was going to happen. So, we have Le Continent, Phoenix Les Halles, Shoprite, then there will be Bagatelle and Highlands City. We can already imagine what is going to happen in the next ten, fifteen years: huge shopping conurbations, starting with Phoenix reaching the river, that is, the bridge, because you can't go beyond the bridge. Once you have gone beyond the bridge at Soreze you start again with the urban new development, but this time you are going to have not a shopping mall, but maybe the car warehouses and, maybe, some of the big companies would have already re-located. This is the Mauritius we are shaping.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me give you another image. Can you imagine, tomorrow, the whole of Desforges Street exclusively allocated for pedestrians, with shopping arcades, with people walking, enjoying themselves just like in any other city today? If you go to Bordeaux there is la rue Sainte Catherine, if you go to Vienna, there is this wonderful mall where the city has been given back *aux habitants, aux citoyens*. I am coming to Réunion in a moment. Let us imagine Chaussée Street! I had been thinking about this and I have even proposed this idea to the CP, to just start it as a pilot pedestrian street where People can walk, where you have shops, just like in any other city. That is where I come again with this idea of the rational of the car. If you go with the rational of the car you are lost, because you will never be able to provide the parking and people will always want the car to come at the doorstep of the bank, at the doorstep of his place of work, at the doorstep of the Ministry where he works because *nous sommes l'otage de l'automobile. C'est pourquoi l'urbanisme moderne ne devrait pas être conçu en fonction de l'automobile dans la ville mais en fonction de l'automobile en dehors de la ville*. Now, when there will be the Bagatelle Shopping Mall, what is going to happen? You will have to have the connection from the motorway to the Bagatelle Shopping Mall and this has not been catered for, because we only designed the motorway. Now, I come to Highlands. Highlands *sera une ville futuriste avec un grand shopping mall, avec des bureaux, etc.* So, the road system, the road infrastructure will shape the making of modern Mauritius.

From Mahebourg to Curepipe as well, along the motorway, you are going to have major urban development and already out of Port Louis towards the north we have already reached the roundabout of Terre Rouge, and we are reaching Pamplemousses in this huge urban development. So, this is what is going to happen to Mauritius in the years to come, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Now, what is going to happen in fact? We are going to become an island city with a certain number of town centres, shopping malls with 1.5 or 1.6 million people. We are going to have fast property development; first urban development and first increase in the number of vehicles. I mention the new city of Highlands. So, what do we do, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once we have this Mauritius of 2050? We need a highway from Mahebourg to Grand Bay, that is, a North/South fast lane.

(Interruptions)

We are not going to have a debate on the definition of motor way. In fact, my colleague and I were talking about this. A motorway must have a lane where any vehicle which has an accident or any problem for that matter, can be put on the side so that the motor way lane would always be free. That is the definition of a motorway and we don't have any in Mauritius. In fact, that is not the problem. What I am saying is that we need a North/South fast motorway now. We need the East/West connector. Imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, driving a car from GRSE to Flic en Flac! Imagine the journey today: from GRSE you go to Flacq, from Flacq you go to Quartier Militaire, Quatre-Bornes, Bambous, then you go to Flic en Flac! It is a two-hour or a one and a half hour journey and on the bird's eye it is only 30 km. This is what actually we are doing, but we can't continue with this. We need this North/South fast lane and the East/West connector.

(Interruptions)

I totally agree with the hon. Minister but we have to do this fast because the major development that we have had in Mauritius in the last 20 years have helped us to reach a stage that whether it comes to road infrastructure, port facilities, airport facilities or utilities, we no longer can provide for Mauritius of today, even less for Mauritius of 2020 and 2050.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have another major problem, that is, the coastal road. All the roads are very narrow, with no pavements, no drains. *Le piéton n'a pas de place sur les routes Mauriciennes!* So, this is what is going to happen in the shaping of modern Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we see that the aspiration of the modern household is to have a car. But, one should know when to use the car and when not to use it. This is what Singapore has done successfully, that is, when to know when the household is to use the car

and when not to, where he is going by car and where he is not. That's when you know the difference insofar as the role of the public transport is concerned.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the issue of the light rail or the bus way has been with us for the last 20 years. All Governments have studied and have tried to do what they could. In 1995, the outgoing Government was very near in implementing it. I remember hon. Jadoo, the then Minister, mentioned this and it was about Rs4 billion in 1995. Then we had a certain number of studies from 2000 to 2005. We also tried to do all sorts of studies, the MSM-MMM Government, and now, from 2006 to 2009 we are still here.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question is: will the average Mauritian leave the car for a better bus facility or will he leave the car for a modern light rail system which will shape modern Mauritius with the whole concept of what we have said at the MSM, the whole concept of the duty-free and at each stop you are going to have a modern city, a nucleus, where buses, vehicles, traffic, trade, shopping, all will convert with this one light rail system?

I have gone through the Richmond report which was laid on 28 September 2006. I would like to say one thing about this. The impression that I have when I go through this report is that instead of analysing objectively the two options and coming to a conclusion, is that they came to a conclusion and then they were trying to find ways and means of saying what was weak in the LRT and what was strong in the bus lane. I think that is the concept of the report. But, this is not what has to be done.

There is one element which has not been factored in this. In all the business plans about the light rail, we have never considered the possibility of a subsidy of Government. If we had considered this option, the business plan would have been totally different. In 2005, the Government decided to give free public transport to the elderly and the students to the tune of about Rs600 m. to Rs700 m. If you inject this in the business plan of the LRT, the whole thing changes dramatically. This is something which we, the MSM/MMM Government, did not do because, at that point in time, in all the studies that we had with the World Bank and all the consultants, the issue was that the LRT should be operational and financially viable on its own. But when you put this element of free transport of Rs700 m. which the Government is injecting every year, the whole thing changes. *Tout devient possible parce que quelque soit le gouvernement d'aujourd'hui ou de demain, il ne pourra pas enlever le transport gratuit pour les étudiants et les personnes âgées. Ce serait politiquement trop lourd de conséquences.*

So, this is another element that we can inject, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When I come back to the Authority - and I go to the Schedule - it mentions, in fact, that projects under the

Road Development, the code “Congestion Programme Fund” will have the Bus Rapid Transit System which is costing Rs8 billion. The East/West Connector, the Harbour Bridge, the Ring Road will cost Rs6 billion and there is then the Dream Bridge. So, the whole sum was about Rs22 billion. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, I am saying aloud the proposal of the MSM. If you factor in the subsidy of the Government and we have another business plan, then, the Light Rail System becomes the natural option. Once you have done that, along this conurbation which I have defined earlier, from the coming new Bagatelle shopping mall to what we already have, from the development that we are going to see at Sorèze, if we factor in this Rs600 m. or Rs700 m., then the light rail becomes the obvious option. I would like this Road Congestion Programme to review this. This is the position of the MSM. Once you have done that and you have done the Verdun/Terre Rouge link road which will allow us to move from the Upper Plaine Wilhems to the north without passing through Port Louis, you can imagine people who have flown in by Air France for 12 hours, landing at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning and hitting the traffic when going north. You can imagine this! This is one example to show the problems that we are facing. Once we have this light rail and the Verdun/Terre Rouge link road, we would then have to have one option, either a tunnel *sous le port* or a dream bridge, and I think then we would not be needing the ring road because we won't need the *rocade, c'est-à-dire la route périphérique qui évite une ville, qui permet de sortir d'une ville pour aller vers une autre*. This can be done with the same amount of money. This budget of Rs22 billion can remain the same. It is a question of priorities. I would like this Road Decongestion Programme and the Land Transport Authority to handle this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me come to a certain number of other comments! The fact that we are creating this mammoth organisation, it is huge, the reasons which have been put forward that we have duplication, a lot of people are working in different organisations, we have delay in coordination and it is a haphazard flow of responsibilities amongst those who handle the security, the licensing, and the motorway traffic and that this Authority will be able to have a coordinated approach. These are the reasons which have been put forward and which also explain the success of Singapore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But when we do this, such a huge organisation and the huge sums which are going to be involved, I think for about Rs50 billion to Rs60 billion in the years to come, we need issues like accountability, transparency, good governance and efficient management to be addressed. Just imagine, I am going to give one example. We have all lived the whole saga of the Euro tunnel. It has been one of the worst financial disasters, but also a project which, because of the resilience of the companies which

came one after the other and because of the political will on both sides of the channel, be it in England or in Europe, it was the resilience and the political will which helped the rescheduling of the debts which were amazing to be able to lead to that famous handshake of Mrs Margaret Thatcher and President François Mitterrand when they hit on both sides of the tunnel and they had succeeded in digging the tunnel.

We do not want any of the projects to be *un tunnel où on ne voit pas la lumière ou un trou sans fond*. We cannot afford for any of these projects to know what happened to the hedging disasters at the STC, for example. Let me just say one thing, Mr Deputy Speaker. Because of one decision on hedging at Air Mauritius, we lost Rs10 billion which we are, one way or the other, trying to manage as a debt. With those Rs10 billion, we could have made the LRT. That is what I am saying: *on n'a pas droit à l'erreur*. If these projects are not well-conceived, well-designed, well implemented and well-managed, any of them would be a disaster for the country. That is where I come about the Authority. I believe personally that the Chairperson of the Board of that Authority should be nominated by the Prime Minister. It is too big an organisation and it should be nominated by the Prime Minister. The CEO can be nominated by the hon. Minister, but the man or the woman who is going to be at the head of that Authority, should be somebody who really has the competence to handle such a huge Authority, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition and hon. Dowarkasing addressed this issue of procurement, of tendering about the company. So, I am not going to go into details, but I would like to say that, in the PNQ dated 01 June this year, the hon. Minister mentioned this issue of bidding a few times. He said -

“Most of these projects have already started. The procedures have already started and all these procedures have being looked by the Central Procurement Office.”

He mentioned -

“There is a difference between financing and bidding. I have just mentioned, as far as the bidding is concerned, the Central Procurement Office will definitely oversee all the works.”

He again answers another question -

“It will definitely be under the purview of the Central Procurement Board. This is what I can tell. Definitely!”

He has to confirm to the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that all these projects, all the bidding and all the tendering will be under the purview of the Central Procurement Board.

Now, the question is: when we come to this company? If it is a private company, the bidding and everything will not fall under the purview of Central Procurement Board, the scrutiny of Parliament, the Director of Audit, and we may end up with the saga such as we have at the STC. That's where I think lies the weakness of this authority. I want to ask the hon. Minister whether this is done on purpose. He said also -

“I maintain again it will be definitely controlled by the Director of Audit.”

This is one of the questions put by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. This is fundamentally one of the weaknesses of the Bill. We need, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the scrutiny, the purview and the accountability, because, as I said - I took the example of the project of the Euro tunnel - we may start a LRT and never end it. It can be *un des plus grands éléphants blancs dans l'histoire de l'île Maurice*, if it is not properly done. We may end up for years and years, just like for Air Mauritius we are taking two years to pay the Rs10 billion. We may end up paying I don't know how many billions over the years.

So, that's where this authority has a very important role to play; the people who are there. Now, I would like to say: do we have the expertise, the competence, the manpower to man such an authority. When I listen to *cette expression lapidaire du ministre qui dit que les consultants étrangers ne nous apportent rien, je me pose beaucoup de questions*. He maintains! So, how do we go about it? I think what he wanted to say most probably - it's up to him to explain – is that, in some cases, the foreigners do not bring us much, because we can do. But, in other cases, we have to rightly choose the consultant. Am I right?

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that's where I say this is a very important Bill, because this authority will shape the Mauritius of 2050. We also have our ideas, we are going touring the island and, tomorrow, we - the MSM - are going to Highlands symbolically, after the other places we have been, to talk about Mauritius 2050.

(Interruptions)

Tomorrow, we are unveiling our vision for the country for 2050 as regards to infrastructure...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have always said, we love this country...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please!

Mr Bodha: So, we have to shape the country for the generations to come. I told you that the Cyber city to shape out of the sugar cane fields. Maybe, many did not believe in it, but today it is unbelievable. Tomorrow, Highlands also will come out of the sugar cane fields and, as I said, you are going to have modern Mauritius. But, to have this, you need the road infrastructure, because the road infrastructure is vital as the link of all this. We will go shopping to Shoprite, Bagatelle, Phoenix in our own car, but we will come to work maybe in the LRT. This is the shaping of modern Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

There are a certain number of other issues I wanted to raise, but what I want to know from the hon. Minister is how this authority going to shoulder all of these responsibilities. Because when we see the Bill - the powers, functions of the authority - it will address the issue of construction, care, maintenance, improvement of motorways, management and regulation of land transport, policy strategies. This is a huge, huge task, with a huge budget. I would like the hon. Minister to answer, because we are really setting up a mammoth organisation, which will shape the Mauritius of tomorrow. The Bill remains here. It is passed in Parliament, it becomes an Act, but the authority will be the body, the instrument, as I said, of Mauritius 2050. The whole thing is: how do we go about it? How do we find the money? To end up on this, I will address the issue of the Verdun-Terre Rouge road, where the Exim Bank of China said they were going to give us a line of credit, and then imposed on us four Chinese companies which were going to do the bidding. When they did the bidding, it was clear that the four Chinese companies came with a sum which was more or less the same. When we had the French consultant, BCOM, they said that this can be done in about Rs2 billion. So, that's another issue; where do we get the finding, how do we manage the funding, and then the time frame. Once you do not respect the timeframe, it's billions of rupees which are just being thrown away.

I think it is a very good idea to have the authority, but, what we need, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the competence, the political will, and I think there is a certificate of urgency when it comes to road infrastructure, motorways. We should also inculcate in our population where to use the private car and where to use the public transport, which is efficient and which is also, I would say, a plus for the tourism industry, because when you go to

Singapore, you are very happy to take the LRT. Our tourists also, as we should never forget that we receive one million people here, because we are, as I said, shaping the Mauritius of 2050.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(5:29 p.m)

Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand that when the hon. Minister is coming forward with the Land Transport Authority, the LTA, the idea is to merge the National Transport Authority, the Road Development Authority, the TMRSU, that is, the arms of the Ministry which do different jobs in the Ministry. But I am asking myself the question: has there been sufficient consultation and is everybody, in the different departments of the Ministry, happy with this idea? The hon. Minister said, in the Second Reading of the Bill, that there will be wide consultation once the consultant will start working on the implementation programme of that Authority then, at the implementation stage, there will be wide consultation with different stakeholders, that is, including the RDA, the NTA, TMRSU, the NTC, the Police and the relevant Ministries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll come to the last point of the Land Transport Authority Bill - the Road Decongestion Programme. I think it is clear today that we have lost four and a half years in what we call the battle against the traffic congestion in our country. We must admit that nothing has been done to solve the problem of traffic congestion in the country and from different Parliamentary Questions the Minister, himself, has replied that billions and billions of rupees have been lost in traffic congestion. This reminds me of the general election of 2005 when the Prime Minister stated in the press and on the television that he does not believe, just like the Minister said, in consultancy report but in *coup de pioche* and that *coup de pioche* would be given in two or three months' time. He said it publicly on TV and in the press. But we saw that nothing has been done and no *coup de pioche* has been given within these four and a half years. Everything has been where it was left and what do we see now? They are now seizing the opportunity to set up what we call the Road Development Company, a private company. Previously the RDA existed with the general fund and we all admit that the RDA has done a marvellous job in the past. All the road constructions in this country up to now are the work of the Road Development Authority. There was no private company which did that particular job. There is no private company which was constructing

bridges or roads; all these were being constructed by the RDA. They were under the scrutiny of the Procurement Board, the Central Tender Board and the Audit Department. Now, while presenting the Land Transport Authority, the Minister is seizing this opportunity to come forward with a Road Development Company which is a private company which does not fall under the purview of the Procurement Board. This is very dangerous, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Why do we say it is very dangerous? We have seen the saga at the STC. I intervened a number of times on the STC. We have seen how public funds have been used to create the State Trading Company Limited (Mauritius). We know how funds are being used at the STC. Apart from what hon. Bodha was saying on hedging at Air Mauritius, we have seen how the STC lost money on hedging on *gros pois* and today they ask us to agree with this Road Development company, which will deal with billions of rupees. No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! It is very dangerous. We think that, once set up, there is no need for a Road Decongestion Programme and for a separate fund. All the money has to be put in a general fund of the Land Transport Authority which will go through procurement procedures and where the Director of Audit will have full right to audit the accounts. I agree with hon. Bodha when he talked of the Chairman of this Authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, two things worry me. We know that when there was the National Transport Authority, the qualifications of the Chairman were mentioned in the law. He has to be a legal person, a barrister. This was only for NTA. Now we are talking of the merging of NTA, TRMSU, RDA and no qualification is mentioned in the Bill and I think this is very dangerous. I think we have to put the qualification because the qualification of the two representatives who will be appointed by the Minister is mentioned in the Bill. They have to be either engineers or have other qualification. The qualification is clearly mentioned in the Bill. They have to be engineers, accountants, etc. But for the Chairman of a big organization like this, no mention is made about the qualification and it is very dangerous. I again agree totally with hon. Bodha when he said that this Chairman has to be appointed by the Prime Minister in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. In the case of the STC, for example, which is dealing with less money than the actual LTA, the Road Development Company will not fall under the purview of the procurement procedures, etc. The Minister said in his presentation that the Chairman will be appointed by 'me'; he ought to have been appointed by the Minister of Transport because it can be that after the election he is not there, another Minister will have to appoint. He said a Chairman to be appointed by 'me', it is not by 'me', it is appointed by the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Transport. I think, in this

case, the Chairman has to be appointed by the Prime Minister in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning the other projects, it is clear that Government has set aside the Light Rail Transit system. They do not believe in it and they are not going ahead with that project, probably *par pur fanatisme politique*, but we know that the LRT, if well designed, would have greatly solved the problem of congestion. It could have created economic activities at the different stations like shops, shopping malls. The World Bank has said that the Ring Road and the LRT are not mutually exclusive and I am sure the hon. Minister knows it. If we go only with the LRT, this will not solve at all the problem of congestion in five years or ten years time. If we are thinking to solve the congestion problem, we must go ahead with the Ring Road, but the LRT must also go line in line.

The World Bank recommends that. I don't know why, Government, on listening to the five projects under the Road Development Company, no mention was made for LRT in this Bill. What is the Government trying to do now? The road infrastructures will take the time that it will take. We know how it will be when we start with that ring road: it will stop after certain meters, and then we don't know when the problems of squatters will be solved, in how many years it will be completed.

Government is relying basically in the short run on the bus rapid transit. This is what Government is betting on in the short run. Mr Speaker, Sir, when we are making this bus rapid transit a choice mode, that is, a viable alternative, what we are trying to do? Let us make the bus rapid transit a viable alternative to the car! Let us try to encourage people to leave their cars at home and use the bus rapid transit system to go to their place of work. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must think how we can improve the bus services to achieve this. For a small country, having so many cars on the already congested road, has, undoubtedly, a serious financial costs at all levels. So, how can we encourage a majority of Mauritians to leave their cars and to travel by bus, the only affordable alternative which exists for the time being? For many people, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, their cars mean convenience, more control on their schedule, saving of time. So, if we want people to embrace the bus as their own car, then the bus service must become more convenient, comfortable and journey time more competitive with the car while remaining affordable. But when people are asked about the bad points in the bus service, the main complaints, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are long waits, erratic bus arrivals, overcrowded buses, total journey time too long. Therefore, to achieve the target of making commuters adopting bus transport as an alternative to their cars, we must think of people centered land transport system. The system must be devised through the eyes

of the commuter from the time he steps out of his house to the time he gets to his destination. We must not only think about planning enough buses for their increased travel demand, but we must think about how people get a bus quickly, how long is the journey time, whether the journey is affordable and comfortable. All these have to be catered for if we are to rely on a bus rapid transit system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that the problem of congestion will unfortunately be with us for quite a good number of years, because I think that right decisions were not taken at the right time to solve the congestion problem. In fact, this has not been taken care of and we are now at square one. Government is trying to go with the rapid bus transit system in the short run. Let's see how it will come out and how we can encourage people, at least, in the short run to go for comfortable buses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my second point concerns the road safety and accidents. We must agree that the TRMSU has done a good job since now. Despite their meagre budget, which is not sufficient to go on aggressive campaigns in schools, in places of work, at times they do some publicity, some advertisement, once in a year, but that is not the fault of the officer. We have very good officers there, but they are limited with financial constraints, they do what they can. I think there is need for more aggressive campaigns, road safety campaigns in schools and places of work. It has to be an ongoing work; it has to be throughout the year and not only once in the year. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that when we have complaints from the public we must make it a must to attend to them. Very often, when members of the public make complaints, whether after an accident, after some demonstration when they go on the road, or they take the law in their hands that we tend to take action. We have, at least, to put a time frame. Once you receive a complaint from the public, from MPs or the *Forves Vives*, there must be a time frame within which you will act, you will go on the spot, you will survey, you'll do what have to be done and not to wait for people to take the law in their hands to demonstrate, then things will keep on moving. Here also, on the roads safety and accident point, we have the traffic lights. Very often, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - I am sure you have seen this happening - as soon as there is a small rainfall, there is a breakdown in the traffic lights and you see accidents occurring. We need to have good maintenance and we have to see how the traffic lights can work properly. There is one more important point and hon. Dowarkasing was right in highlighting that. The TMRSU, so far, was dealing with the problems of non-classified roads. When we had road humps, we had to put pedestrian crossings or yellow lines in non-classified roads. It was the TMRSU which was so for a Department of Ministry of Public Infrastructure which was dealing with that.

Now TMRSU will fall under the main law of the LTA whereby now the Land Transport Authority will deal only with main roads – as it is said in the law. The hon. Minister will clear the point later on. But, as I can see in the law, it says that the LTA will be responsible for maintenance, care of main roads, classified roads, we must know which Department it is to be, whether it will be the Municipal Councils or District Councils which will deal with the non-classified roads falling under the purview of the District Council area, the Municipal Council area, which authority will be dealing with these non-classified roads. It is important, because people rely a lot on that.

There is also the problem of petrol service stations. In fact, petrol service stations have grown like mushrooms on the two sides on the highways. If you drive from Pailles, you go up to La Vigie, I am sure you will count the number of petrol stations which have been given authorisation and, at times, in certain cases, they even represent accident hazards because of the entry and exit points in these service stations. If tomorrow we have to enlarge these highways, we can find ourselves in serious problems because of petrol stations. Some are just near the highways.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll now come to the payment of road tax and decentralization. In fact, we started with the payment of road tax in post offices. Previously, old people were coming to Port Louis and this was creating more congestion. We started it in March/April 2005 when we were in Government. Since then it was extended to some 50 post offices.

But I think we must move forward because when we introduced it, it was for private vehicles. And I understand that in post offices we are accepting payments for road taxes for private vehicles only up to now. But I think with technology and improvement, we must think about taxis, heavy vehicles, contract vans and all these. Instead of coming to Port Louis to pay for their road taxes, now that we have already set up the structure in post offices where they collect money for road taxes for private vehicles, we must think about the taxis, heavy vehicles, contract vans so that they can pay their road taxes in the region where they reside and operate. At the same time, on the computerisation front, I think there is little progress which has been made. The NTA has made progress on that point because I understand that horsepower now are issued electronically. But, from what I understand, the speed is very low and I think that the number of desks which is found there must be increased because if we want to give a good service to the car users, we must think about providing more desks, giving the services more rapidly and here also we must think about regionalising the service

of issuing of horsepower. When people sell their cars, it takes nearly three days to change ownership.

We understand that at a point in time there was supposed to be a Bill to come when there will be a one-stop shop where in one day everything will be done. People get headache when they sell their cars. This is why many people prefer to run their cars on *papier blanc*. They do not go to register because they get headache as it takes three days before they can transfer their ownership. I think here also we must work seriously and try to see how we can make a one-stop shop so that people do not get all these problems when they are buying a car and when ownership has to be transferred.

The same thing applies for driving licence. When we were in Government, I remember myself that I was working on a sort of a small driving licence like an ID so that people can carry it easily because you can imagine somebody on a motorcycle with the sort of driving licence which is exposed to rains and every sort of natural calamity. Four and a half years have gone but nothing has been done up to now. We don't see that driving licence in the format of an ID with all information required by the Police in that. I think there is urgency in that front also.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as the lighting on the highways are concerned, we know that very often, the RDA installed the lighting and we know then it is handed over to local authorities and we know when it is handed to Local Authorities what happens to the maintenance. Very often, we see that on the main roads and on the highways when the lighting system breaks down, just to change a bulb we see that there is no uniformity. We can see the voltage of the bulb. Once it is changed by the Local Authorities, it differs from one bulb to another and varies from colour to colour. Therefore, I think that now it must be the responsibility of the authority to install and maintain this lighting system on the highways instead of one installing it and then transferring it to local authorities, and we know that local authorities complain that they do not have funds to maintain these lighting systems. And the end result is that they are the users of cars who can make serious accidents and have to suffer.

Concerning the bus shelters on pavements, hon. Lesjongard raised that point and I talked to the Minister also. Even in my constituency, I can see bus shelters on pavements here and there. People walking on the pavements have to go down on the road when they come near the shelter and this can cause serious accidents. We don't wait for people to get into serious trouble, and then we will think about whether this is a way to put bus shelters. We agree that these are being put in populated areas, but this is not the way to do it because it can be very dangerous in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning the taxis and what we call the illegal taxis or “*taxis marron*”, when we were in Government we tried to solve this problem. A first report was prepared by the NTA in 2003 on the situation of *taxis marron* in Mauritius. The report was not to the satisfaction of the Cabinet and was set aside, then a second committee was set up under the Chairmanship of the then Permanent Secretary who made a report on the situation. From the joint survey carried out by the NTA and Police at that time, it was found that 502 private cars were being operated for hire. From the 502 cars it was found that 298 were providing a full time service as what we call *taxi marron*. It was agreed at that time to advertise for PSV taxi licences in those regions where the *taxis marron* were operating. When we left Government, almost 80% of the genuine *taxis marron* were regularised. The remaining 20% were not eligible for various reasons because they were not residing in the place where they had their base. There were civil servants and all sorts of people, 20% were not eligible for various reasons.

At this stage Mr Speaker took the Chair

Mr Speaker, Sir, I was talking on the issue of taxi and *taxi marron*. Therefore, at that time, when we were dealing with that problem and we solved the problem as I said, what was the actual Attorney General doing at that time? He was encouraging these people, he was encouraging *taxi malheureux* - all types of associations were being put in place – to go for that illegal business. But despite that we, as Government at that time, we solved the problem of *taxi marron*. But what can we see today, Mr Speaker, Sir? If we read the paper of Sunday – *inspecteur de la Police du transport*, Mr Beejaye Rambursee said “*depuis janvier nous avons dressé 4418 contraventions dont 2246 concernent directement des opérateurs illégaux.*”

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is alarming to see from January so many contraventions for illegal taxi operators and we know that today there must be, in this country, some 500 illegal operators. We know in certain taxi stands, there are serious problems whereby genuine taxi drivers are being aggressed by illegal taxi drivers. We have seen how many cases we have got, but we do not hear anything from the Government, nothing is being said, nothing is being done and we leave the situation as it is and the situation worsened; that is the best solution for the Government actually. But I am afraid, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to revisit the whole issue of taxi. I take the last survey which I have in my possession which dated 17 July. There are 6320 taxis as at 17 July 2009 when it is said in the various reports that the optimum capacity of this country - when we see the ratio - must be some 4000 taxis in operation. When we take all these into consideration, for example what was said in that report that there is a

need to review the system of base on which the taxis are operating. They have to take passengers only from their base and it was recommended in the report by somebody who is very able in the TMRSU, Dr. Resaul, who said that we have to regroup some of the bases and I quote -

“We believe that it would be better to licence the existing taxes on an area basis by grouping a certain number of bases of operation found within a certain radius into one area.”

It is true that we have always given taxis licenses on a base. It is operating on a base, but we know how there are reports which have come out which say that we must revisit the whole issue of base. That is why we see that a taxi can pick up passengers only from that base and have to come back without any passenger. It is true that certain bases where you have plenty of business, they will object, but you have certain bases where people are no longer working because there are so many taxis on that particular base. Therefore, it is time to revisit the whole issue of taxis, *taxi marron* and to act immediately and urgently in that case before it is too late.

There is also, Mr Speaker, Sir, the question of the setting-up of a Transport Tribunal. The setting up of an independent body to deal with appeals was recommended as far back as 1978 in the Lavoipierre Report and in the MAB report in 1994 on the organisational and functional review of the NTA. The MAB also recommended that the tribunal be headed by a full-time chairperson who shall be barrister in law not below the rank puisne judge.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you will not imagine that under the actual law there are 8 sections where a right of appeal is given to an aggrieved person. These are, firstly, section 7 (2b) and 7 (4c) right of actual owner of a motor vehicle to make appeal; secondly, section 26 1(b) suspension or refusal to renew a motor vehicle license; thirdly, section 32 (2) refusal of a motor dealers vehicle license; fourthly, section 51 refusal to grant or renew and revocation of a driving licence; fifthly, section 109 refusal to grant or renew and suspension or revocation of a conductor's license; sixthly, section 166 AB refusal to grant and suspension or revocation of a petrol service station license; seventhly, section 169 refusal to grant a driving instructors license or a driving school license. In all these cases the appellate authority is the Minister. Can we imagine a Minister tomorrow responsible for the Land Transport Authority having 100 of appeals everyday on its table? That is why it was recommended for the setting-up of a Transport Tribunal to look after all these appeals, an independent body, so that it can look after all the appeals but, unfortunately, in this piece of legislation, nothing has been said and nothing has come out concerning the setting-up of the Transport Tribunal.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we are coming with this Bill, I think the Minister ought to have taken the opportunity, because I see that one fundamental function is missing and I think the Minister will agree with me. The Licensing of drivers, driving schools and driving instructors is a function which is presently under the Commission of Police. I quote various different places, for example, the Road and Traffic Authority in New South Wales, the big roads in Victoria, Australia and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in England. All these bodies dealing with transport are responsible for the licensing of drivers, driving schools and driving instructors. I think that we have missed the opportunity, when setting up the LTA, of bringing this function under the purview of the Land Transport Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that I have covered the points that I had to make, but what I can understand from the speech of the Minister is that now that the Bill has been passed there will be a consultant who will be appointed. It will take 30 weeks despite the Minister does not like to appoint consultants.

(Interruptions)

But I know why the Minister did that because too many consultants are being imposed on the Minister by the Ministry of Finance. He is fully aware of how many consultants have been imposed on him that is why that famous statement comes out, but now we see that another consultant will be appointed, who will come out with a report in 8 months' time, and then the consultation will start with the implementation. We don't know how many months the consultation will go on and in how many months the Land Transport Authority will be set up. I think that, in the meantime, for God's sake, let us try to deal with the problem of congestion, we should not wait for the LTA to be set up or else it will be too late.

Thank you.

(6.14 p.m)

Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition and the other Members of the House for expressing their general agreement to the Bill. Until now I haven't heard anyone speaking against the creation of the MLTA and the Leader of the Opposition has expressed certain worries which I shall hasten to dissipate. It is good also for me to point out that the congestion problem cannot be tagged to any Government. These problems have existed for years and all possible efforts are made to abate it, if not, to solve it. I was in the previous Government, and I know what was done from 2000 to 2005. Decisions were taken, but we could not give any practical shape to those decisions. So much of red

tapism, so much of problems which kept on occurring, and that acted as a break to the wheel of those works which we wanted to do. However, any sensible person will have to admit that this Government is making its effort to the fullest extent to address this problem, and this can be seen in the numerous road infrastructural development projects which are underway. Therefore, it would not be correct at all to say that the Government has failed in tackling the congestion problem. That was one of the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition. With a constant increase in the number of vehicles, as hon. Bodha himself pointed out, on our roads, the problem would have been simply unbearable, were it not for the road development projects that have been undertaken in the past two years by this Government.

There seems also to be a severe misunderstanding regarding the role of the MLTA. MLTA by itself will not undertake the implementation of major projects. In fact, it will rather act as a regulatory body while, at the same time, it will be responsible for the implementation of some road development projects other than those captured under the road decongestion programme. For example, what actually the RDA is doing, that responsibility will be vested on the MLTA. It is the Road Development Company, which will be the executing agency for the road development programme. We are setting up the Land Transport Authority to be a credible regulator of transport related businesses that take place in Mauritius. This entity will also make sure that transactions are carried out in the most transparent manner and that value for money is obtained.

It is true that, in response to the Private Notice Question earlier this year, I made it clear that the Road Development Company or whichever entity that would be responsible for implementing and managing transport projects would have to adhere to the principles of the Public Procurement Act. My position has not changed since then, Mr Speaker, Sir. We will not sacrifice transparency at the cost of speed of implementation, but we would rather strike the right balance between these two variables, so that agreed transport sector solutions are not unnecessarily delayed for implementation. Though the hon. Leader of the Opposition has accepted the creation of the MLTA, it would seem that he had doubts in his mind regarding the two funds, namely the General Fund and the Road Decongestion Fund. He said, I quote -

“There is absolutely no reason to have two different Funds.”

But let me remind him that he had been in the House for decades, and he knows that we need a General Fund to receive payments due to the Authority and to incur expenditure in terms of salaries, cost of utilities, stationeries and, secondly, a Road Decongestion Fund,

which would be a dedicated Fund meant for the road projects. So, these two Funds are clearly spelt out, and I find no reason for any type of worry or anxiety. Hence, the apprehension of the Leader of the Opposition is unjustified.

The RDC will be created under the Companies Act; Government will ascertain that, in the conduct of procurement exercise, it will respect provisions of the Procurement Act. I would even go one step further and, as hon. Bodha also raised this issue today, I can confirm that the Director of Audit will be requested to scrutinise the accounts of the company. So, we want accountability, transparency and good governance in that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the question was also raised regarding the chairman. I don't know who will be the chairman of this company, but he will be the pride of this nation I am sure. He will be an incorruptible person and the one who will be properly chosen. So, there is no fear in this aspect.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is not the first country in the world to have set the Road Fund. India did it as far back as 1937; New Zealand in 1953; Japan in 1954. India, which has got the largest extensive road network of 3.3 million kilometres, has also created the National Highway Authority in 1995, which is responsible to develop, maintain and manage highways. It has planned to invest \$60 billion in five years in road infrastructure, and a large component of highways in India will be developed through Private Public Partnership. What is really surprising is that the Leader of the Opposition has given the impression that nothing has been done. I heard hon. Ajay Gunness, also repeating the same thing: nothing has been done for the past four years. But, let me remind the House that, since 2005 till today, money spent on roads and upgrading works by the RDA and the NDU amounts to more than Rs3 billion. Many questions were raised, and we have been answering those questions. So, Rs3 billion is not a few rupees. We have spent heavily, invested heavily on our road projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me inform the hon. Member that we are in a country where the rule of law prevails. They had themselves been Ministers in the past, and they know quite well that, before starting any infrastructural project, we need to acquire land, and acquisition of land takes so much of time. Too often, we have got court cases also. For example, actually, when we are trying to acquire land, there are cases in the Supreme Court, and that is the reason why these projects have taken too much of time. Implementation is not child's play; very often the acquisition is contested in the Supreme Court. Apart from land acquisition, we have to design the project, and consultants have to be appointed. It is true that

I have raised my voice against a few of them, but this is logical and reasonable also, because we have seen consultants coming as the parties for the case. For example, when you go through the light rail, how many consultants came, prepared projects, then a second one was appointed, leading to a third and fourth one and, ultimately, we could never even meet the horizon? This has been the case in many of the projects. That is the reason why we have got delays because once the consultants are appointed, it creates confusion and then we have to put up a committee to deal into those cases; then, a sub-committee is set up and, after that, the matter is taken to government. That takes too much of time. We have been losing too much of time in the past and even now. We have to follow all the tender procedures also from inception until materialisation. One important project may be taking us from a minimum of one year to a maximum of two or three years.

Let me give a preamble to the tale of what is being done to tackle the issue of congestion. More than often, we give a restricted interpretation to the congestion problem. We try to limit ourselves to the corridor Curepipe to Port Louis, but this is not the case. Congestion is a burning issue equally throughout the country, in the rural as well as the urban areas. I have been listening attentively to the Members of the other side, and most of them have raised up the issue that nothing had been done and that, after four years, we are opening our eyes and now we are trying to do things slowly. But this is not the case. I can give you a few examples of what we have done, starting with Goodlands which was itself one of the bastions of my good friend, hon. Nando Bodha - it used to be; he was a candidate there. So, everybody knows that it is just like a town and, in the morning, as well as in the evening, there used to be congestion problems. Nobody thought about the Goodlands by-pass. But, now, this Government is doing something in order to clear the highway of Goodlands. Today, it is becoming a reality. We are spending Rs300 m., and 25% of the works have already been completed. So, within six months, we are going to have a modern by-pass in Goodlands. This is no mean achievement. What has been done in the past? Nobody thought about Goodlands. Coming to Triolet, everybody knows that, from the morning till the evening and late at night, that road is congested. We are spending Rs225 m. Work has already started and, probably, in six months' time, the work will be completed. The third one is the Rivière du Rempart-Poudre d'Or by-pass to the tune of Rs100 m. Tenders are being floated and, within six months, the work has to be completed and even the land has been acquired.

Apart from that, everybody knows that Flacq has become a township. I am not spending too much. The Flacq by-pass is costing us only Rs40 m., and the work will be completed in two to three months' time. Camp Thorel was almost landlocked. It was the talk of everybody but the play of a few. We have spent Rs42 m., and that road also is nearly completed. I hope we are going to invite my hon. friend, Pravind Jugnauth, for the inauguration. With regard to the dual carriage way from Pamplémousses to Forbach, all of us know how many accidents occurred in that region.

The project value is Rs230 m. Work has already started and most probably we are going to complete it by the month of April next year. Even that work is also on. Forbach to Grand' Baie, the project value is Rs400 m.; land acquisition has started; section 6 is being published. We are preparing the designs and probably in two months time we are going to start the work. Access to Tianli road: Rs101 m. In two or three weeks time we are going to inaugurate that road. Access road to Reduit triangle: Rs300 m.; 75% of the works had been completed. Towards the end of the year the work will be completed. These are the examples I am giving you for the amount of works we have done as far as decongestion is concerned. Wooton to Belle Rive, the project value is Rs140 m. 95% of the works has been completed we are left with only a few weeks time to inaugurate that road.

From Belle Rive to Quartier Militaire the project value is Rs700 m. The tender document is being vetted by the World Bank and I do hope that in the weeks to come we are going to launch a tender. Mare d'Albert to Grois Bois in the south that is, Rs60 m. Works have already started, it will be completed towards the end of January. Insofar as Phoenix/Beaux Songes is concerned, everybody knows of the problem we are facing in Quatre-Bornes from morning till late at night. So, Phoenix/Beaux Songes is going to solve the problem. The contract value is Rs280 m. The works is going to start in the days to come. We have two court cases and I hope they are being cleared and work will start soon. Then the widening of motorway, Pailles to Caudan, the work will start in two or three day's time. The contract value is Rs206 m.

Concerning the junction at Caudan, we have already launched the tenders. We do hope that in two or three week's time we are going to open tenders.

Concerning the third lane from Phoenix to Shoprite, land acquisition is already on. Section 6 has already been completed and we are moving to section 8. At the same time the tender document has already been launched. The enlargement of Avenue Tulipes in Constituency No.18, the design has been prepared and the land acquisition is on. The third

lane from Shoprite to Pont Colville, on both sides of the roads, the detailed designs are being prepared. The land acquisition is already on. The most important point, Terre Rouge to Verdun, for a project value of Rs2 billion, tenders have already been floated. Probably in three weeks time we are going to open. For Ebène, Verdun and Valentina, there is a contract value of Rs1.3 billion; tender documents are being prepared and they will be vetted by the ADB probably.

Then we have the Nalletamby Road by the side of Gymkhana: Rs20 to Rs25 m. Works has started already. Then we have the Ring Road Phase I, the contract value of which is Rs1.2 billion and that constitutes 5 kms of road - not a few kilometres that I have heard earlier. The contract is to be awarded in the days to come. As far as the second phase and harbour bridge are concerned, a transaction adviser had already been appointed and final feasibility report will be ready in a few weeks time. Rs10 billion of work has already been awarded. I do not understand ...

(Interruptions)

If Members have got eyes to see and ears to hear! We are going fast we are not hastening slowly. It is not too little too late; in fact you have to be practical, pragmatic. Be positive and active and try to understand what is being done! We are not sitting cross-legged. In fact, day and night, we are thinking about how to solve the problem of congestion in the country. The issue of toll was also raised. It is known to one and all that this is an international tendency. For example, if you go to India, you'll find everywhere that wherever there have been highways you have got this issue of toll.

As far back as 2004, the then Government - where I was a Minister - had commissioned a study by Mr Mennon, a Singaporean consultant who came up with a report. In principle, even the then Government had accepted the idea of a toll. But then, there were elections and nothing was done. When working towards introduction of toll, we have decided that toll should be imposed on roads where alternating routes exist. We are not depriving anybody of the utilisation of roads. Where there are alternatives automatically the congestion pressure will go down. To ensure the affordability of the toll rate, a system will be put in place whereby road networks will be packaged. Preliminary findings for transaction adviser point in that direction. The modalities are being looked by the consultant. In the economic magazine of 10 October 2008, Raul Castro has rightly stated. I am quoting "No individual in the country can indefinitely spend more than he earns."

(Interruptions)

So, how can we deal with so many roads if we are not going to impose tolls? We should not develop the mentality that everything is free in this country. But we should rather move towards the principle of cost recovery system although partially, but not fully.

Hon. Mohamed raised his concern about the construction of buses and road safety. Under section 190 of the Road Traffic Act, the Minister may make such provisions as he thinks fit for the purposes of the Act. He may, under relevant sections, made provisions for construction and equipment of vehicles, motor vehicles, public service vehicles and trailers and the conditions under which they may be used on the roads.

I wish to inform the hon. Member that a new set of legislation, the Road Traffic, Construction and Use Regulations, is currently being vetted by the State Law Office. The new regulations cover a wide range of road safety aspects, including the construction of buses, convenience of dangerous and chemical goods, the fitting of gas cylinder to vehicles which use LPG as a means of propulsions, the fitting of speed limiters as well as side and rear guards to heavy vehicles. Hon Dowarkasing raised the question about the privatisation and regulation of the examination of motor vehicles.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has announced a couple of years ago - even in the previous Government this matter was raised - that private centres will be licensed to carry out inspections of motor vehicles. As the National Transport Authority would no longer exist, the MLTA will regulate the private centres. Here I would like to point out, that under section 14 of the Road Traffic Act, the Minister may make regulations to provide for the establishment of stations where examinations may be carried out, the provision of apparatus for carrying out these examinations, the manner in which and conditions under which examinations are to be carried out, inspection of premises where an apparatus with which the examinations are to be carried out. In this context, the Road Traffic Examination of Motor Vehicles Regulations have been submitted to SLO for vetting. So it is coming probably in the weeks to come.

As regards the alternative mode of transport raised by hon. Dowarkasing, hon. Lesjongard and also my friend, hon. Bodha, I wish to inform the House that Government has opted for the bus rapid transit Iberinsa Report. I think all of you are aware of that as far back as 1997. This report stated that “the bus will remain a cost-effective solution to meeting the transportation and congestion issues between Curepipe and Port Louis”. This report also made reference to the experience of Sheffield, a city in UK of some 2 million people, which had built a light rapid transit system at immense cost to the taxpayers, only to find that the demand did not cover the operating cost and eventually required subsidy. Experience worldwide demonstrates that the most economical mass transit system is the BRT. Besides

local conditions as such, they did not dictate the immediate adoption of the LRT System. The BRT systems can compete with rail systems in terms of carrying capacity and are affordable, cost-effective and space efficient.

Light rail systems can cost up to 10 times as much per kilometre as bus systems that we cannot afford. Such systems have emerged as an important alternative to rail systems and be implemented in a number of cities. That is the reason why we are moving for it and, secondly, even in the previous Government also - I can take from 1990 till 2005 – insofar as the corridor is concerned nothing was done. I know the number of buildings which had mushroomed for the past 15 years and that become a very difficult issue even when we are dealing either with BRT or light rail. Hon. Dowarkasing mentioned that MLTA is merely the regrouping of the three authorities, namely NTA, Traffic Management and Road Safety and the Roads Development Authority together under one umbrella. But, I wish to inform him that it is not a cosmetic institutional change, it is more than that. All working processors will undergo a deep re-engineering. Hon. Ajay Gunness has raised many issues regarding the NTA, taxis, transport tribunal, etc. All these things will be revisited and will be taken over by the MLTA. In fact, when the issue of “*taxi marron*” was raised, in the past there were 500 and now you, yourself, are telling that there have been 2,000 contraventions. This means that the *Police de Transport* is doing its work. Even if you are going to solve the problem of “*taxi marron*”, let’s say that 500 get their patents today; tomorrow you will find that another 500 have replaced them and that really reminds what the former Prime Minister said. I still remember he had once expressed his concern on that when we were dealing with the *taxi marron*. He had said that once the problem is solved, in one or two months’ time another group will come up. I am aware of it and that is the reason why it is very, very difficult to tackle the issue of *taxi marron*. Once you tackle the issue, other groups crop up and secondly, the contract vans also are acting in an illegal way. The Police are having much difficulty in tackling those problems. However these things will be definitely taken up by the new body that we are creating.

Regarding the issue raised by the hon. Member on the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer concerning his qualifications. He had mentioned that the qualifications are not elaborated in the law, but obviously great care will definitely be taken to ensure that the candidate satisfies the required profile. Normally, we don’t put the qualifications in the main law itself.

With regard to the management of classified and unclassified roads, hon. Gunness raised the issue, but I can give one assurance, that the Traffic Management and Road Safety

Unit will be responsible for the safety aspect of all the roads in the country. That is a guarantee that we can give to the House. Regarding the costs of the consultancy services which were raised by hon. Dowarkasing, he had mentioned the astronomic figure of Rs70 m. but, in fact, it is exaggerated; it is Rs27 m. and we are going to economise much more, probably once this organ is set up. What I do not agree with hon. Joe Lesjongard is when he mentioned that in the first phase of the Ring Road, it is only 650 metres, but, in fact, it is five kilometres. What he has mentioned is far from the truth. Secondly, for the second part of the Ring Road, we have already appointed a transaction adviser who is going probably to submit his report regarding the Harbour Bridge and the second phase of the Ring Road in a week's or two weeks' time. After that, we are going to decide what action to take. I would also like to thank my good friend, hon. Mungur, for the suggestion that he made and the support he has given to this piece of legislation. He raised certain issues regarding the traffic management, I would like to inform him that the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has acquired 1450 lead light emitting diode aspects and other related components for traffic signal equipment and as to date, there are some 200 sets of traffic signal equipment in Mauritius and the majority of those traffic lights use conventional lights. The power rating of the conventional light is relatively high and the annual electrical consumption amounts to Rs5.6 m. Lead lights use approximately five to six times less power and thus represent a significant decrease in electric consumption. Lead lights have other advantages like low maintenance cost, prolonged design life – eleven years - better visibility and high light intensity.

Let me conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius, being a small country, faces the same magnitude of transport challenges as big countries are facing. At some point in time they also took bold decisions and implemented deep institutional transport sector reforms and in a book by John Kay called 'Culture and Prosperity', he mentioned a number of reasons as to why some nations are rich, but most remain poor. If you want to join the rank of developed nations, we have no choice than to pursue our efforts to modernise our country, especially the whole environment regarding infrastructure. The Mauritius Land Transport Authority is a step towards that and it is crucial that we get on with this reform to give the next generation a strong credible and efficient institutional set up which can devise global solutions to global transport problems that we are facing. There is also a notice of amendment which I propose to move at the Committee Stage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before ending I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister and the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, my friend, hon. Dr. Sithanen, for their

guidance , for the economic and financial support that he is giving us in order to make our dream a reality.

Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

THE MAURITIUS LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY BILL (NO. XIV OF 2009)

Clauses 1-30 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 31 Consequential amendments

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill.”

Mr Bachoo: Mr Chairperson, I move that in clause 31(1), the words “Part V” be deleted and replaced by the words “Part IV”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 31, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 32 and 33 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedules were agreed to.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Mauritius Land Transport Authority Bill (No. XIV of 2009) was read the third time and passed

Second Reading

**THE SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY BILL (NO. XVII OF 2009)**

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Mr M. Gowressoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority Bill (No. XVII of 2009) Bill 2009 be read a second time.

The SMEDA Bill 2009 aims at repealing the SEHDA Act 2005 and sets the legal framework to -

- take over the activities of the Small Enterprises and Handicraft Development Authority.
- provide a more responsive institutional framework to cater to the needs of the SME Sector, and
- provide business facilitation services to SMEs.

The new SMEDA Bill sets in motion a completely new integrated approach to facilitate the promotion and development of SMEs in Mauritius. It seeks primarily to enhance their competitiveness with a statutory framework with measures aiming at generating sustainable and productive employment opportunities.

As you all know, the existing SEHDA Act was hastily enacted on the eve of the 2005 elections without any consultations. The merging of ex-SMIDO and National Handicraft Promotion Agency (NHPA) into a single entity without a well defined vision was a half-baked legislation with numerous flaws hampering the growth of SMEs. The biggest mistake was that the medium sector was ironically left out in spite of the medium enterprise sector being already included in the former SMIDO Act.

The integration of the medium-sized enterprises in this new SMEDA Bill will resolve a long overdue injustice caused and frustration suffered by a large number of medium-sized enterprises. These could not benefit from the services and support programmes provided by the existing legislation. Bringing them under a legal framework today is another illustration

of our effort to provide equal support to both small and medium sized enterprises to expand their economic potentials.

This new SMEDA Bill comes at the right time to correct this anomaly and provides for facilitating the promotion, development and increasing the competitiveness of all SMEs.

Such adoption of an integrated holistic approach will meet both present and future requirements of SME and mark a new era in the history of SMEs.

A new approach to SMEs in this Bill is the registration of activities such as cultivation of fruits, vegetables and flowers, livestock breeding and other activities likely to fall under the SME Sector, including the incorporation of Cooperatives as SMEs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a great day for the SME Community. This new SMEDA Bill is not just changing the appellation of SEHDA into SMEDA but, most importantly, marks a paradigm shift in focus today from small enterprises to small and medium sized enterprises. It is the first time that the medium enterprises which were forgotten are being integrated in the definition of a Bill. Further the Bill provides the proper representation of all stakeholders on the Board of SMEDA. This will ensure a better legal framework to support the SMEs including Women Entrepreneurs and the physically impaired in view of the increasing number of women and the physically impaired in *entrepreneuriat*. The youth have not been forgotten and there will be a representative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports on the Board of SMEDA so as to inculcate in them the spirit of entrepreneurship. Talks delivered in colleges and tertiary institutions have revealed that there is a great interest of our youth in *entrepreneuriat*. There will also be a representative of the Ministry of Environment on the Board to ensure that development of SMEs goes hand in hand with our concept of "*Maurice Ile Durable*".

We have reviewed the definition of both Medium and Small Enterprise to bring it in line with modern requirements with output as the single criteria. This new SMEDA Bill makes a clear-cut definition between a small and a medium enterprise.

- A small enterprise has been defined as an enterprise with an annual turnover of less than Rs10m.
- A medium enterprise as one with a turnover of more than Rs10 m. but not more than Rs50m.

The criteria of turnover are considered to be more relevant and appropriate for defining an SME as against the employment figure. For example, an enterprise in either I.T or Jewellery sector can generate a turnover of over Rs49.5 m. with only a few employees.

The development of SMEs occupies top position in this Government agenda since we assumed office. This huge commitment is based primarily on three core principles namely -

- (i) boosting economic growth and development through employment creation;
- (ii) greater democratisation of the economy and poverty alleviation, and
- (iii) enhancing entrepreneurship and cooperatives development.

In its 2005-2010 Programme, Government has laid emphasis on the establishment of a strong and resilient SME Sector through the creation of an entrepreneurial economy with a nation of self-reliant, innovative and outward-looking entrepreneurs. I quote at para. 74 of the Government Programme -

“In line with its vision to create a nation of creative and innovative entrepreneurs, Government will provide an integrated package with a series of bold and innovative measure and promote the development of SMEs.”

As you may be aware, the SME Sector was in serious difficulty prior to July 2005 and all indicators pointed towards a downward trend. The investment climate and business mood were not ripe to spur SME development to the extent that only 428 SMEs were registered by the then SMIDO in five years during the period 2000 -July 2005 while on the other hand more than 11,000 Small Enterprises have been registered with SEHDA during the past four years. Let me emphasise, Mr Speaker Sir - that these 11,000 are only small enterprises as medium enterprises could not be registered because, as mentioned early, no provision was made in the SEHDA Act 2005 for the registration of medium enterprises.

To reverse the declining trend existing prior to July 2005, the creation of an enabling economic environment backed by the pro-active SME development policy was greatly felt. In order to revamp and revitalise the sector, an unprecedented comprehensive range of support measures were introduced.

First: Access to Finance:

Access to Finance was difficult in many cases, not to say impossible in view of the compulsory requirement for collateral. This Government introduced a number of collateral-free schemes such as Booster Loan, Quasi-Equity and the SME Partnership Fund to provide quick and easy access to credit at preferential interest rates.

Mr Speaker Sir, the House may wish to note that during the period July 2005-July 2009, DBM Ltd. disbursed loans worth R1.1 billion to over 8,600 entrepreneurs.

Second: Ease of Doing Business:

This success was due to measures undertaken and pursued in 2006 through the enactment of the Business Facilitation Act which streamlined all bureaucratic procedures and removed unnecessary administrative bottlenecks thereby facilitating the ease of doing business. As at now any SME may obtain its permit after three days of date of application provided it complies with all the requirements. This has led to Mauritius being ranked FIRST IN AFRICA AND 17TH IN THE WORLD FOR EASE OF DOING BUSINESS.

Third: Access to Information:

Providing opportunities to target special categories of entrepreneurs who, for historical, cultural or economic reasons have been more discarded, an SME outreach programme through the *Caravanne de l'Entrepreneuriat* and *Semaine de l'Entrepreneuriat* have been launched since 2006 to be at the doorsteps of potential entrepreneurs. Some 25 Caravane and 10 *Semaine de l'Entrepreneuriat* including Regional Trade Fairs which have been a real success have been organised throughout the island and Rodrigues.

Fourth: Marketing Support:

Effective marketing and promotional tools such as subsidised participation in both local and foreign fairs, buyers-sellers meetings, market research, surveys and organisation of local fairs are regularly conducted to help SMEs increase their sales and capture new markets.

Fifth: Capacity Building and Training:

Sector-specific training courses are being conducted in fields like fashion and design, jewellery, textile painting, leather works, curtain making, food processing, entrepreneurship development and other related fields. About 4,500 trainees have benefited from these training programmes during the last four years and have become entrepreneurs.

In order to further assist SMEs to develop their marketing capability to penetrate international markets, a specialised course in Import and Export has been mounted by my Ministry.

Sixth: Access to Technology:

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is unacceptable for a country like Mauritius to continue importing items that could be produced locally such as Rs200 m. of biscuits, Rs82 m. of canned tomatoes, Rs121 m. of paper products, Rs82 m. of tooth brushes, Rs800 m. of maize.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to help our SMEs acquire new technologies and enter these lines of production, a Research and Development Unit has been set up at SEHDA. In addition,

participation and visits in technology fairs and networking with foreign technological organisations have been undertaken.

Furthermore, we are also envisaging to set up a technology based incubator, which will enable new SMEs to familiarise themselves with relevant technology so as to produce import substitution products I have just mentioned. To that effect, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have established a link with National Small Industries Corporation of India (NSIC), the counterpart of SEHDA in India, to assist us in this venture.

Seventh: Quality Improvement

To raise the quality of products manufactured by domestic SMEs, workshops, seminars and training courses have been held by SEHDA with support of institutions like AREU, University of Mauritius, IVTB, Mauritius Standards Bureau, Legal Metrology Division and other institutions to facilitate SMEs access to testing, metrology, standardisation, including adoption of ISO 9000/14000 standards.

Eighth: International Exposure

The SME & Technology Fair, organised by SEHDA on an annual basis, is a much awaited event by the SME community. The Fair showcases products and services offered by a wide range of SMEs, selected from across the country and the region, as well as suppliers of Technology from India, China, Pakistan and Reunion Island to present latest technology for SMEs.

The technology component updates existing entrepreneurs on latest technologies, which they can use to lift their venture to a higher level. At the same time, it assists potential entrepreneurs to discover machines, equipment, components and accessories that will be useful for the implementation of their new ventures for import substitution projects.

Mr Speaker Sir, I note with great satisfaction that all the measures and policies we have undertaken so far to better support the growth and prosperity of SMEs have paid handsome dividends, and have been acclaimed in all quarters.

I am, therefore, surprised that, during debates on the Mauritius Land Transport Authority Bill last week, the Leader of the Opposition spoke of “*un aveu d’échec*”, “*effet d’annonce*” with regard to SMEs.

On the contrary, since we assumed office in 2005, the SME sector has been put on the track of sustainable growth and economic progress. Enterprise registration with SEHDA

increased from a low figure of 428 in 2000-2005 to a high of 11,000 from 2005-2009. This demonstrates that the SMEs have derived maximum benefits from the programmes and schemes established by this Government.

How can we, Mr Speaker Sir, talk of “bitterness about those who were left behind?” On the contrary, SMEs were left behind during their mandate, and figures speak for themselves. Latest figures published by the Central Statistics Office indicate that SMEs account for the creation of greater number of jobs, the percentage of which has reached 43%, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Indeed, the economic landscape has changed, and is dominated by the impact of SMEs with a contribution of about 20% to GDP, 18% of total gross output, and 43% of total employment. The 2007 Census of Economic Activities shows a staggering increase in both the number and workforce in small establishments, especially after the enactment of the Business Facilitation Act of 2006.

This Government places development of SMEs high on its economic agenda. You all know how economic liberalisation, reduction in tariffs and the global meltdown have put additional pressure on our SMEs. To help them resist and grow in this challenging economic scenario, we have introduced a series of measures in our previous budgets to support the development of SMEs and help them withstand global competition. Under the Manufacturing Adjustment and SME Development Fund, 51 projects totalling Rs400 m. are currently being implemented by SEHDA and Enterprise Mauritius for the benefit of SMEs in areas such as marketing, technology acquisition, management, training, quality and productivity.

The 2009 Budget for SME related schemes under the Saving Jobs and Recovery Fund bears testimony of our unflinching commitment to shield and help our SMEs. My Ministry has toured the whole island of Mauritius and Rodrigues through our sensitisation campaign ‘*PME Nou L’Avenir*’, which was a total success, to invite both existing and potential entrepreneurs to take cognizance of the various schemes the Government has put at their disposal. These various new schemes are assisting our SMEs to overcome their current difficulties and reposition them in the new economic environment.

While these are all positive measures set in place to help the SMEs face the economic downturn, it does not mean that we should not seek further improvement. As a Government

with a long term vision, we are determined not only to consolidate the SME sector but to make it reach higher and higher.

Mr Speaker Sir, it has been acknowledged worldwide that SMEs are crucial for industrial development, and they are the main engines of growth. They represent the model of socio-economic policies of Governments, which emphasize on employment creation, generate foreign exchange earnings, and discourage monopolistic practices of production. The recent economic meltdown has proved the resilience of the SMEs to face difficult times bravely. This is the reason why governments worldwide are banking much on SMEs for take-off.

SMEs are the main pillars of economic development, and make significant contribution towards growth and prosperity in almost all countries. In the European Union, SMEs are economically strong, with 98% of an estimated 19.3 million enterprises, providing around 65 million jobs. In China, SMEs account over 90% of the total number of firms with a share of 84% of total employment and 71% of total sales. In India also, the economy is driven by the SME sector while in Singapore, the SME sector accounts for 80% of enterprises. The picture would not be complete without citing the USA.

As President Obama has rightly stated -

“Small businesses are the heart of the American economy. They are responsible for half of all private jobs, and they create roughly 70% of all new jobs in the past decade. So, small businesses are not only job generators, but they are also at the heart of the American dream.”

Mr Speaker Sir, to prosper, SMEs need a conducive business environment. To help them achieve their goals, this Government translates its acts into actions as it has been successfully doing until now.

In line with our policy manifesto, we made the commitment to support the development of SMEs and, today, the introduction of this new SMEDA Bill has become primordial. This new Bill, I am sure, will give our SMEs the extra mile needed to sustain their growth in this competitive environment.

The SMEDA Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, has not forgotten the handicraft sector. Provision is made in the Bill for a representative of the Art and Craft Manufacturers Association of Mauritius to be appointed as Board member. We are proposing to revamp the existing SEHDA shops to make them more attractive and create new outlets for sale of handicrafts to

the public in general and the tourists in particular. Our long term strategy is to set up a National Handicraft Centre where all items of genuine Mauritian crafts are exposed for sale and where artisans can be seen at work. This Centre would be marketed as a “must see” location for visitors and tourists.

Yet another novelty of this Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that we are equally catering for co-operative entrepreneurship, by providing for co-operatives to be classified as SMEs.

We have to reckon that co-operative societies are socio-economic enterprises, which are democratically owned and controlled by people, promoting the interest of their members and their communities by carrying out economic activities.

The Co-operative business model has been found to provide a special supportive environment to effectively empower planters, breeders, fishermen and specially women and youngsters by harnessing the skills and resources to embark on business ventures. Co-operatives thus aggregate the market power of their members, who on their own could achieve little or nothing.

In line with Government’s programme, we have, over the last 4 years dispensed Co-operative Entrepreneurship Development courses throughout the island and encouraged over 400 new groups of persons to collectively generate employment by starting their Co-operative enterprises, which have great development potential, if provided with necessary support and guidance.

This Bill, therefore, makes provision to categorize Co-operatives as SMEs. This will eventually enable Co-operatives also to avail themselves of all available supports and incentives to increase their business efficiency while keeping their social goals and noble values.

On the other hand, we shall encourage existing and new SMEs also to cooperate, network and cluster together with a view to increasing their competitiveness and efficiency through economies of scale.

The SMEDA Bill also provides innovative tools for promotion, development and enhancement of competitiveness of SMEs especially by -

- Bolstering human resource development
- Strengthening technology and R & D initiatives
- Providing information as a core development service.
- Encouraging cluster development and strengthening. backward and forward linkages.

- Improving market access and market presence.
- Promoting entrepreneurship development.

The enactment of this innovative and farsighted SMEDA Bill will surely open windows of opportunities for our SMEs and transform them into value creators.

Our aim through this Bill is three fold -

- To make the SME sector as the number one job provider in Mauritius by 2015.
- Double the number of SMEs.
- Increase SMEs input to a much higher percentage as contribution to GDP.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this Bill we have refrained from speaking of specific programmes and incentives. Our overall objective is to promote an entrepreneurial culture, to create a nation of entrepreneurs who would eventually need no protection, but who would venture in the big sea of globalization and be compliant with all the requirements of the World Trade Organisation. We are on the right path of making Mauritius a Nation of Entrepreneurs. All these are achievable. As always, I am confident that we will fulfill our mission as our credentials speak for themselves.

Mr Speaker Sir, we all know that with the globalization process well anchored, domestic SMEs will face stiffer competition. It cannot be business as usual. Our SMEs should aim for their products to be designed or made in Mauritius, but sold to the world. To respond to these challenges and to enable small businesses to grow bigger and medium enterprises to transform into larger units, the Government will soon launch the World Bank funded project "Mauritius Business Growth Scheme". This 12 million US dollars project aims to support enterprise productivity, competitiveness, especially in areas of skills upgrading, technology acquisition, standards, quality and marketing with a view to expanding market shares with higher sales in both local and foreign markets.

Mr Speaker Sir, the preparation of this Bill was a challenge on all fronts. Business consultants, entrepreneurs associations, Ministries and private sector organizations have all worked hard with a clear objective to provide the tools and support for SMEs to maximize their potentials and create a better business environment. I thank them all for their valuable contribution and support. Special thanks go to the hon. Prime Minister for the trust put in me to spearhead changes in the SME sector.

My thanks also go to the officers of the State Law Office and the staff of SEHDA and my Ministry.

To conclude, I firmly believe that this new SMEDA Bill has addressed most of the concerns and apprehensions of SMEs and will pave the way for a globally competitive and resilient SME sector. I would like to end on this note -

“Every Mauritian running an enterprise and hoping to start a business one day deserves a chance. Mauritius needs you. As Minister responsible for SME development, I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that you get the opportunity to contribute to our economy and to the future of our beloved country”.

I now commend the Bill and welcome proposals.

Dr. Bunwaree rose and seconded.

(7.08 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall refer to what I said last week. I re-read the press conference given by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on 15 of this month when he said “*les infrastructures et les petites et moyennes entreprises au coeur du Budget 2010.*” And I said, and I repeat, that this is *un double aveu d’échec*. If after Budget, and Budget with a fantastic “*effet d’annonce*” on infrastructure projects and *on petites et moyennes entreprises*, after several Budgets full of “*effet d’annonce*” for those two sectors, if now the last Budget before general elections has to concentrate on infrastructure and small and medium enterprises it is *un double aveu d’échec*.

As far as, infrastructure is concerned, the coincidence has it that we have just voted today, and we’ve listened to the summing-up of the speech of the Minister on the Mauritius Land Transport Authority. *L’échec est là, patent*, but when I mean infrastructure I don’t mean only *congestion routière* and building of roads, I mean also the mess at the CWA.

No progress at all has been made as far as supply of water to the population is concerned. It is even worse as far as *tout-à-l’égout* is concerned. The wastewater programme is causing havoc left, right and centre. Today, after having dealt with infrastructure, we are dealing with the *petites et moyennes entreprises*, the SMEs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after having reread the press conference of the hon. Minister of Finance of 15 of this month, I reread the comments made by Mr Amar Deerpalsing on 15 of this month, reacting partly to what the hon. Minister of Finance had said. The title itself is *éloquent*: “*L’amertume des petites et moyennes entreprises*”. The hon. Minister presenting the Bill, a few minutes ago, said that in all quarters, ‘*succès, saluer*’. What nonsense! *L’amertume des petites et moyennes entreprises!* And the Chairperson says: “*Déjà les mesures dans les anciens budgets ne sont pas appliquées efficacement, c’est un flop.* » These

are not my words; they are from the Chairperson of the *fédération des petites et moyennes entreprises*, Mr Speaker, Sir.

And what a coincidence! In a paper that is normally so generous to Government “*Le Matinal*”, I have never read such a damning statement as appeared in this morning’s “*Le Matinal*”. Mr Amar Deerpalsing again: “*Nous n’attendons rien du prochain budget.*” *Il est exaspéré par ce qu’il appelle le manque de volonté du gouvernement d’aider les petites et moyennes entreprises.* « *Nous demandons à ce que le gouvernement cesse de nous mener en bateau.* » I could quote. The coincidence has it in this morning’s newspaper. I have never read such damning comments coming from the association representing *les petites et moyennes entreprises*. Yet the hon. Minister – *tout va très bien madame la marquise*. In all quarters and the association dealing with *les petites et moyennes entreprises*, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

It is not, unfortunately, this Bill that is going to change anything. I will keep hope that in the next budget, there will be not only more *effet d’annonce*, but some concrete measures. The Bill, by itself, will do nothing to get rid of this *amertume des petites et moyennes entreprises*, *ce flop qui est constaté par la fédération des petites et moyennes entreprises*. After all, what’s in a name? This afternoon, we voted a Bill which kept more or less the same institution, but changed the name. Now, it is more or less again the same thing. We are replacing *la SEHDA* by what is before us in the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The SEHDA has been a failure over the past four years because of *politisation outrancière, conflits d’intérêt interminable*. There are some good officers, but there is an absence of qualified officers. Everybody agrees on that except the hon. Minister, of course. Yet, listening to the hon. Minister, it seems it will be business as usual. I’ve heard nothing about recruiting new staff, getting rid of these *conflits interminables*. Nothing! As if just changing the name will make the miracle happen. No, Mr Speaker, Sir! What would make a change are concrete measures for the SMEs - and I would end on that later on - not *effet d’annonce*.

I have looked at the definition of SMEs and although I heard the Minister mention information technology, the definition does not include information technology. In the definition in clause 2, the Interpretation clause, “enterprise” means any form of trade or manufacture, craft by hand or foot, cultivation of fruits, vegetables or flowers, livestock breeding. And I am advised that in that list, it should have been spelt out that it will include support services and ICT small and medium enterprises. It should have been spelt out. I agree that the definition says, after the list of activities which I have just listed, “or activity

approved as such by the Authority”. But I believe that these two areas which are very important for SMEs, should have been spelt out. Other activities which I have just listed have been spelt out but these two activities should have been spelt out because they are substantial.

The definition of a small or medium enterprise, we’ve moved from unemployment criteria to turnover criteria. I don’t have any special quarrel with that, but has attention been paid to the shareholding issue, for example? What happens if a large and big enterprise finds it profitable to the majority shareholder in a small and medium enterprise with the turnover that makes that enterprise qualify as a small and medium enterprise? Should it not have been provided that if a large enterprise owns a given percentage of shares in an SME that this enterprise does not qualify? I listened carefully, but I don’t have the impression that any attention has been given to that. Yet, if concrete measures are taken to make it profitable to register - because people will not register if they are not going to benefit from advantages, incentives and if you succeed, then, beware, you might have a good number of big enterprises that are interested to become majority or controlling shareholder to benefit from these enterprises. I have the impression that no thought has been given to that possibility, Mr Speaker, Sir.

As far as the Board is concerned, it is ironical. I heard the hon. Minister refer positively to Enterprise Mauritius and yet Enterprise Mauritius is not on the Board. I believe that it should be on the Board as well as Local Government. Local Government is involved in all sorts of permits. The Minister has included on the Board, members, not necessarily fit in, but a vital member like Enterprise Mauritius has been excluded. I don’t think that is correct, Mr Speaker, Sir.

It has been spelt out that the Board will include a representative of the Association of the Arts and Craft Manufacturers Association of Mauritius.

There will be a representative, meaning that the Arts and Craft Manufacturers Association of Mauritius will choose a representative, who will be appointed by the Minister, unless there is a very serious reason for the Minister to refuse to appoint. But why spell out in this case - rightly so, I understand that this Arts and Craft Manufacturers Association have never read anything about it in the press, but I tried to get information and it seems that it is doing good work. Fair enough! Therefore it should choose and have a representative on the Board. But why this *deux poids deux mesures!* We spell out the Arts and Craft Manufacturers Association of Mauritius. But we say a representative of SMEs to be approved by the hon. Minister. Why this *deux poids deux mesures?* Is it because *la*

fédération des petites et moyennes entreprises refusent d'être des béni-oui-oui, because they speak their mind. Why not the same principle - a representative of the federation of Small and Medium Enterprises as in the case of the Association, Mr Speaker, Sir?

I must say that I find it a bit odd that we have one representative of the Arts and Craft Manufacturers Association, one representative of SMEs chosen by the hon. Minister without reference to the *fédération des petites et moyennes entreprises* and then we have two representatives of the private sector. I think this is a bit lopsided. We have two of Small and Medium Enterprises and two from the private sector which is generally the JEC, such big private sector organisation. I think we should have been more generous as far as SMEs are concerned. We should have spelt out that it is the *fédération des petites et moyennes entreprises* who chooses a representative and it could have been more than two for the SMEs, two for the private sector, it could have been more to the advantage of the SMEs.

My main point Mr Speaker, Sir, is that this Bill will change nothing, especially being given that as far as SEDHA is concerned, under its new name it will be business as usual. I have heard nothing that convinces me on the contrary. What would make a difference would be incentives, benefits that SMEs will obtain when they register with the new SMEDA – under its new name. Concretely...

(Interruptions)

Under its new name! I am referring to the one that is being reborn under a new name, the same *machin*, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am very pessimistic. I repeat that there have been *effets d'annonce* budget after budget. Concretely, we have seen what we seen and we have read the comment of the *fédération des petites et moyennes entreprises*. Here again, the hon. Minister would let us believe that *tout va très bien, Madame la Marquise*, concerning benefits, incentives and so on. This is not the case. Let me take two examples. For years, in Budget after Budget, Government has promised the SMEs, industrial space. *Budget pou faire la, ek ferraille pou faire parski* there is benefit for *ferraille* in it! But to be serious, Mr Speaker, Sir, *pou faire maintenant*, Budget after Budget, they have been promised industrial space. Zéro!

(Interruptions)

What a joke, Mr Speaker, Sir! I heard the hon. Minister - I think he does not even measure what he has just said. He made a positive reference to the incubators experience. Total flop! Yes, the incubators have been provided space – incubators space. My information is that not only one single incubator has moved out of that incubators space. They are still there incubating, year after year. So be it, because there is no industrial space. If you had constructed industrial space, you give facilities to incubators and then they

graduate. But they are incubating there year after year. *Et tout va très bien, Madame la Marquise!* Now, on the eve of election, we are going to deliver as far as industrial space is concerned. *Comme par miracle*, on the eve of election, incubators are to become high flyers. Yes, I wish those incubators well, but treat them well.

They were promised industrial space. They were promised facilities after that incubators stage total flop. There is not that much time left before general election, but it is not too late. Deliver at least on industrial space! Allow these incubators to move towards the next stage of their industrial life! *Tout va bien, Madame la Marquise!* Five tourist villages were going to bloom all over the places. Five tourist villages where small and medium enterprises, handicraft and so on would have a chance of earning a living. One is still under construction. Five were promised, Mr Speaker, Sir. *Effets d'annonce*, budget after budget. Instead of that, I hope the next Budget does provide concrete, real incentives. Not *effets d'annonce!* Fiscal incentives! Why not a different corporate tax to help them? Fiscal exemptions from certain tax which those SMEs pay. Although it is a bit complicated issue, maybe the hon. Minister of Finance will clarify. I understand that SMEs below a figure of turnover do not have to go to the MRA to make returns, to register with the MRA for Value Added Tax purposes. Good thing! But I understand that the ceiling is very much too low. These small and medium enterprises are not equipped to prepare all sorts of returns with the MRA. A lot of them is being harassed from what I understand. So, I would like to see in the next Budget more facilities because inflation is there, the ceiling that was provided for has stayed where it is. I will be interested to know what are the incentives to allow the SMEs to perform without such harassment. I heard the hon. Minister, again, *tout va très bien, Madame La Marquise, à la banque de développement.*

I heard the hon. Minister of Finance react, he was giving figures of how many loans have been given by the DBM - the hon. Minister of Finance could not refrain from reacting - to be written off. But the real problem of SMEs, I am advised – because I discussed with the people concerned - is cash flow. Not necessarily loans for capital development and so on! I understand that their main problem is cash flow. I would be very keen to see in the next Budget what can be provided for to help them as far as cash flow is concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, this Bill will be voted, it will change nothing, but the next Budget could, *effets d'annonce à part*, come in to help the small and medium enterprises, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The debate today is not really on this change of name. The Bill, as it is, is a change of name *avec un recul dans certains cas*, as I pointed out, but the real issue, as far as SMEs is concerned, is not just to create again SMEs, but to give them the space to go on living and to

develop. The incentives, the advantages, the benefits that the SMEs get upon registration, that is the heart of the matter and I do hope, as I said, that in the Budget which will come in a few days' time, there will not be still more *effets d'annonce*, but concrete, immediate measures to help the SMEs.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(7.30 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithaneni): Mr Speaker, Sir, let me start by commending my colleague for presenting this very important Bill to the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if I could use one sentence which, very often, I use for poverty alleviation - the history or the story of the SME, probably I could say, it's the good, the unfinished and the misunderstood. I shall speak on these three issues, but first let me answer some of the points that were made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition because I think he was wrong on the basis of evidence, facts, figures, and statistics. Obviously there are some criticisms that have been made by people, but significant progress has been made since 2005 and I'll explain that, Mr Speaker, Sir. But let me return *l'ascenseur* to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't gamble. I was telling my good friend, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister what would be the three main arguments of the Leader of the Opposition and I won all three. He has been saying that we are bringing this Bill one year before general election. Mr Speaker, Sir, even though I am working very late on the Budget, I took the time very early morning to read the speech of my friend, hon. Barbier, the speech of the then Prime Minister and the speech of the then Minister who presented the SEHDA Bill.

It was presented, Mr Speaker, Sir in the last week of April 2005, after the Budget that was presented in April of that year. I think two weeks later, Parliament was dissolved. Yet, the hon. Leader of the Opposition comes to this House and says that, at the last minute, we are doing this. This is not at the last minute, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is evidence. This is fact. These are figures. This can be verified, Mr Speaker, Sir. I won't go into the speech of the then Prime Minister, but I would ask him to read the speech and what he said. This is the first point, Mr Speaker, Sir. The second point that I won, and I knew he was going to do that, Mr Speaker, Sir, "*c'est du pareil au même*, that it has been pasted, it has been copied and there is nothing new.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me make four points, how unfair the previous Bill was to end. There was no definition of a medium enterprise. There was no support for a medium enterprise. There was no incentive for a medium enterprise and we all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that small enterprises don't stay small all the time. We all want them to progress, to improve. The single biggest change contained in this legislation is inclusion of medium enterprises and we have given a good definition of what is a medium enterprise in order to differentiate it from a small enterprise lower than Rs10 m and between Rs10m and Rs50 m. The hon. Leader of the Opposition says that *il n'y a rien de nouveau dans ce projet de loi*.

Second, Mr Speaker, Sir, the range of activities is defined. It was restrictive and limitative in the former Bill whereas here it is wider. Let me dispose of one argument that was made by the Leader of the Opposition - ICT. Of course, ICT will be covered, but does the hon. Leader of the Opposition know - and I am sure he knows - that he is playing politics, Mr Speaker, Sir, that ICT contributed for 0,5% of GDP when we came to power and employed 2,000 people. Today the ICT accounts for 5,75% of GDP, employing Rs12,000, because we have taken the right measures in terms of bringing down the cost of telecommunication, in terms of services and also in terms of training, Mr Speaker, Sir, in four years. This is how the ICT has developed, Mr Speaker, Sir and the ICT has been one of the most resilient sectors during the recession. So, it is broad-based: cultivation of flowers, cultivation of vegetables. The range of what is called an SME has been broadened considerably, Mr Speaker, Sir. Three, voice and representation. The hon. Minister has put it and we know that we need to encourage our youngsters to become entrepreneurs, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have also included environment. We can build on a pillar of *économie verte* young entrepreneurs. So, one, the inclusion of medium enterprises; second, Mr Speaker, Sir the broadening in the definition of activities; third, voice and representation and, fourth, Mr Speaker, Sir there is a clearer definition of what is an 's' and what is an 'm'. The hon. Leader of the Opposition said '*effet d'annonce un aveu d'échec*'. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have done in four years what has never been done in the history of this country for SMEs. Let me give some figures, Mr Speaker, Sir.

SMEs used to account for about 33% of total employment in this country in 2005. Today, SMEs, only 's' - because we are talking about enterprises that employ fewer than ten people, they account for 43% of employment in this country. If this is *effet d'annonce*, if this is an *aveu d'échec*, it is better to have *effet d'annonce*, it is better to have an *aveu d'échec* than in 2005. How many people were unemployed in the SME sector, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Second, Mr Speaker, Sir in terms of registration, 410 *en cinq ans*; 11,000 *en neuf mois*. Of course, I am the first one to admit that not all those who are registered have become businessmen, but the overwhelming majority of those who have registered, Mr Speaker, Sir, have started business otherwise how come from 60,000 in 2005 today we are 90,000 jobs. How come? This is evidence-based. These are facts; these are figures. If you look in terms of contribution to GDP, contribution to output has gone above 25%, Mr Speaker, Sir. *Est-ce cela l'effet d'annonce, un aveu d'échec?* I think we need to be fair. Of course, we have a problem and I explained what is the problem. What is a small enterprise? It can be a self-employed, the one who cuts our hair or *qui est notre tailleur dans le coin*, he is an 's'. *Un micro entrepreneur* is an 's'. A lady, who is at home doing some work, is an 's'. An 's' which is less than Rs10 m. is also an 's'.

So, you can see the range of activities which is covered by 's'. I understand there are probably 50,000 to 60,000 small enterprises if you include all these, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, there is no one size that fits all. You will always have people who will not be happier about their incentives. I will come to the incentives later on, Mr Speaker, Sir. In their system, when they were in power, SMEs were paying 30% tax. It is only those who had incentives who were paying 15%, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the first Budget presented by this Government, I said: we cannot say something and, in terms of policies, would say exactly the opposite. The big hotels were paying 15%, the big sugar magnates were paying 15%, the EPZ were paying 15%, but *le marchand de dholl puri ou le petit tailleur* was paying 30%, because he was not in the schedule. Today, it is this Government which has put a level playing field and they pay 15%, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is what has happened. I can argue with anybody: come and tell me. I know they were paying 30% before and now they are paying 15%, Mr Speaker, Sir. The problem with some people and, I understand that, if the Chairperson of the SME is in one particular sector that has a specific problem, he will continue to hammer this point without giving names, because I don't think it is fair to give names. There was one Chairman before, he had a problem with the Banking sector, access to finance. So, every time, he meets me, he will tell me: *La Banque de Développement nous fait la vie dure*. You have to resolve the problem of availability of credit, access of credit and cost of credit, whereas there are other Chairmen that don't have a problem with banks because they run their enterprise well, but they are in a particular sector where they think competition is tough. For instance, if you are in furniture, they are only concerned about one thing. Let us be honest, they want us to raise taxes in order to give them protection. So, whatever you would do, but you have to make a

choice between protecting consumers, giving variety to people, bringing down the cost and protecting one particular industry. We have given their incentive in order to move to the regional market, in order to improve their technology so that they can sharpen their competitiveness, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, I think a lot of good has been done.

Let us talk about collateral. It is this Government that has introduced three schemes without collateral, Mr Speaker, Sir. Boost up equity, quasi-equity and, of course, it works. Give me at least the benefit that I know what is happening. I know how many people have benefited from this and I have not heard any alternative, except what the hon. Leader of the Opposition was saying fiscal incentives. But, we have given fiscal incentive. They did not give any fiscal incentive. They were charging these SMEs at 30%, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have announced industrial park. La Tour Koenig, the project comprises four building blocks. Today itself, there has been a handing over of Vacoas/Phoenix industrial estate. 25,000 m² belonging to DBM and located at the Vacoas/Phoenix industrial estates have been partitioned between 13 units, ranging from 1,000 m² to 2,000 m², Mr Speaker, Sir.

The contribution of SMEs, Mr Speaker, Sir, is extremely important. I salute all these people who, very often, are working in difficult conditions, against many odds. In spite of that, their contribution to GDP, their share in employment, their percentage in export earnings continues to increase, Mr Speaker, Sir. And we will continue to support them for a very simple reason. The development growth and progress of SMEs is the important linchpin in our strategy. It is good because it is going to create jobs; it is good because it is going to alleviate poverty; it is good because it is going to broaden the circle of opportunities; it is good because it is going to improve innovation; it is good, Mr Speaker, Sir, because it will give a chance to people who were not in business to be in business. So, I don't think there is any disagreement on this, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is most unfair to come and say that *c'est un aveu d'échec*. It is true, as I said, many good things have been done, it is an unfinished agenda, but is also misunderstood.

Let me give you some facts, Mr Speaker, Sir, because I have spent a lot of time trying to understand what is happening to SMEs, just like I have spent a lot of time trying to understand the problem of poverty alleviation; it is the same thing. We have done a lot, but it is an unfinished agenda and it is also a lot which is misunderstood, Mr Speaker, Sir. Very often, people would come and say: write off my loan. It is this Government that has introduced a scheme to write off the loan of SMEs, Mr Speaker, Sir. Nothing was done before. It is this Government that is also subsidizing for the marketing of the product and services of the SMEs, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is this Government that introduced in the

Additional Stimulus Packages many schemes. I can give the name. They came to see me and told me: Mr Minister we have a problem: access to finance, availability of finance and cost of finance. I sat down - including Mr Deerpalsing - and we said: look, let us try to find a scheme through leasing. In leasing, Mr Speaker, Sir, they were asking for 40% of the value of their equipment that you have to put as deposit. Second, they were paying interests at 11.5%. What have we done in the Additional Stimulus Packages, Mr Speaker, Sir? I called all the leasing companies, we discussed, we negotiated, we finalized a scheme and we put Rs900 m. for leasing. So, we have addressed the problem of access and availability of finance. Second, I negotiated with the leasing company. I said: you cannot ask them to put 40% of the value. We agree that we are going to put 10% of the value and the rest part of it is a guarantee from the Minister of Finance. Third, we are giving a subsidy of 2.5% on their interests so that the overall interest rate has come down from 10.5% to 8%. People are using it; people in printing, in flower growing are using it, Mr Speaker, Sir. We need to sensitize about these incentives. My colleague has gone around the country. One of them was sent in my constituency where we try to ventilate, to explain to people what are the schemes that are available; this is very important. I met some people who told me: we don't know what are the schemes that are available. So, I think this new institution has important role to play to sensitize the SMEs about the opportunities that exist, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Access to technology is important. There is no way we can compete in the regional economy if you don't improve the technology. We have technology improvement scheme where we subsidize. We have even gone to the extent, Mr Speaker, Sir, of giving a grant to an SME that wants to have a consultancy in order to make sure that you have the right technology, that you make an efficient use of energy and that you also understand how to run your business. So, in terms of capacity-building, in terms of training, in terms of institutional support, in terms of access to technology, we even pay their airfares to go and attend fairs, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have got the list, all these have been done. In fact, I asked someone what more can be done in order to support the SME. The SME is important for economic growth, but it is also important for social progress, Mr Speaker, Sir.

And this is what we have tried to achieve. So, I have given many of these incentives. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is aware that the tariff, the taxes and the labour law prior to 2005 were anti-SME. This has been demonstrated by expert. Tariff, labour law and taxes, all were biased against the SME. It is this Government that has created the level playing field. Export bias, Mr Speaker, Sir! We know we have got

commitment at the WTO; we are part of COMESA and SADC. So, obviously, tariff and non-tariff barriers will have to come down. We know that, Mr Speaker, Sir. And we have told the SMEs to go in the regional market. It might be difficult to compete with China and India, but, I think, it is possible to compete with Madagascar, Tanzania, Kenya and even South Africa now.

We have done relatively well in textile and clothing in South Africa. We have to go regional. That's why we have said that it is going to be very difficult to raise tariff barriers. If anything, tariff will continue to fall, non-tariff barriers will continue to disappear. So, we need to sharpen the competitiveness of our SME in order to go on the regional market. And many of them are going in the regional market. But there is some contradiction between the duty-free concept and probably the growth and prosperity of SME. You have to see how you sequence it in order to make sure that as you bring down the tariff, you don't penalise SME.

There is another issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, which is extremely important which I have discovered. We worked the supply chain to encourage SMEs outsourcing. We have discussed with the big boys to see whether some non-core activities can be outsourced. And there are some areas where this can be done. It can be done in textile and clothing, construction, hotels and hospitality. Not easy! It is happening. In textile, I have seen some models of clustering and outsourcing that are working and we need to continue to support this type of linkages because it is good for these enterprises.

In tourism also it is happening, but probably we could do better. I have tried to understand why it is not happening at a faster pace. So, I pick up my phone and speak to people and some people tell me: "Minister, we have a problem of quality". And we need to address this problem of quality because, very often, we have been doing business with someone, I don't know, he delivers the eggs, flowers and meat at three o'clock in the morning because the client has played \$300 or \$500, you want to have the best services and, very often, when they have outsourced this to SMEs, they have some problems.

So, we need to find a solution how to ensure that when you outsource some of these activities, quality does not suffer and the regularity of supply also is not affected. I called some of the big contractors in my office and I told them: "Look, you need to outsource some of your activities." And you know what they told me, that at times when they outsource the activities to do a particular work, *lundi matin* there is no work on the construction site. So, we have a problem. That's why we need to encourage the small enterprises to come together; it works very well in Milan and other countries. So, we need also to instil discipline, ensure that there is quality and regularity of supply and we are trying to work on this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, in some areas, it works well and in other areas, it is quite difficult. I know one of the largest companies in Mauritius that takes big orders from abroad in textile and they outsource it to a cluster of SMEs. But they make sure that the quality control remains in-house so that they can honour the quality to the big supply chain in Europe.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the DCP, Decentralised Cooperation Programme did not exist before. We put 20% of the money and I negotiated to get money from the EU. We put there. I am sure hon. Members on the other side of the House know that this is 75% grant and 25% you contribute. And do you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, how many SMEs have benefited from the DCP? Many women! And we know, Mr Speaker, Sir, out of the 45,000 people who lost their jobs in the EPZ between 2000 and 2005, 80% were women. And that's why *on a ce reliquat dans le chômage féminin aujourd'hui. Le taux de chômage masculin est presque zéro, ce que les économistes appellent le chômage frictionnel. Pour les homes, on est à 4,5%. Malheureusement, chez les femmes, parce qu'on a eu ce reliquat en 2000/2005, on était à 15%, aujourd'hui on est à 12%. C'est 4% plus 12%, qui vous fait une moyenne de 8%*. How many women have benefited from the DCP? 75% grant and 25%, they can put either in labour or *en espèces*, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The National Empowerment Foundation, how many SMEs have benefited from this? *Je rencontre des gens qui viennent me voir, on va sur le terrain. I have known a lady in the constituency of hon. Ganoo qui fait l'élevage de canards et de porcs* and they have benefited from this money. One of them even came to see me, *li dire li pu capave faire foie gras*. I said: very good, we will support that. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think, it is very unfair on the part of the Leader of the Opposition to speak of *effet d'annonce, il y a eu beaucoup plus qu'effet d'annonce*. And many of these measures have been implemented, they are working, they are effective and they have broadened the circle of opportunities. I have provided social progress to many of our people; I have contributed to employment creation and the SMEs have been more resilient than the big boys during the recession. If you look at the statistics and figures on employment, growth and revenue, you will see that SMEs have resisted much better than some of these big companies.

So, let me conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is like poverty. We will never do enough to alleviate poverty just like we will never do enough to support the SMEs. SME is important as an economic empowerment vehicle. It is important for social progress. We have done a lot

in the last 4½ years, Mr Speaker, Sir. And this Bill, if anything will improve considerably, the institutional support that Government gives to the SMEs.

There is a lot also that is misunderstood. I have explained it to you and I understand why it is misunderstood. Because it covers such a broad spectrum of activities and there is also unfinished agenda. I chaired a meeting yesterday with all the stakeholders to see what is working well and what needs to be twiggled in order to better meet the aspirations of the SMEs and, at the same time, to see what is not working. And it does that make sense to say that we are not doing enough. We have done much more than was done by the former Government, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Thank you very much.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Bodha rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Sir, I beg to move that the Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 10 November 2009 at 11.30 a.m.

Dr. Sithanen rose and seconded.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED ON ADJOURNMENT

PAUL ET VIRGINIE STREET, VALLÉE DES PRETRES – DRAINS - CONSTRUCTION

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for allowing me to raise the specific matter on adjournment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the specific matter standing in my name today relates to the construction of drains at Paul et Virginie Street, Vallée des Prêtres which is found in Constituency No. 4.

Some two years ago, the inhabitants of that locality made representations to the Municipality of Port-Louis to the effect that they were facing severe overflowing problems during heavy rainfall.

Sometime later, the Municipality of Port-Louis started the construction of drains along *Paul et Virginie* Street. The Municipality of Port-Louis was later informed, that is, exactly on 5 December 2007, through its Customer Care Unit that construction of drains which had started along that street at Vallée des Prêtres will not solve the problem of accumulation of water in certain areas when it rains heavily and that the project should be reviewed.

On 18 December 2007, Mr Coopoosamy, an inhabitant of that locality, met the Chief Engineer of the Municipality of Port-Louis and discussed the whole problem with him. On 11 February 2008, almost six months later, Mr Joomun, Councillor and former Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Port-Louis, visited the site and acknowledged the problem and promised that a site visit will be effected by the technicians of the Municipality of Port-Louis. Later, neither the Lord Mayor nor his Deputy nor even any technician from the Municipality of Port-Louis visited the site, although several correspondences were written to the Municipality of Port Louis.

On 26 November 2008, that is, almost a year later since the construction had started, the issue was raised during a radio programme, after which the Lord Mayor phoned Mr Coopoosamy who had intervened during the programme and promised that he would visit the site, and he also promised that the needful would be done, but nothing was done, Mr Speaker, Sir. The same problem was raised again during the same programme on 29 July 2009 and I came to know about the problem.

A few days later, Mr Speaker, Sir, I visited the site and on 20 August 2009, I wrote a letter to the Lord Mayor of the Municipality of Port-Louis to the effect that I visited the site and made the following observations. The works which started two years earlier had not been completed. The design of the drains was not to standard and would not solve the problem, that is, the problem of over flooding in that area. Constructions were substandard and of poor quality. Materials used were still lying there on sites and, even today, the materials are still lying there.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a Member of this House and as an elected Member of the Constituency, until today, the Lord Mayor has not replied to the letter I addressed to him on 20 August 2009. Mr Speaker, Sir, you will understand that I was left with no alternative than to raise the matter in this House, and I believe that the matter now will be taken care of by the Government. I understand that it is going to be the Minister responsible for Environment who is going to reply though I think that the Minister responsible for the Municipality of Port-Louis is the Minister of Local Government.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Environment and National Development Unit (Mr L. Bundhoo):

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I must say that hon. Lesjongard had an alternative. I will tell you why. The Royal Road at Vallée des Prêtres near Sipaye Brulé is listed as a flood prone area in the Gibbs report of 2003 following the study of the land drainage system of the island of Mauritius. Lower Vallée des Prêtres is also listed in that report. If I am not mistaken, during that period, hon. Lesjongard was Minister for Local Government and NDU. Therefore, he had an alternative then to do something about it.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, can I, with your permission, inform the hon. Member - it is factual - that the Municipality of Port-Louis has started the work and 75% of the work has been completed? This is what I have been informed by the Municipality of Port-Louis. Furthermore, I must say that since the appointment of hon. Mrs Juggoo as PPS of the region, tremendous work has been done in this region of Vallée des Prêtres.

Let me remind the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in the region of Vallée des Prêtres, substantive sum of money has been invested and specifically in Constituency No. 4, almost 59 projects to the value of Rs161m. have already been carried out.

With regard to the specific issue raised by hon. Lesjongard, may I assure him that hon. Mrs Juggoo has already effected, in her capacity as PPS, three site visits there, and I am pleased to inform the House that, on her behalf, since the hon. Member raises the issue, soon in November, the Municipality of Port-Louis will continue the remaining work which is approximately 70 metres in order to connect it with the main road at Vallée des Prêtres.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I take this opportunity to thank the hon. Member for having raised this issue and giving me the opportunity to thank hon. Mrs Juggoo for the tremendous job she is doing.

Thank you.

At 8.09 p.m the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 10 November 2009, at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**MEDIA LAW REFORM - REPORT**

(No. B/1019) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to media law, he will state if he has received the report on the proposed Media Law Reform, and, if so, where matters stand.

Reply: In reply to a Parliamentary Question on 21 April 2009, I informed the House that Mr Geoffrey Robertson, Q.C., had submitted a preliminary report.

In the light of this report and following discussions at Government level, a draft Independent Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Bill has been prepared. Further discussions will be held with Mr Robertson to fine tune the Bill before its presentation to the House.

POLICE CELLS – DETAINEES - DEATH

(No. B/1020) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the death of detainees having occurred while being in the Police cells, since June 2009 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police –

- (a) a list thereof, and
- (b) information as to where matters stand in relation to the inquiries into the death of late J. R. T. and late R. R..

(Withdrawn)

POLICE BRUTALITY - REPORTED CASES

(No. B/1021) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to police brutality, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since May 2007 to date, indicating the names of the victims.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY – PROCEEDINGS - BROADCAST

(No. B/1022) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a Select Committee on the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly on radio and television, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY – MEMBER - OFFICIAL BODYGUARD

(No. B/1023) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if any Honourable backbencher Member of the National Assembly is presently being provided with the services of an official bodyguard and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the reasons therefore and since when, and
- (b) if the hon. Member was provided with the same facilities in the past and over which period.

(Withdrawn)

DRUG TRAFFICKING – GANG FIGHTING - MEASURES

(No. B/1024) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to gang fighting related to the control of drug trafficking territories, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, over the last six months, in Cité La Cure, Ste Croix and the surrounding regions, indicating the –

- (a) number of arrests carried out in relation thereto, and
- (b) measures taken to reinforce security in these regions.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that no case of gang fighting related to the control of drug trafficking territories in Cité La Cure, Ste Croix and the surrounding regions, has been reported to the Police. Consequently, part (a) of the Question does not arise.

However, as from 01 April to 21 October 2009, a total of 176 persons have been arrested in drug related cases in the concerned regions.

As regards part (b) of the Question, the Commissioner of Police has further informed that adequate security measures are being taken and resources deployed to combat drug trafficking in hot spots, including:-

- special mobile patrols performed by ADSU personnel in collaboration with ALPHA SQUAD, CID (North) and DSU (North) to prevent and combat the sale of drugs, both during day time and night time. Furthermore, other units of ADSU based in Metropolitan (South) Division also effect searches and arrests in these areas following specific intelligence/information;
- Crack down/Joint Operations are mounted against drug traffickers with the support of other adjuncts of the Force, such as the SSU and the SMF whenever reliable information is received;
- On the preventive side, the Police actively encourages interaction with socio-cultural groups for sensitizing the population about the ill-effects of drugs and its impact on the family and the society at large; and
- Personnel of ADSU participate actively in prevention campaigns in close collaboration with the NATReSA and local civil society organizations.

The impact of the CCTV Street Surveillance System introduced in the region of Flic en Flac has already proved to be very effective in crime reduction and prevention. Government will continue this policy with the extension of the project in other regions. By May 2010, CCTV cameras will be installed in the region of Port Louis, including the areas of Plaine Verte, Vallée Pitot, Roche Bois and Ste Croix, and which will further improve capability of the Police in their strategy to prevent and detect crime.

ROCHE BOIS & COCOTERIE ROUNDABOUTS - CCTV SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS

(No. B/1026) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Motorway M1, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the

Commissioner of Police, information as to the reasons why only part thereof, between the Roche Bois roundabout and the Cocoterie roundabout, is equipped with CCTV Surveillance cameras.

Reply: I have, on various occasions, informed the House that the Police is implementing a CCTV Street Surveillance project in Port Louis and Grand Baie with the assistance of the Government of the People's Republic of China through an interest-free loan of about Rs135 million. Installation works would start by January 2010 and are expected to be completed by May 2010.

POLICE RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS - OCCUPANCY

(No. B/1027) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Police residential quarters, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) if any of them are being occupied by retired Police Officers, and
- (c) the reasons why the quarters recently renovated in Curepipe are still vacant.

Reply: In regard to part (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there are presently 834 Police quarters, out of which 12 are occupied by retired Police Officers. Legal action has been initiated for these officers to vacate the quarters.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am further advised that Police carried out renovation works on two blocks of flats at the Police Quarters in Curepipe for the purpose of housing the Central Police Stores. These works were completed on 22 May 2009. Provision for lighting was, however, not made at the start of the project. Electrical works have now been completed and works for the construction of a boundary wall will be completed by the end of this month.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that following technical advice from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, the first floor of the building will not be used for warehousing purposes as initially planned.

Subsequently, a new scheme has been worked out to house the warehousing facilities at the ground level only. The available space will be used by the Police Training School, the Special Supporting Unit, the Field Division of the Traffic Branch, and the CID and Anti-Drug & Smuggling Unit.

Police intends to proceed with the installation of these units in the building by November 2009.

PAMPLEMOUSSES & RIVIÈRE DU REMPART- DRUG OFFENCES

(No. B/1028) Mr M. Dulloo (First Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to drug offences, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof in the districts of Pamplemousses and of Rivière du Rempart respectively, since 2006 to date on a yearly basis, indicating in each case

- (a) the date the offence was committed and where and
- (b) if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and if so, the outcome thereof.

Reply: The information requested by the hon. Member is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as it is ready.

PAMPLEMOUSSES & MAPOU DISTRICT COURTS - DRUG OFFENCES CASES

(No. B/1029) Mr M. Dulloo (First Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to cases of drug offences lodged before the District Courts of Pamplemousses and that of Mapou for the District of Rivière du Rempart, since 2006 to date on a yearly basis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of -

- (a) counts preferred
- (b) persons released on bail pending trial
- (c) persons convicted and
- (d) cases dismissed.

Reply: The information requested by the hon. Member is being compiled and will be placed in the library of the National Assembly as soon as it is available.

**PAMPLEMOUSSES & RIVIÈRE DU REMPART - DRUG OFFENCES
- SUBUTEX**

(No. B/1030) Mr M. Dulloo (First Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to cases of drug offences involving Subutex, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases in the Districts of Pamplemousses and of Rivière du Rempart, since 2006 to date on a yearly basis, indicating in each case the

- (a) date the offence was committed and where and
- (b) if an inquiry has been carried out and if so, the outcome thereof.

Reply: The information requested by the hon. Member is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as it is ready.

**PAMPLEMOUSSES & RIVIÈRE DU REMPART DISTRICT COURTS -
DRUG OFFENCES - CONVICTS**

(No . B/1031) Mr M. Dulloo (First Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to convicts of drug offences before the District Courts of Pamplemousses and of Mapou for the District of Rivière du Rempart, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number

- (a) thereof, since 2006 to date on a yearly basis and
- (b) who have been ordered to undergo -

- (i) treatment
- (ii) education
- (iii) after-care
- (iv) rehabilitation or

(v) social integration, at prescribed institutions, indicating in each case, the name and place of the said prescribed institutions and the outcome of such orders

Reply: The information requested by the hon. Member is being compiled. It will be placed in the library of the National Assembly as soon as it is available.

VACOAS - MARKET FAIR - POLICE PATROLS

(No. B/1032) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the market fair at Vacoas, he will state if he will consider requesting the Commissioner of Police to reinforce Police patrols and traffic management controls thereat and in the vicinity thereof, on Tuesdays and Fridays when the fair is operational, with a view to relieve traffic congestion and inconveniences caused to the general public on those days.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that as many as 19 Police Officers are already detailed for the regulation of traffic and the maintenance of law and order on market fair days at Vacoas as follows -

- Inside the market;
- at strategic junctions, namely corner of St Paul and Sivananda Avenue in front of CEB; and corner of St Paul and Independence Avenue in front of Savoy cinema, from 0600 hours to 1800 hours, and
- for performance of traffic duties and preventive patrol in the vicinity of the Vacoas market, such as -
 - (i) regulating traffic;
 - (ii) helping people to cross the road safely at the pedestrian crossing along Sivananda Avenue;
 - (iii) providing police vigilance over parked motor vehicles;
 - (iv) ensuring orderly parking, and
 - (v) facilitating the disembarkation of vegetable lorries and vans.

The Emergency Response Service also provides mobile patrol thereat whenever the need arises; and a team from the Divisional Support Unit is posted at the location from 08h00 to 18h00.

The Commissioner of Police has assured that the traffic arrangements on market fair days are adequate to ensure traffic fluidity and eliminate any major congestion.

With a view to improving traffic management throughout the island, the Commissioner of Police is reorganizing the Traffic Branch of the Mauritius Police Force. A Divisional Traffic Unit will be created at the level of all Divisions and which will deal with traffic issues pertaining to that specific locality.

POLICE BRUTALITY - REPORTED CASES - MAY 2007 – OCTOBER 2009

(No. B/1033) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to Police brutality, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since May 2007 to date, indicating in each case

- (a) if an inquiry has been carried out and if so, the outcome thereof and
- (b) the number of cases which have been prosecuted before the court and if so, the outcome thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from May 2007 to date cases of alleged Police brutality have been reported to the Police as follows:

Period	No. of cases reported
May to December 2007	155
Year 2008	290
January to 22 October 2009	175

As is the established practice for all cases reported to the Police Complaints Investigation Bureau, enquiries have been carried out in each of the cases and I am tabling the outcome thereof. In 10 cases the Director of Public Prosecutions has advised prosecution and Court decision is awaited in all these cases.

MADAGASCAR – POLITICAL SITUATION

(No. B/1034) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether in regard to the situation in Madagascar, he will state the latest developments to find a solution to the crisis, indicating if he has recently raised the issue with the other SADC Heads of State and Government.

Reply: Mauritius is closely following the political situation in Madagascar, in particular the mediation process under the aegis of SADC and AU which are striving to engage the political players in Madagascar in fruitful dialogue for the establishment of a Transitional Government with a view to holding internationally supervised credible elections leading to the restoration of democratic and stable institutions in Madagascar.

On 30 March 2009, SADC convened an Extra Ordinary Summit in Swaziland to discuss, *inter-alia*, the political situation in Madagascar. The Summit condemned in the strongest terms the unconstitutional actions in Madagascar and suspended the country from all SADC institutions and organs until its return to constitutional order with immediate effect.

As the House is aware, the International Community and regional organizations have also unanimously condemned the unconstitutional change orchestrated in Madagascar and called for a rapid return to constitutional order in the country.

At the Extraordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government held in South Africa on 20 June 2009, H.E. Mr Joachim Chissano, former President of Mozambique was appointed to lead a team of mediators and coordinate the all party dialogue in Madagascar. Mauritius proposed that a Mauritian legal expert be included in the Mediation Team. Subsequently, Mr Herve Lassemillante, Barrister at Law was designated and has been actively involved in the mediation process. Mauritius has expressed its full confidence in the SADC mediation efforts of H.E. Mr Chissano. I have personally spoken to H.E Mr Chissano to pledge our support to the mediation exercise. Mauritius also aligns itself with the position of the African Union, COMESA, IOC and the United Nations.

As the House is aware three round of talks have so far been held under the SADC Mediation and the International Contact Group. From 05 to 09 August 2009, the leaders of the four main Malagasy political movements, Mr Andry Rajoelina, Mr Marc Ravalomanana, Mr Didier Ratsiraka and Mr Albert Zafy, met in Maputo under the auspices of the International Contact Group (ICG) chaired by the SADC Mediator. The Maputo Summit, known as Maputo One, concluded with the signature by the four leaders of six Agreements, including the *Charter of the Transition*.

It was the first time that the four 'Chefs de file' came together and unanimously agreed on a framework for a neutral, peaceful and consensual transition and the establishment of a Government of National Unity with a consensual Prime Minister, 3 Vice-Prime Ministers and 28 Ministers. The leaders agreed that the duration of the transition shall not exceed 15 months from the signing of the agreement and will conclude with the holding of general elections.

A second round of talks, also known as Maputo Two, of the 'Chefs de File' of the Malagasy political movements was held from 25 to 27 August 2009 in Mozambique under the auspices of the International Contact Group (ICG) chaired by the SADC Mediator. The second talks collapsed as the parties could not reach consensus on who would hold the key positions in the Transition Authority namely, the President, the Vice President and the Prime

Minister. However, the leaders agreed to pursue consultations in order to find a consensus on this issue.

On 3 September 2009, former President Albert Zafy, representatives of Mr Ravalomanana and Didier Ratsiraka made a proposal to allocate the posts of the President, Vice President and a consensual Prime Minister of the transition to the armed forces. The latter declined this proposal. Subsequently, on 8 September 2009, Mr Rajoelina unilaterally formed a Transitional Authority with 31 Ministers and himself as President and Mr Monja Roindefo as Prime Minister. The three other political movements rejected the establishment of the new government on the ground that it constituted a breach to the Maputo Agreement.

The SADC Heads of State and Government, during its Summit Meeting held in the Democratic Republic of Congo on 08 September 2009 firmly rejected and strongly condemned any unilateral decision which violates the spirit of the Maputo Agreements. The Summit further reiterated its decision on the suspension of Madagascar from SADC until the restoration of constitutional order in that country.

On 06 October 2009, the International Contact Group met in Antananarivo under the Chairmanship of the AU Commissioner, H.E Mr Jean Ping, in the presence of the SADC Mediator H.E Mr Chissano, representatives of the IOC, UN, EU, OIF, Libya in its capacity as Chair of the AU, permanent members of the UN Security Council and Japan. The meeting announced that the major political forces in Madagascar have reached an agreement on a multi-party transitional authority until elections scheduled for November 2010. The political forces agreed as follows:

- President of the Transitional Authority: Mr Andry Rajoelina.
- Vice President of the transition: Dr Emmanuel Rakotovahiny.
- Consensual Prime Minister, Head of Government: Mr Eugene Mangalaza.
- The Transitional Congress: Mr Ravalomanana's Movement.
- The High Transitional Council: Mr Rajoelina's Movement.
- The National Council for Reconciliation: Mr Zafy's Movement.
- The Economic and Social Transitional Council: civil society.
- The three Deputy Prime Minister positions will be shared between the political forces led by Mr Ravalomanana, Mr Zafy and Mr Rajoelina.

The movement of Mr Ravalomanana rejected the deal on the ground that it did not explicitly prevent the President of the Transitional Authority, Mr Rajoelina to stand as a candidate for the Presidential elections. On 9 October, Mr Ravalomanana wrote to the AU

Chairperson and expressed his disagreement on the nomination of Mr Rajoelina to lead the Transitional Authority.

Mr Rajoelina was debarred from addressing the Plenary Session of the 64th United Nations General Assembly following a motion from the SADC Group.

Mauritius has joined efforts with other SADC member states in lobbying the EU and the USA against any possible trade and aid sanctions on Madagascar. At the working lunch session hosted by President Obama, I had the opportunity to discuss the situation in Madagascar with the SADC Heads of State or Government present including Mr Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa and Mr Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the Republic of Tanzania, the Prime Minister of Lesotho and the King of Swaziland. We expressed our full support to the Mediation team under the auspices of the SADC Mediator. Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius remains actively engaged in all efforts to encourage the parties concerned to resume talks, as a matter of urgency, in order to reach an all inclusive agreement.

A meeting of the four political movements was due to be held in Geneva last week but was postponed. The new date and venue are yet to be finalized.

HOLD UPS – JULY 2006 – OCTOBER 2009 - INQUIRIES

(No. B/1035) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to hold ups, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since July 2006 to date, indicating the outcome of the inquiries carried out in each case.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since July 2006 to date, the cases of hold up which have been reported are as follows -

- July to December 2006: 12
- Year 2007: 10
- Year 2008: 31
- 2009 to date: 23

The outcome of the enquiry into these cases is as follows:-

- 47 cases are pending enquiry;
- 4 cases are pending advice from Director of Public Prosecutions;

- 4 cases are pending Court;
- 18 cases have been filed, and
- in 3 cases the accused have been convicted.

ICAC – MR BERTRAND DE SPEVILLE - REPORT

(No. B/1036) **Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Independent Commission Against Corruption, he will state if Mr Bertrand De Speville, the former Director of the Independent Commission Against Corruption in Hong Kong, has submitted any report and recommendations for the better functioning of the Commission, during his recent visit to Mauritius.

Reply: I am informed by the Independent Commission Against Corruption that the Commission has availed itself of the services of Mr. Bertrand de Spéville, Consultant from De Spéville and Associates, a United Kingdom based consultancy firm. The consultant has submitted a report on certain aspects of its operation.

For the information of the House, I should add that Mr. De Spéville has acted as Consultant for ICAC previously in 2002 for the preparation of its strategic plan, and had then also submitted a report in this connection.

As Members of this House are aware, the Parliamentary Committee is the institution which issues instructions in specific matters and monitors, reviews and gives general directives with regard to the manner in which the Commission fulfills its functions. Any question pertaining to the functioning of the ICAC should be dealt with at the level of the Parliamentary Committee.

MBC –MR MAHMOUD LABADI (PLO) – PRESS CONFERENCE

(No. B/1037) **Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to the reasons why the Corporation did not cover a press conference given by Mr Mahmoud Labadi of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), on Monday 28 September 2009.

(Withdrawn)

MINOR M. R. – DEATH - INQUIRY

(No. B/1038) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to one minor M. R., who died allegedly following abuse and ill treatment, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand in relation to the inquiry carried out thereinto.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 26 August 2009, at around noon, a doctor of Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam National Hospital referred the case of death of minor M.R. to the Police as foul play was suspected. In the evening, an autopsy was carried out by the Police Medical Officer on the dead body of the child.

The report of autopsy attributed the cause of death to be “Traumatic Perforation of Intestine”.

On the same day a police enquiry was initiated and statements from the child’s mother and the latter’s concubine Mr S.L. were taken.

Upon further questioning, Mr S.L. admitted having assaulted the child, in a spell of anger. He was arrested by the Police on the same day and detained.

On 27 August 2009, a provisional charge of “Murder” was lodged against him before the Pamplémousses District Court. The Police objected to his release on bail and he was remanded to jail.

The bar-at-law of the accused has applied for a bail motion which will be heard before the Pamplémousses District Court on 04 November 2009.

The Police’s enquiry in nearing of completion and the case file will, thereafter, be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

**CIVIL SERVICE - SCE, PS, PAS, AS & SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS
- VACANCIES**

(No. B/1039) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the grades of Senior Chief Executive, Permanent Secretary, Principal Assistant Secretary and Assistant Secretary, he will state the number of vacancies that exist as at to date, indicating the reasons

for the non filling of the vacancies in a substantive capacity, especially that of Secretary for Home Affairs, which is vacant since the beginning of 2009.

Reply: The number of vacancies existing as at to date in the grades in question is as follows -

Senior Chief Executive	-	5
Permanent Secretary	-	10

There are no vacancies at present in the grades of Principal Assistant Secretary and Assistant Secretary.

In my reply to PQ B/889 in July last, I explained that following the publication of the 2008 PRB Report, the vacancies in the Administrative Cadre could not be filled as the Association of Public Administrators had made representations which were referred for examination to the PRB in the context of its Errors and Omissions Report.

Nevertheless, pending the publication of the Errors & Omissions Report, and in order to ensure the smooth running of the different Ministries, most of the vacancies were filled on a temporary basis, by assigning the duties of the posts to officers from down the hierarchy. In fact, seven Principal Assistant Secretaries have, in this way, been assigned the duties of Permanent Secretary.

Regarding the Post of Secretary for Home Affairs, I wish to point out that according to the PRB Report, this post cannot be filled in a substantive capacity. It can only be filled on an assignment basis by an incumbent of the rank of SCE. As a temporary measure, the responsibilities of the post have been entrusted to, and are being discharged by, an experienced Permanent Secretary.

I would again like to stress on the fact that no Ministry has been left without either a Senior Chief Executive or a Permanent Secretary (either full fledge or acting) at its head.

Vacancies are not filled automatically. The filling of vacancies thus depends on the exigencies of the service. These exigencies have been considered and appropriate action is in the process of being taken to fill the vacancies in question.

SYNDICAT DES PÊCHEURS - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/1025) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will state if he has received representations from the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* de Maurice regarding the difficulties being faced by the fishermen and, if so, indicate the remedial measures that have been taken.

Reply (The Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security): A petition was addressed to the hon. Prime Minister and to me on 30 April 2009 by the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* regarding problems faced by fishermen. The issues raised therein are as follows-

- (i) Fishermen should not be expelled from lagoon as a result of hotel construction and tourism activities in the coastal zone and illegal works which were having negative impacts on the marine ecosystem of the lagoon.
- (ii) Fishermen should be encouraged through relevant accompanying measures to engage into other activities. A Fund should therefore be created to compensate fishermen whose activities are affected by coastal development projects.
- (iii) Fishermen should be given training and equipment to enable them to fish off-lagoon and part of the Rs10 billion earmarked under the Additional Stimulus Package should be used to give financial and technical assistance to them.
- (iv) All outstanding debts of fishermen should be written off and the bad weather allowance should be replaced by a fixed monthly allowance of Rs3,000.
- (v) Fish Aggregate Devices should be replaced, the Fishermen Cooperatives should be restructured, the lagoon should be better protected and the criteria for the determination of bad weather allowance should be reviewed as well as registration of fishermen.

Following the receipt of the petition, two meetings have been held at the Fisheries Division of my Ministry with the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* on 26 May and 18 June 2009 when all the issues have been discussed and appropriate explanations given regarding measures taken by my Ministry. I am tabling a copy the petition addressed by the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* and a summary of the discussions held on the issues raised therein.

I wish to inform the House that the Fisheries Division of my Ministry holds regular meetings and consultations with representatives of fishermen to discuss their problems and to find solutions thereto. There are actually 46 organisations including the *Syndicat des*

Pêcheurs which represent the 2310 registered fishermen. According to the records available at the Registrar of Associations, the *Syndicat des Pêcheurs* has only 19 members. Its position on a number of issues may, therefore, not necessarily reflect the views of the whole fishermen community.

MOTORWAYS - STREET LIGHTING

(No. B/1040) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he is aware that street lighting on the motorways, coming from the North, and the main roads of towns and villages leading to the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, are inadequate, thus being sources of potential danger for major road accidents at night and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal and District Councils, information as to if consideration will be given for the reviewing of the street lighting system in connection therewith.

Reply: I am informed by the Road Development Authority which is responsible for the provision of street lighting facilities along all motorways that such facilities are adequately provided along the motorway starting from the North to Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport.

I wish to inform the House that Local Authorities are only responsible for the maintenance of the street lighting system. Such maintenance is effected on a regular basis.

LA PAIX STREET, PORT LOUIS – VEHICLES - PARKING

(No. B/1041) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the disorderly parking of vehicles along the La Paix Street, Port Louis, in the vicinity of the Notre Dame de la Paix R.C.A School, when the school starts and finishes, is causing traffic congestion and, if so, will he state if consideration will be given for the provision of yellow lines thereat, on both sides of the road, in view of the narrowness thereof and for the taking of other appropriate measures.

Reply: I am informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) that, indeed, there is a disorderly parking of vehicles along La Paix Street near the Notre Dame de la Paix R.C.A. School when the school starts and finishes.

A survey has been carried out and it has been found that the yellow lines painted there have faded and, this is giving rise to the present unsatisfactory situation.

Immediate arrangements are being made for yellow lines to be painted along one side of the road to prohibit parking while the other side will not have any markings thus allowing vehicles to park on that side.

EBENE BUSINESS PARK & REDUIT - TRANSPORT PROBLEMS

(No. B/1042) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware of the transport problems being faced by the employees working in the Ebène Business Park and the students attending the University of Mauritius at Le Réduit, when they finish up late in the afternoon and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for the extension of the time of buses plying thereat.

Reply: I am informed by the National Transport Authority that, at present, no transport problems are being encountered by the employees working in the Ebène Business Park and by the students attending the University of Mauritius at Le Réduit, when they finish up late in the afternoon.

Fourteen bus routes operate via both Ebène Business Park and the University of Mauritius, while three bus routes operate via the University of Mauritius only and two other routes via Ebène Business Park only. These routes are served by the United Bus Service, Rose Hill Transport Co. Ltd., the National Transport Corporation and individual bus operators.

It is a fact that, on 10 March 2009, a complaint was received regarding lack of accommodation in the last bus released from Rose Hill and scheduled to pass through the Cybercity at 17 45 hours for Port Louis. At that time, buses were released from Rose Hill at intervals of thirty minutes and the last bus (a 40-seater) left Rose Hill at 17 30 hours. After consultations with the Rose Hill Transport Co Ltd., the timetable was revised, as from 27 July 2009. Bus releases are now being made at intervals of twenty minutes and an additional trip is

being performed at 17 40 hours. Checks carried out by the Inspectorate of the National Transport Authority on 30 March 2009 and 26 May 2009 have confirmed that the new timetable is being adhered to and no transport problem has been observed. With the new arrangement, no further complaint has been received from passengers working at Ebène Cybercity.

Additionally, to make sure that students of the University of Mauritius enjoy a reliable and satisfactory bus transport service, a revised timetable has been made operational since 10 August 2009, whereby, in addition to normal services, fifteen short services from Le Réduit towards Mahebourg and four towards La Sourdine are provided as from 15 00 hours. Buses are released at Le Réduit at an average interval of ten minutes from 15 05 hours to 18 10 hours.

REDUIT - BUS STOPS

(No. B/1043) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Le Réduit bus stops, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for –

(a) the conversion of the two bus stops into a single bus stand, and

(b) allowing buses plying towards Port Louis to link the motorway directly through Martindale.

Reply: Regarding part (a) of this question, I am informed by the National Transport Authority that there is a bus stop on each side of the road between the University of Mauritius and the Réduit roundabout. Each of these bus stops has a ‘4-bus capacity’ lay-by to avoid traffic congestion on this segment of the road. A bus park near this road segment has recently been constructed to cater for short services in the afternoon peak periods and the new infrastructure is already operational. This has improved the traffic flow to a great extent within the University compound.

Réduit is an intermediate point to various destinations and, with the creation of the bus park at this location, the need to convert the two bus stops into a single bus stand does not arise, at least, for the time being.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed that the National Transport Authority has already authorised buses heading towards Port Louis to move directly along Martindale Avenue during peak hours.

RODRIGUES – EXPATRIATES - WORK PERMIT

(No. B/1065) Mr J. R. Speville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the expatriates who have been granted work permit in Rodrigues, he will state the number thereof, indicating in which companies, governmental or non-governmental organisations they are working.

Reply (The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment): According to records at my Ministry, there are actually six expatriates who have been granted work permits to work in Rodrigues. Four of them were granted work permits to work in companies/organisations located in Rodrigues, namely BDPM Fishing Co. Ltd, Blue Water Big Fishing (Rodrigues) Ltd, and the Rodrigues Student Needs Association.

The other two work permits were issued in favour of expatriates to work in Rodrigues but employed by companies/organisation based in Mauritius, namely A & J. Maurel Construction Limitee and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Port Louis.

SOCIAL AID AND BASIC INVALID PENSIONS - BENEFICIARIES

(No.B/1066) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to social aid and the Basic Invalid Pensions, she will state if a fast track has been set up to avoid the potential beneficiaries thereof long delays to go through a Medical Board or appeal before the Medical Tribunal.

Reply: Prior to April 2009, claimants of basic pensions have always had to suffer undue hardship due to the delay in the processing of their applications. However, the solution was not to implement a fast track system, within the existing ineffective system.

Conscious of this difficult situation, my Ministry, has as from April 2009, proceeded with a complete review for the processing of basic pensions in Rodrigues. The system has been completely computerized since then. The processing as well as award of basic pensions are now entirely carried out in Rodrigues. However, the processing of pay sheet is still being effected in Mauritius and sent to Rodrigues for payment, as the budget for the Basic pensions for Rodrigues is still integrated with that of my Ministry.

A Principal Social Security Officer has been posted in Rodrigues since July 2009 and training has been provided to the Social Security staff there for the smooth implementation of the new computerised system. By January 2010, the budget for the Basic pensions will be transferred to Rodrigues. Consequently, processing of pay sheets will equally be carried out in Rodrigues thus further reducing the processing time.

With the change in the new system, the processing time has been significantly reduced from 4 to 1 month for the basic retirement and basic widow's pension and from 6 months to 6 weeks for the basic invalidity pension, as claimants have to be medically boarded.

As regards Medical Boarding, these are carried out on a weekly basis as well as on the last Friday of each month in Rodrigues. According to figures obtained, the average number of BIP applications on a monthly basis for Rodrigues stands at 60 and 12 claimants are examined at each session, which appears reasonable.

As far as appeal cases are concerned, the practice is that 2 Medical specialists from the panel of specialists who are serving as members of the Medical Tribunal, proceed to Rodrigues on a yearly basis to hear Rodrigues appellants. Until 2008, the Tribunal was presided over by the visiting magistrate and as stated earlier, it was meeting on a yearly basis in view of the limited number of cases. With the posting of a Residing Magistrate at the end of 2007 and in view of the consistent increase in the number of appeal cases, decision has now been taken to increase the frequency of visits of the 2 Medical Specialists.

As regards Social Aid applications, all processes were carried out manually in Rodrigues prior to the computerization project. However, with the putting up of the new system, all processing are now done electronically with efficiency gains in terms of data management.

FOREIGN NATIONALS - OCCUPATIONAL PERMIT

(No. B/1067) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the foreign nationals operating in mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues, he will state the number thereof who are holders of an occupational work permit, under the Business Facilitation Act, indicating, in regard to those residing in Rodrigues, the number thereof and their country of origin.

Reply: (The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment): I am informed by the Board of Investment (BOI) that as at 20 October 2009, there was a total of 3,692 foreign nationals holding Occupation Permit issued under the Business Facilitation Act for the whole of Mauritius, including Rodrigues.

Of these, 920 are in the category of investors, 135 are self employed and 2,637 are in the category of professionals.

I am further informed that seven Occupation Permit holders have given their address in Rodrigues at the time of registration with BOI.

MOBILE TELEPHONE SECTOR – FOURTH OPERATOR

(No. B/1068) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to allowing a fourth operator in the mobile telephone sector in Mauritius, he will –

- (a) state where matters stand, and
- (b) table copy of the correspondences dated 03 and 04 August 2009 respectively, from his Ministry to the Information Communications Technology Authority.

(Withdrawn)

ABBE DE LA CAILLE STREET, CUREPIPE – DRAINS

(No. B/1069) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware that there exist open drains in the impasses, along the Abbé de La Caille Street, Curepipe, thus representing real hazards to the inhabitants thereof and if so, will he state if remedial works will be carried out thereat and, if so, when and if not, why not.

Reply: I am pleased to inform the House that the drain at Impasse Mungra, Abbé de la Caille is included in the Emergency Rehabilitation Programme of my Ministry prepared in the aftermath of the flash flood of 26 March 2008.

I am informed by the Municipal Council of Curepipe that it has awarded a contract for three sites, namely Malherbes/Leclezio Street, Morcellement Senneville and Impasse Mungra at Abbé de Caille on 08 September 2009. Mobilisation is in progress and works are expected to start shortly and once started, would be completed within 60 days according to the terms of the contract.

I further wish to inform the House that the project is funded by the National Development Unit.

RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGES – INFRASTRUCTURE - FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

(No. B/1070) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to religious pilgrimages, he will state if Government makes financial provisions therefor in relation to infrastructures and other facilities and, if so, indicate the amount of money spent thereon, since July 2005 to date, on a yearly basis.

(Withdrawn)

MEDICAL DRUGS (FAKE) - INQUIRY

(No. B/1072) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware that Mauritius has been reported as being a hub for the trafficking of fake medical drugs and, if so, will he state -

- (a) if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto
- (b) the number of reported cases of fake medical drugs having been detected or seized as at to date, and
- (c) the measures his Ministry proposes to take.

Reply: The reply is in the negative. Therefore, the question of conducting an inquiry does not arise.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that, according to records available at the Police Department and the Mauritius Revenue Authority, no cases of fake

medical drugs have either been detected or seized for period 2005 to 2008. As regards 2009, one suspected case of fake medicine is being currently investigated by the Police.

Concerning part (c) of the question, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry is taking all appropriate measures to ensure that quality drugs are imported and dispensed in Mauritius. In this connection a Quality Control Laboratory for testing of pharmaceutical products has been set up at a cost of Rs25 m., at the Government Analyst Division since July 2009. In addition, the scope of work of the Central Flying Squad set up in October 2008 which has together with the Health Inspectorate Division of my Ministry seized 850 tonnes of foodstuffs over the last 12 months, has been extended to cover inspection of Pharmacies too. Furthermore the activities of the Pharmacovigilance Unit which was set up in November 2008 for public health institutions, are being extended to cover the private sector as well.

DAGOTIERE – NHDC HOUSING COMPLEX – SEWERAGE PROBLEMS

(No. B/1073) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)

asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, he is aware of the sewerage problems existing at the NHDC housing complex at Dagotière, and if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

Reply: I wish to refer to the reply I made to the Private Notice Question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition in May 2009 where I explained clearly to the hon. Members of the House the responsibility of syndics under existing legislation pertaining to “*règlement de copropriété*” in regard to “parties communes” in NHDC housing estates.

The responsibility to ensure the proper maintenance and running of the NHDC housing estates, including the sewerage system rests entirely and solely with the co-owners through their respective syndics. It is very unfortunate that syndics are not assuming their responsibility in most housing estates. As I mentioned in the reply I made, I am very much aware of the situations prevailing in NHDC housing estates and wish to reiterate the fact that this Government has at heart the proper living conditions of its citizens, particularly, those at the lower rung of the ladder.

As regards sewerage problems, my Ministry, through the NHDC and with the collaboration of the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) is, within the financial means available, doing its level best to maintain the sewerage system in all NHDC estates which are not connected to the sewer network.

I am informed that following sewerage problems which cropped up in the past at Dagotière NHDC housing complex, my Ministry acquired land to accommodate a new leaching field and a pumping station. Rehabilitation works to the tune of around Rs10 m. were completed in June 2007.

However, due to lack of maintenance which should have been undertaken by the Syndic, sewerage problems, particularly overflowing of septic tanks were again reported at the Dagotière NHDC housing complex in August 2009. The problems were compounded by the disappearance of manhole covers which had been stolen by not well intentioned persons. I am informed that necessary remedial action has already been taken since September 2009. The manhole covers have been replaced by concrete covers and have since then stayed in place. At this point in time there is no sewerage problem at Dagotière NHDC housing complex.

STC – EMPLOYEES - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/1074) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the employees of the State Trading Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the number of persons recruited thereat, since September 2005 to date, indicating their respective names, addresses and grades.

(Withdrawn)

CARGO HANDLING CORPORATION – EMPLOYEES - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/1075) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the employees of the Cargo Handling Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the number of persons recruited thereat, since September 2005 to date, indicating their respective names, addresses and grades.

(Withdrawn)

CWA – STOCK OF WATER

(No. B/1076) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the measures the Authority proposes to take to ensure an adequate supply of water to the population, indicating the present stock of water in our reservoirs and aquifers.

Reply: Potable water is supplied from three different sources, namely –

Groundwater: 50%;

Storage reservoirs: 30%, and

River off-takes: 20%.

On 19 October, the actual storage level in the reservoirs was 78.9% of the total storage capacity as compared to the average level of 66%.

Following the recent rainfall, the actual storage level in the reservoirs increased to 83.4% on 26 October, above the average but lower than last year at the same date which stood at 94.5%. The recent rainfall has contributed some 4.3 million cubic meters in the storage capacity of reservoirs and has also slightly improved the ground water levels and river flows, and likewise, the level in the aquifers decreased by 10 to 20% with a peak of 35% at Hollyrood boreholes but with the recent rainfall it has slightly improved.

The Hollyrood boreholes supply the regions of Quatre Bornes, Rose Hill, Beau Bassin and the neighbouring areas which depend entirely on ground water. The yield at Hollyrood boreholes has now increased from 13,000 to 17,000 meter cube daily which is still below the maximum production of 21,000 meter cube per day.

Depending on the severity of the dry season, I am informed that the following measures will be implemented by the Central Water Authority (CWA) to ensure optimal use of available water resources island wide -

- (i) adjustments depending on rainfall in the draw-off from the main reservoirs namely, Mare aux Vacoas, La Nicolière, Piton du Milieu and water abstraction from boreholes with consequential increase or decrease in hours of supply in the six water supply zones and to keep the public informed;
- (ii) operation of stand-by sources from rivers and boreholes used for irrigation to supplement water resources where the need arises;
- (iii) enhance the water tanker service to supply customers in the most affected areas, and

- (iv) the media awareness campaign throughout the year is being reinforced to inform the public of the water supply situation and the planned interruptions.

Moreover, two months ago on the initiative of the Hon. Prime Minister, a special Emergency Unit has been set up at the level of the CWA to promptly attend to emergencies, disruption of supply and major breakdowns.

The House may wish to note that the water distribution network in Mauritius especially in the urban areas dates back to more than 100 years and this contributes to a high level of non-revenue water, estimated at around 48%.

The level of non-revenue water has remained unchanged for a number of years and is, therefore, a cause for serious concern. Many attempts have been initiated over the last 10 years to implement an intensive non-revenue water programme which will require massive investments to replace the very old pipe lines. In this respect, the European Investment Bank has provided a loan of Euro 20 m. to reduce the level of non-revenue water.

Meanwhile, the CWA, on its own initiative is implementing on a small scale a non-revenue water campaign in the six water supply zones involving 24 localities and covering around 10% of the total number of customers. I am informed that the level of non-revenue water has been reduced from around 50% to an average of 37% in these localities.

A private sector operator will be appointed by next year, under a Management Services Contract, to implement a performance-based non-revenue water programme island wide.

For the long-term development of water resources and to ensure a reliable water supply to the population, the following projects are being implemented -

- (i) elaboration of a Master Plan for the development of the water sector up to 2050;
- (ii) construction of Bagatelle Dam and Riviere des Anguilles Dam as well as diversion of Riviere du Poste to increase the storage at Mare aux Vacoas;
- (iii) construction of a new treatment plant at Pailles to improve water supply in Port Louis, and
- (iv) replacement of old pipe lines islandwide in a phased basis for which tenders have been floated in respect of works to be carried out in the eastern region.

Notwithstanding the measures I have enumerated, I wish to stress on the need to make judicious use of our water resources. We should not lose sight of the impact of climate change which may drastically affect water resources availability in the long term and cause our country to move towards a water stressed State. In this respect, I have instructed the CWA to implement an aggressive campaign to sensitize the public on the need to save water.

PUBLIC SECTOR - EDUCATORS - DUTY-FREE CAR FACILITIES

(No. B/1077) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the duty-free car facilities granted to educators in the public sector, he will state if the latter have been informed that, contrary to the agreement that they had signed, they will not be entitled to duty free car facilities for a period of seven years, as opposed to the period of six months as indicated in the initial agreement.

(Withdrawn)

CAMP FOUQUEREAUX - DRAINS

(No. B/1078) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if his Ministry will consider the advisability of constructing covered drains at Camp Fouquereaux, in front of the Mosque.

Reply: (The Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping): The site at Camp Fouquereaux in front of the Mosque is a built-up area and the road is narrow. The provision of covered drains on that location will require land acquisition.

The Road Development Authority will be requested to carry out a survey to look into the possibility of implementing the project.

PHOENIX-BEAUX SONGES ROAD - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1079) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the construction of the Phoenix-Beaux Songes Road, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: On 30 September 2009, the RDA awarded the contract for the construction of the Phoenix-Beaux Songes Link Road to COLAS (Maurice) Ltée. Works were due to start around 28 October 2009. Two private owners of lands have challenged the legality of the land acquisition for the project. However, one of them has already removed the challenge.

The challenge has caused a certain delay but will in no way jeopardise the implementation of the project.

FORM V – SCIENCE SUBJECT

(No. B/1080) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the project to render compulsory the taking of science as a subject up to Form V level, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

MS G. G. - HIGH LEVEL ATHLETE - ASSISTANCE

(No. B/1081) Mr J. R. Speville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, he is aware that Ms G. G., a high level sportswoman who was injured in judo in 1998, is suffering from Meniscus tears and Anterior Cruciate Ligament rupture of the right knee and which needs urgent surgery to avoid permanent incapacity and, if so, will he state if his Ministry proposes to extend any assistance to her.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ No. B/925 on 21 July 2009 whereby details were given on the benefits/assistance being provided to the abovenamed athlete.

I am further informed that apart from the social aid and income support of Rs1,123 which is being paid to her since January 2008, the athlete has also been awarded –

- (i) a sum of Rs10,000 by the National Solidarity Fund in July 2009;
- (ii) a Basic Invalidity Pension of Rs2,652 monthly for a period of one year with effect from 2009 and a Contributory Invalidity Pension of Rs77, and
- (iii) a Carer's Allowance of Rs1,606 per month as from June 2009.

Moreover, her case has been referred to the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board for possibility of training and employment.

BLACK RIVER - PUBLIC BEACHES - ACCESS ROAD

(No. B/1082) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if he has received representations from a non-governmental institution and the inhabitants of the Black River District in regard to their difficulties to have access to the public beaches of the region, including being denied access to an access road allowing them entry to the beaches.

Reply: My Ministry has indeed received representations from the inhabitants and the *Forces Vives* de Grande Rivière Noire claiming that they are being denied access to a public beach at Les Salines Koenig. I wish to inform the House that there is no proclaimed public beach or open space at Les Salines Koenig and the access road referred to is located on private land belonging to Société Koenig Frères.

With a view to provide an open public space, my Ministry has earmarked a site of an approximate extent of 5A61P for the creation of a public beach at *Pas Géométriques* Les Salines Koenig. Action is being initiated to proclaim the site as a public beach.

FISH AUCTION MARKET - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1083) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the proposed construction of the fish auction market, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The Fish Auction Market project is a much awaited project both by the local artisanal fishermen and operators in the seafood hub as it is expected to democratise and modernise the fisheries sector.

The implementation of the project has been delayed for a number of reasons which are all beyond the control of my Ministry. In my reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/150 on 07 April 2009, I indicated that the tender exercise would be launched and the construction of the market would start once the tender is awarded.

Bids for the construction of the Fish Auction Market were effectively launched locally on 10 August 2009 and 11 bids were received on 15 September 2009, the

closing date for submission of bids. A Bid Evaluation Committee was set up to evaluate the bids. The Committee has submitted its report on 21 October 2009.

The recommendations are being examined by my Ministry and a decision will be taken soon.

BAMBOUS VIRIEUX – AQUACULTURE PROJECT

(No. B/1084) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the proposed implementation of an aquaculture project in the region of Bambous Virieux, he will state if he has received representations from the fishers of that region complaining against the implementation thereof.

Reply: I am aware of representations from fishermen of Bambous Virieux regarding the proposed aquaculture project to be implemented in that region.

I have also been advised that the elected representatives of fishermen on the Board of the Fishermen Investment Trust had, at the Board meeting held on 27 February 2009, reported that a group of fishermen of Bambous Virieux was opposing the aquaculture project of the Fishermen Investment Trust on the following grounds:-

- (i) The structures to be put at sea for the aquaculture project, i.e. the fish cages, would be an obstacle to their fishing activities and navigation in the lagoon would be restricted by the presence of the cages;
- (ii) the marine environment could be affected, and
- (iii) there would be a decrease in the fish catch.

The Fisheries Division of my Ministry which is closely monitoring the implementation of the aquaculture project at the La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg Ltd as well as the lagoon ecosystem in that region holds the view that the grievances expressed by the group of fishermen of Bambous Virieux may not be justified because of the following reasons:

Fish cages occupy an insignificant area of the lagoon and do not represent any obstacle to the navigation of artisanal fishermen and other users;

- (i) There has so far been no adverse effect on the marine environment; and
- (ii) There has been no decrease in the catch rates of fishermen in that particular region.

I am advised that the FIT will convene a meeting with the fishermen concerned in due course to discuss the merits of the project and the advantages and benefits which they will derive thereof. It is relevant to mention that this aquaculture project will be financed under the Food Security Fund and its objective is to increase fish production in that region for the benefit of the fishermen.

BAIL ACT - AMENDMENT

(No. B/1086) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Attorney-General whether, in regard to the Bail Act, he will state if the proposed amendments thereto have already been worked out, indicating if Government proposes to come up with a new Bail Bill.

Reply: I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the recent Report dated August 2009 of the Law Reform Commission entitled 'Bail and Other Related Issues'.

As the House may be aware, the Report is available to the public on the website of the Law Reform Commission at <http://lrc.gov.mu> since the beginning of September 2009.

Any comments, suggestions and proposals with regard to the contents of the Report and, in particular, on bail reform are most welcome and will be given due consideration.

In the meantime, my Office is considering the recommendations made by the Law Reform Commission, which have public interest, legal and financial implications.

GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS – FUNDS – AMOUNT DISBURSED

(No. B/1087) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Food Security Fund, the Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund, the Maurice ile Durable Fund, the Local Infrastructure Fund, the Saving Jobs and Recovery Fund and the Social Housing Development Fund, set up by Government, he will state the amount of money disbursed from each, as at to date.

Reply: In early 2008, we were worried that the global financial crisis that was unfolding could culminate into a major global economic crisis with severe ripple effects on our economy. We therefore used the greater fiscal space that the success of our reforms had

generated to allocate some Rs6 billion to various funds in order to address crucial long-term development issues while at the same time shielding our population, our enterprises, and our industries from any adverse impact of the crisis. With hindsight we know that we have taken the right decisions.

With the resources in these funds we have been able to save thousands of jobs directly by preventing closures, especially in the textiles and clothing industry and in the tourism sector. Jobs have been saved mostly because we have required that firms that benefit from the stimulus measures of Government do not lay off workers. And these measures, include, not only the use of resources from the various funds but also revenue foregone by Government in terms of temporary fiscal reliefs. As a result, the economy has shown remarkable resilience in 2008 and the growth projection for 2009 has been revised upward.

To carry out the activities and implementing projects under these six funds we have to date an allocation of around Rs8.4 billion out of which the Savings Jobs and Recovery Fund absorbs Rs3.1 billion. In addition Government has provided an amount of Rs1 billion as equity for the modernization and expansion of the airport.

All the resources in the funds have been committed. As the hon. Members would appreciate, disbursements out of the funds depend on the speed of implementation of projects and their payments schedule. As at to - date, the total amount of money disbursed out of the six funds is around Rs2.3 billion. They are summarized as follows-

Airport expansion & modernisation	Rs1 billion
Saving Jobs and Recovery Fund	Rs399 m.
Food Security Fund	Rs27 m.
Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund	Rs74 m.
<i>Maurice Ile Durable Fund</i>	Rs157 m.
Local Infrastructure Fund	Rs272 m.
Social Housing Development Fund	Rs403 m.
Total	Rs2332 m.

There are some projects which are being implemented and for which money has not yet been disbursed as there is always a time difference between execution of projects and

payment by the Accountant General. These works are estimated to cost an additional Rs863 m. by the end of December 2009 giving a disbursement of Rs3.195 billion.

We have also allocated Rs1 billion to RDA to implement major road infrastructure projects. Some of these road projects have already started such as the Goodlands Bypass, the Triolet Bypass, the Dual Carriageway from Pamplémousses to Sottise and widening of Motor way M1. We expect disbursement to follow rapidly for these projects.

Additional disbursement for projects already approved from those funds are expected to be as follows over the next three years-

For FY 2010	Rs2.9 billion
For FY 2011	Rs2.27 billion
For FY 2012	Rs2.1 billion

FOOD AID & SOCIAL AID - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1088) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to Food Aid and Social Aid, she will state the number of beneficiaries thereof as at to date, indicating the

- (a) amount of money disbursed during the last four financial years, and
- (b) eligibility criteria therefor.

Reply: Food Aid was first introduced in the year 1993 and an amount Rs 25 was paid per month in respect of each member of households in receipt of Social Aid and needy beneficiaries of a basic pension.

Following the reorientation of the subsidy of rice and flour towards the most needy and destitutes, the Income Support was introduced in replacement of the Food Aid in July 2006. Under the Income Support Policy, today an amount of Rs115 is being paid to each family member instead of Rs50 paid in the year 2004, that is, an increase of 130%.

As at September 2009, there were 64,009 households representing 87,120 members benefiting from Income Support compared to 31,019 households representing 38,847 members in the year 2004/2005 that is an increase of 106% and 124% in the number of households and members, respectively.

- (a) The amount disbursed during the last four financial years

for Income Support are as follows:

Income Support

Financial Year	Amount disbursed (Rs) M
2005/06	30.5
2006/07	75.8
2007/08	69.4
2008/09	108.7

In the year 2008/2009, the amount disbursed as Income Support has increased to Rs108.7 m. representing an increase of 256% compared to Financial Year 2005/2006 (Rs30.5 m.)

The amount disbursed for Social Aid are as follows-

Social Aid

Financial Year	Amount disbursed (Rs) M
2005/06	269.7
2006/07	335.9
2007/08	309.5
2008/09	336.9

(b) (1) **The eligibility criteria for Income Support are:**

- (i) All beneficiaries of Social Aid and Unemployment Hardship Relief;
and

- (ii) Beneficiaries of a Basic Pension under the National Pensions Act where the beneficiaries would have been qualified for Social Aid in the absence of the Basic Pension (BRP, BWP, BIP).
- (2) **The eligibility criteria for Social Aid are:**

The eligibility criteria for Social Aid under the Social Aid Act are the same since 1983. However, my Ministry is proposing to review the Social Aid Act with a view to making it more responsive to the needs of the vulnerable groups.

DBM – FINANCIAL SITUATION

(No. B/1089) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank, information as to its present financial situation and
- (b) state if Government is proposing to wind up the Bank?

Reply: I refer the House to the reply I gave to PQ B/129. I did mention that Government has on various occasions and more particularly in the 2006/07 Budget stressed on the need to restructure the Development Bank of Mauritius. In fact, I mentioned that DBM had over the years developed into a mammoth organisation with outdated, cumbersome, inefficient procedures and unable to sustain satisfactorily our SME's which are increasingly operating in globalised and highly competitive market.

In this respect, I did inform the House that an international firm, the International Financial Consulting Ltd was hired to help diagnose the problems of the DBM and suggest options to make the Bank more responsive to the needs of the SMEs and other clients. In its report in late February 2009, one of the conclusions of consultant was that DBM was in a very heavy loss situation with its capital base severely eroded.

Furthermore, in so far as part (a) of the question is concerned, the situation has not improved. I am informed by the Bank that for the financial year ending June 2008 the percentage of capital in arrears to its loan portfolio stands at 37% with operating profit being around Rs 140 million which could be completely wiped out with loan loss provisioning of over Rs 400 million. It has total assets of around Rs 8 billion with a 1.69 % return on capital employed which as per its projections is expected to deteriorate further during this financial year.

In a loss making situation , one can give many reasons for qualifying the Banks poor performance. But it is also to be recognised that the bank's loan portfolio comprises higher risk clients as is generally the characteristic of development bank portfolios.

In so far as part (b) of the question is concerned ,I wish here to also add that the consulting firm which I referred to earlier has, as per its extended terms of reference submitted a final report in June 2009 indicating the way forward for the restructuring of the Bank

In this respect, my Ministry has set up a committee which includes the chairman of the Bank to examine the proposals and make policy recommendations on how best to restructure the Bank and make it a more efficient financial intermediary to meet the needs of SMEs and other clients.

TERRE COUPÉ, MOUNT ORY – ROAD ACCESS

(No. B/1090) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if there is any project for the provision of road access to the inhabitants of Terre Coupé, Mount Ory, in view of the fact that they are encountering hardships due to the lack of such an infrastructure.

Reply: The Road Development Authority has no project to provide for road access to the inhabitants of Terre Coupé at Mount Ory. The Ministry of Local Government has been requested to look into the matter.

**RICHE TERRE MIXED FARMING CO-OPERATION SOCIETY –
VEGETABLE GROWERS**

(No. B/1091) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne and GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the 23 vegetable growers of the Riche Terre Mixed Farming Co-operative Society Ltd., whose leases are due to expire in 2015 but have had to vacate their respective plots of land as a consequence of the implementation of the Jing Fei project, he will state if a committee has been set up to look into their claims and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: In reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/544 addressed to me by the hon. Member, I indicated that 97 out of the 120 former lease holders of State land at Riche Terre were paid the compensation of Rs. 120,000 per arpent and 37 out of the 51 planters eligible for land were allocated one arpent of State agricultural land each at either Bois Marchand or Arsenal.

I am informed that the 37 planters are well settled now on the new sites and are doing fairly well in terms of vegetable production.

One of the 23 planters came to see me in August last and accepted to take his compensation and one arpent of land on lease at Bois Marchand. He was invited to call at my Ministry on 19 August 2009 to collect his compensation but has not done so up to now.

It is unfortunate that 22 planters have been misguided into believing that they could obtain a higher compensation. They are now claiming a compensation of Rs. 900,000 each. The payment of such a compensation will entail serious financial implications and may give rise to similar claim from the other 98 planters. In such an eventuality, there is a risk that Government might end up paying around Rs. 100 Million to have back the rights on its own land.

A Committee set up at the level of my Ministry is currently re-examining the survey reports of the plots of land occupied by the 22 planters to determine whether there is any justification for payment to them of additional compensation, ie. over and above the compensation of Rs. 120,000 per arpent approved by Government. Upon receipt of the report of that Committee, appropriate decision will be taken and communicated to the planters.

I would like to indicate that the offer of the cash compensation of Rs. 120,000 per arpent to the 22 planters and of lease of State land of one arpent to each of the 13 eligible planters at an annual rental of Rs. 120 until 2015 still holds good. The planters concerned may, at any time, call at my Ministry to collect their compensation and sign the documents relating to the lease of the land.