

No. 5 of 2010



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION
TUESDAY 29 JUNE 2010**

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK,
FRCP

*Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs
and External Communications*

Dr. the Hon. Ahmed Rashid Beebeejaun, GCSK,
FRCP

*Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and
Public Utilities*

Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK

*Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social
Integration and Economic Empowerment*

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth

*Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and
Economic Development*

Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo

*Minister of Public Infrastructure, National
Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping*

Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell

*Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration
and International Trade*

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*Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development
and Family Welfare*

Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha

Minister of Tourism and Leisure

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Hon. Satya Veryash Faugoo	<i>Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security</i>
Hon. Showkutally Soodhun	<i>Minister of Industry and Commerce</i>
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Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	<i>Minister of Civil Service Affairs and Administrative Reforms</i>
Hon Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed	<i>Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment</i>
Hon Yatindra Nath Varma	<i>Attorney General</i>
Hon John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	<i>Minister of Business, Enterprise, Cooperatives and Consumer Protection</i>

*Members**Members*

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<i>Deputy Speaker</i>	Roopun, Hon. Prithvirajsing
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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 5 of 2010

Sitting of Tuesday 29 June 2010

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. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

The Borrower Protection (Invitation for Bids by Sealed Offers) Regulations 2010 (Government Notice No. 142 of 2010).

B. Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security –

- (a) The Annual Report of the Sugar Investment Trust for period ending 30 June 2009.
- (b) The Annual Report of the Farmers Service Corporation for financial year 2007-2008.

C. Ministry of Health & Quality of Life –

The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 2010 (Government Notice No.143 of 2010).

D. Ministry of Fisheries and Rodrigues –

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 15) Regulations 2010 (Government Notice No. 144 of 2010).

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

GRAND RIVER NORTH WEST PRISON – MUTINY

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the situation in the prisons and the last Sunday's mutiny at the Grand River North West Prison, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to –
 - (i) the number of prisoners still at large,
 - (ii) if the Close Circuit Television (CCTV) system at Grand River North West Prison was fully operational,
 - (iii) if offensive weapons used during the mutiny had been manufactured by the prisoners;
 - (iv) whether high-risk detainees were involved, and
- (b) state the measures being envisaged to address the issue of overpopulation and under-staffing.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police, in consultation with the Commissioner of Prisons, that on Sunday 27 June 2010 at about 17 00 hrs, disturbances occurred at Grand River North West Prison which led to the escape of 34 detainees.

As indicated in the official communiqué released by my Office yesterday, I have had intense and in-depth consultations with the Commissioner of Police, the Commissioner of Prisons and officials of my Office and those of the State Law Office.

I instructed that an immediate Police Inquiry be initiated to look into all the circumstances of this case with a view to taking appropriate action. I have also directed that security measures at and within the prisons and in the country be stepped up. These measures include –

- (a) posting of a contingency of the SMF at Beau Bassin and Grand River North West Prison;
- (b) a unit of SSU has been stationed at Petit Verger Prison;
- (c) the National Coast Guard and the Helicopter Unit have been placed on maximum alert and vigilance;
- (d) 24-hour road blocks by the SMF are operational, and
- (e) all the other units of the Police Force have been mobilised to trace and arrest the fugitives.

In regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I should like to point out that within less than 24 hours of the escape, the Police had already captured 15 fugitives, that is, yesterday. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Commissioner of Police and the entire Police Force on the prompt and expedient manner in which they have handled the situation so far. I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, at present, there are 23 fugitives who have already been captured and Police is actively engaged throughout the breadth and width of the country to capture the remaining 11. It is expected that the remaining fugitives will be captured within the coming hours.

Regarding part (a) (ii) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the CCTV System at Grand River North West Prison was first installed in 1997. However, the system was damaged during the 1999 riot. Some of the cameras were subsequently repaired and were functioning, but the whole system went out of order in 2004. Further repairs were effected to the system resulting in five cameras being operational.

In 2009, it was decided that the whole system should be scrapped and replaced. A consultant was appointed to advise on the fitting system to be installed at Grand River North West Prison. Tenders have been floated. A successful tenderer has already been identified and the contract is to be awarded shortly.

In regard to part (a) (iii) of the question, I am advised by both the Commissioner of Police and Commissioner of Prisons that no offensive weapons as such have been manufactured and used during the disturbances. However, in their escape attempt, the detainees laid hands on whatever objects that they could find in their hurry including stones, iron bars and sticks.

As regards part (a) (iv) of the question, I am advised that some high-risk detainees were involved.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, the maximum capacity of our Prisons is 2,135, but there are at present 2,395 detainees, of whom 799 are on remand. These figures do not suggest that there is an acute problem of overpopulation in our prisons. However, I wish to point out that a more pressing issue is the relocation of the prison at Grand River North West.

One of the reasons for the high number of prisoners on remand awaiting trial in the past was the fact that criminal trials before the Supreme Court could only take place during Assizes Sessions. The law was amended in 2007 to allow the Supreme Court to hear criminal trials throughout the year. I must also point out that the Chief Justice has set up administratively a Criminal Division at the

Supreme Court to hear and dispose of criminal cases more promptly. I wish here to express my deep appreciation to the Chief Justice and the Judiciary at large for these decisions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a decision was taken in 2001 to construct a new prison and the then Government identified a plot of land at Rose Belle. Subsequently, in September 2004, that is, more than three years later, it was found by the then Government that the site identified at Rose Belle was not appropriate for a prison.

Following the identification of an appropriate site of some *37 arpents* at Melrose in July 2005, action was initiated by the then Central Tender Board to appoint a Consultant to prepare designs and tender documents. It is expected that construction works would start in August 2010. The estimated cost of the new high security prison is Rs1.4 billion.

Regarding the alleged understaffing of our prisons, I wish to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the staff to inmates ratio for Mauritius, which is at present one officer to two inmates, compared with countries like New Zealand and the UK. For India, it is one officer for seven inmates and for Singapore, it is one officer for eight. As I said, in Mauritius, it is one officer for two inmates. Nevertheless, action has already been initiated for necessary amendment to be brought to the Schemes of Service of the various grades of the prisons service following the PRB Report and it is expected that all the vacancies will be filled shortly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have also requested the Office of Public Sector Governance to carry out a thorough organisational audit of the Mauritius Prisons Service which will also cover the important question of enforcement of disciplinary measures and action.

I have had lengthy discussions with the Commissioner of Police, the Commissioner of Prisons and the State Law Office on the appropriateness of a

Commission of Inquiry to inquire into the escape of 34 prisoners from Grand River North West Prison last Sunday evening.

The conclusion reached is that since the Police are already investigating into the offence committed by the prisoners and possible offences, including collusion and acts of negligence by Prisons Officers, there could be an overlap and possible legal or evidential obstacles to both investigations being carried out concurrently.

Witnesses and suspects interviewed or arrested by the Police could be tempted to invoke their right to silence to the Police or refuse to cooperate with the Police because of their eventual obligation to testify before a Commission of Inquiry. Furthermore, a Police investigation would have had, in any event, to be carried out anew into offences, if any, revealed during the proceedings of the Commission of Inquiry, as evidence given before a Commission of Inquiry cannot be used against an accused in a criminal case except in the case of perjury that is lying before the Commission. That is why I do not, at this stage, propose to set up such a Commission of Inquiry.

This being said, I should not be understood to imply that I am against the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry. Should the need be felt to do so after or during the Police investigation, I would not hesitate to set up such a Commission of Inquiry. I will also add that there have been Fact Finding Committees and Commissions of Inquiry in the past, and various aspects of the prisons systems were inquired into and various recommendations were made and implemented.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know what damage the prison at Grand River North West has suffered? Have the authorities been able to put a value on the damages caused?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid, I have not been able to complete the exercise; they are actually in the process of doing so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that the authorities had been repeatedly warned that trouble was brewing at that prison?

The Prime Minister: We even had people saying that. But, in fact, we know that some people are complaining all the time in the prisons; that is the case.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure that the hon. Prime Minister is aware that, as from Sunday evening, there is a *véritable psychose* in the country, people are very worried. The Prime Minister has listed the actions taken. Can I ask him what actions will be taken to reassure the population and cool things as far as this *psychose* is concerned?

The Prime Minister: As I have said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained all the actions and I can repeat them. I must say that the Police have acted very promptly, 23 fugitives have already been captured and the Police is actively engaged, as I said, throughout the country, to try to capture the remaining 11, and they expect to be able to capture them very soon. In the meantime, as I have said, I have taken all the contingency plans that we should in such a case, including, as I said, SMF being posted at both Beau Bassin and Grand River North West Prisons, a unit of SSU at *Petit Verger* Prison and also road blocks by the SMF, which is operating on a 24-hour basis. We have also mobilised the other units of the Police Force and we have also put the National Coast Guard and the Helicopter Unit on high alert - maximum alert, in fact - to see if anyone tries to leave the country.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Police is in presence of any report of crimes committed by those who have broken out of the jails since Sunday?

The Prime Minister: No, I don't have such report, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: So far as the CCTV cameras are concerned, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether any cameras were working at the time of the mutiny at the prison and, if yes, did they manage to produce images?

The Prime Minister: There are two things, Mr Speaker, Sir. There has been a lot of damages, including two cameras. We decided to scrap the whole system in 2009 and proceeded to have a tendering procedure because the cameras are not working as it should and, in fact, they can't even record so that we can use that later on. The screens are not good and they are breaking all the time; that is why the decision was taken in 2009 to go for a new camera system.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister said that there were no offensive weapons as such manufactured by the detainees. Does the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that the situation is unacceptable inside our prisons? Some prisoners are left free to do what they want. The hon. Prime Minister is aware that last Tuesday he confirmed to us that at Beau Bassin Prison in the Segregation and Protection Unit, which the hon. Prime Minister himself described as a highly protected area, nine detainees, including HC, were found in possession of mobile phones in that supposedly highly protected area. We can imagine what the detainees do in other not highly protected areas, including Grand River North West. Does the Prime Minister agree with me that urgent action needs to be taken to control all this?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that this is not a new situation. When the hon. Leader of the Opposition was Prime Minister himself, the same thing happened and I have records here in 2004.

(Interruptions)

I sympathise with him, I am not....

(Interruptions)

In 2004, this is what they said –

“Il brosse un même tableau, elles ressemblent plus à une ville du Far West qu’à un pénitencier. Des hors-la-loi ont instauré leur propre organisation : drogue, téléphone portable, comprimés».

What “*L’Express*” said in 2004.....

(Interruptions)

Look what the then hon. Prime Minister said ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I will quote what the hon. Leader of the Opposition said. Look at his response! I will quote “*L’Express*” -

« Il a comparé l’article. Il a dit qu’il existe des problèmes dans les prisons. Mais, il a déclaré que les faits rapportés sont exagérés. Il a annoncé une enquête de police sur le contenu du papier (c’est-à-dire « L’Express »). Il vient dire que le rapport de la NATReSA également est faux. »

(Interruptions)

What I am saying is that this situation is not new. It has existed. We are trying to redress the situation. That is why ...

(Interruptions)

Yes, mutinies, encouraged by you, people!

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Why is it that when the Labour Party is in power that there are mutinies? Because they are the people who encourage...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Order, order!

The Prime Minister: Let me tell them, if anybody has in mind to try to mutiny again, they will see what the result will be this time! In fact, I can tell them

that I am going to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with foreign countries if we have mutiny – what we will do - in this country.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, he cannot do his job!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: We have been informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that high-risk detainees were present in that prison, which is not the high security prison, which is a medium security prison as catalogued. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell me how can that be, mixing high-risk criminals in that place, with houses all around the place, including very dangerous characters who are still out there? How can this happen and how is this going to be stopped? How is Government, the Police, the Prison, going to sort out criminals and use the Prison of Beau Bassin, the three detention centres that now exist? How and when is this going to be sorted out?

The Prime Minister: I wish the hon. Leader of the Opposition would have carried out what I should have said and done instead of finding a place in Rose Belle in 2001, and then, after three years....

(Interruptions)

This is what their competency was about! In 2001, they identified a new prison plot at Rose Belle. Three years later, they decided that this was inadequate after two tenders had been launched. A third tender was about to be launched and then...

(Interruptions)

That is the delay! And now they find it a delay!

(Interruptions)

No, but you have to have space! Where do you put the bloody prisoners? On your head!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Let the hon. Prime Minister answer!

Mr Bérenger: I am not talking about Melrose. I am talking about three detention centres.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order, please! There is no need for any provocation. I am appealing to both sides of the House. There is no need for any provocation. Please!

Mr Bérenger: I am talking about the detention centres. It seems the hon. Prime Minister does not make the difference between existing detention centres – there are three of them - and the Melrose Prison. But since he has said that, yes, technically, it was found three years later that the site had to be changed and it was changed. How can he explain to me six years later that work has not started at Melrose Prison? How can he explain that?

The Prime Minister: There are two things, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is mistaken. We are talking about remand prisoners, not prisoners who have actually gone to the court and found guilty. They are remand prisoners, first of all.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Remand prisoners, not already gone to court and convicted.

(Interruptions)

Nevertheless, they are remand prisoners! Secondly, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, himself, in 2001, they identified the plot. I understand that two times tenders have been called, the tenders recalled, etc. I won't go through that again and it is only in 2004 that it was decided that the site had to be changed. I

must tell you, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is on 18 April 2005 that they decided to change and to find new sites; again, they had problems with FUEL which did not agree with the site and again later on. It is only in July 2005 that a plot of 32 *arpents* was identified and has been vested in my Office later on and there is a whole procedure of having to call for tender, of having to appoint the architect and all these things. This is the procedure.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Five years later! Mr Speaker, Sir, I listened to the hon. Prime Minister....

Mr Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister has given the reasons why.

Mr Bérenger: I was very surprised to hear the hon. Prime Minister saying that there is no problem of overpopulation in the prisons. Then, can I ask him, in the Government Programme 2010-2015, how come that in the Programme itself, I read and I quote, Mr Speaker, Sir -

“To overcome the problem of overpopulation in the prisons, Government will finalise the construction of a new high security prison at Melrose.”

Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, which is which? Today, we are told that there is no problem of overpopulation. In the Programme which I just read, it is stated that there is a problem of overpopulation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: There are two things, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Leader of the Opposition did not listen carefully. There is relatively no overcrowding in the prisons. I have just mentioned the figures. The figures are there but, in spite of that, we want to make sure that we have more space for the prisons. Let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition what he said in 2003 when he just became Prime Minister. He said -

“The House will be glad to note ...”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: No! The hon. Leader of the Opposition has to listen to what he said in 2003!

“The House will be glad to note that the problem of overcrowding which existed in our prisons some time ago is now behind us.”

(Interruptions)

That is what he said!

Mr Bérenger: Nothing done during five years! Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he had received the letter from the Prison officers at the beginning of this year – a memorandum – listing problems and warning that troubles lie ahead? What were the main issues raised and what action was taken?

The Prime Minister: Letters which are sent to me and then copied to other people, I throw in the bin. If they want to send me a letter, they should send it to me and they don't copy it to the press, to 'X', 'Y' and 'Z'. But, nevertheless, the Commissioner of Prisons is aware of these things. Lots of the complaints are unjustified - some of them are, we don't say all of them. We have a problem in the sense that when we try to put order - and I said before, the Commissioner of Prisons is a man who is very determined to put order in the prisons - as usual, when somebody tries to put order, we get all sorts of complaints. I will give an example. They wanted to watch television during the World Cup. Is this acceptable in a prison? When he says no, we get people who complain.

Mr Speaker: Let me go to the three hon. Members who have signalled their intention to put questions and then come back to the hon. Leader of the Opposition! Hon. Bhagwan! Only three Members, because time is running out.

Mr Bhagwan: Being given that the hon. Prime Minister, who is the Minister of Interior - he, himself, tends to forget that he has been and is Prime Minister and this is his third mandate as Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Let me listen to the question!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, who is also the Minister of Interior, to give the assurance to the country that there won't be any repetition of such type of prison break in the coming months, because *il n'y a jamais deux sans trois*? This is policy now!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: We can take action that we want to take, Mr Speaker, Sir, including shooting prisoners who try to leave the prison. This is coming.

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: But I cannot give a guarantee. In America, there are prison breaks. In England, there are prison breaks. So what, Mauritius is super power?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I said three only! Hon. Lesjongard and then hon. Baloomoody and then back to the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister what mode of communication do the prison officers have within the prison premises while they are on patrol?

The Prime Minister: I believe they have a system of walkie-talkie in the prison which was working in spite of what we hear and also other systems of communication that they have. The walkie-talkie was working; this is what I am told.

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Prime Minister just stated that the Grand River North West Prison is only for remand.

The Prime Minister: No, I did not say that.

Mr Baloomoody: But, is he aware that the National Human Rights Commission in its report, has, on several occasions, made recommendations that the practice of mixing convicted detainees to remand detainees should be reviewed? It made recommendations regarding the Grand River North West Prison where it said that the situation is very difficult for remand detainees and it stated in its report that we should not mix remand and convicted prisoners. May I ask Government what action has been taken to ensure that remand prisoners are not mixed with convicted prisoners?

The Prime Minister: That is why I said – and I think that is where the misunderstanding is – that we need to build other prisons. The Melrose Prison will be very appropriate for this, because then, we can separate them. We must have space.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I be allowed to put my last questions? One is: will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that, unfortunately, Police is part of the problem as far as overpopulation in the prisons is concerned? Will the hon. Prime Minister take action so that inquiries by the Police for people staying on remand will not take years and years? The case of Monvoisin, I am informed! And this adds to the pressure for mutiny, for disorder in the prisons. Will the hon.

Prime Minister see to it with the Commissioner of Police that all those inquiries are expedited?

The Prime Minister: I always say that. As the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows - he has been Prime Minister - I can only give general directives on policy. Operational procedures controlling the operations are with the Commissioner of Police very strictly, but I always say to them – whoever was Commissioner of Police before as well – that we need to expedite matters.

Mr Bérenger: Replying to a Private Notice Question on 30 March 2010 - quite recently - on the law and order situation and the situation in the prisons and replying only last Tuesday to a Parliamentary Question on the situation in the prisons, the hon. Prime Minister gave the impression that everything was fine, everything was going smoothly and so on. The hon. Prime Minister should re-read it, I read it carefully. Would the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that he was wrong and that what is required is urgent action to set things right inside the prisons, give the manpower required and take all the decisions that need to be taken concerning not only Grand River North West, but also Beau Bassin?

The Prime Minister: That is precisely what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir. I never said that everything is rosy in the country; everything can never be rosy in any country anywhere in the world. So, this is not the case. This is what I said at the end, that we are, in fact, carrying out an organisation audit of the prisons service. This is being done at the moment and this will also cover the important question of enforcement of disciplinary action.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ganoo! There are two minutes left.

Mr Ganoo: Although he seems to be complacent about the numbering prisoners on remand by arguing that now that the law has been changed, the Supreme Court can sit all year round, there is no problem of prisoners on remand,

this is not the case, because there are other accused parties awaiting trial before the Intermediate Courts or the District Courts and this is the problem. People are waiting for two or three years before being charged formally and brought before Court. This is one of the main reasons of overpopulation. As the hon. Prime Minister said, there are 700 prisoners now at Grand River North West Prison. Had this problem of speedy justice been resolved, there would not have been so many prisoners on remand and this is one of the key problems linked to overpopulation in our prisons and our criminal justice system today.

The Prime Minister: In fact, this is precisely what I have been saying. This is why I talked to the hon. Chief Justice to see whether we can accelerate the whole procedure because, as the hon. Member said, it is taking too long. We all agree with this. I thank the hon. Chief Justice and the Judiciary at large. They have accepted to have the Assizes to meet for criminal trials all the year round. It was not done before 2007. The hon. Member is a Barrister, he should know it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, can you keep quiet, please!

The Prime Minister: That is what is being done, but this is a situation that happens not just here, but in other countries as well.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question No. 1B/147 has been withdrawn. The Table has further been advised that Parliamentary Question No. 1B/145 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister will be replied by the hon. Attorney General and Parliamentary Question No. 1B/214 addressed to the hon. Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare will be replied by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister. Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister! Hon. François!

RODRIGUES – ICAC - COURT CASES

(No. 1B/135) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether in regard to cases from Rodrigues reported to the Independent Commission Against Corruption, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission, information as to the number of cases which have been referred to Court since July 2006 to date on a yearly basis, indicating in each case the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to remind the House that the ICAC, which has been established under the Prevention of Corruption Act 2002, is meant to operate as an independent body. Its operation is monitored only by the Parliamentary Committee.

Furthermore, according to section 81 of the Act, all Board members and officers of the ICAC are required to take an oath of secrecy and they have a duty to maintain the confidentiality of, and not divulge, any official information that becomes known to them, except as provided under the Act.

The information requested falls within the purview of the Parliamentary Committee.

It would, therefore, be improper for me not only to seek, but also to give such information.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister says he cannot answer the question. Once a question cannot be answered, there can't be any supplementary questions.

MISS P. S. – ALLEGED RAPE - INQUIRY

(No. 1B/136) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External

Communications whether in regard to the alleged case of rape on the person of Miss P. S. on or about 07 September 2006 reported at the Rivière des Anguilles Police station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) where matters stand in connection with the inquiry, and
- (b) whether a DNA test has been carried out to establish the paternity of the child born as a result of the alleged rape.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 02 October 2006, Miss P. S., then aged 16 and residing at Rivière des Anguilles, reported a case to the Rivière des Anguilles Police station, in the presence of her mother, where she accused three persons, H. S., V. B. and I. C. to have allegedly raped her on different occasions during the year 2005 to 2006.

An enquiry was carried out and the three persons were arrested and bailed out.

On completion of the enquiry, the matter was forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions on 22 April 2008 for advice. On 22 December 2008, the Director of Public Prosecutions called for a Social Enquiry Report in the case.

On 11 February 2009, the Social Enquiry report was forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions. On 30 March 2009, the Director of Public Prosecutions advised no further action into the case. Subsequently, the provisional charges against the three persons were struck out and the case was set aside.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that on 07 February 2007, a male child was born to Miss P. S. In the course of the Police enquiry, Miss P. S. was agreeable to a DNA test being carried out to determine the paternity of the child. I wish to thank the hon. Member for having asked the question because I am

now informed that, so far, no such test has been carried out. I am very much concerned that no such test has been carried out, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, to me, this looks like a clear dereliction of duty.

I am advised that the Commissioner of Police has initiated an enquiry into the matter to find out why the DNA test has not been carried out so far. The advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions is being sought on the course of action to be taken in the light of the request for a control blood sample test.

I have also asked the Commissioner of Police to initiate a fresh enquiry into the matter to look at the whole case again with a view to see if there is any fresh evidence that can be brought regarding the case. If any such evidence is uncovered, the matter will be submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions for reconsideration in the light of any new evidence.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister for this answer and the assurance he has given to the House. I would like to ask him whether in such cases, where matters have been struck out and so on, should we not look into measures that the alleged victims be informed because the mother of this girl has been going to the Police station on several occasions and it is only recently that she has been informed that there is no case, that it has been put aside and she has been waiting for years, I would say. Can we look into the necessary measures so that alleged victims are informed of the outcome of the cases?

The Prime Minister: I think this is right. Already this is a very sad case and not informing the person makes it even worse. I agree totally with the hon. Member. I will pass this on to the CP.

POLICE – POWERS OF ARREST

(No. 1B/137) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to arrestable offences, he will state if, following the recent arrest of a former vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Government will consider measures to review the power of arrest by the Police so as to avoid arbitrary arrests.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, the powers of arrest of the Police are provided principally under Sections 12 and 13F of the Police Act. As per Section 9 of the Act, it is the duty of the Police to take all lawful measures to apprehend persons who have committed, or who are reasonably suspected of having committed offences. Section 12 of the Act provides that a Police Officer may, without warrant, arrest any person who commits an offence within his view and whose name and address cannot be immediately ascertained. And section 13F further provides that any Police Officer, who has reason to suspect that any person who has committed or is about to commit an offence, which will endanger public safety or public order, may arrest that person and use such force as may be necessary for that purpose.

There are also specific instances where the Police have been given special powers of arrest.

However, there are judicial safeguards against arbitrary interference with the liberty of a person. In the case of *Sheriff v District Magistrate of Port Louis* in 1989, the Supreme Court held that the discretion to arrest must be exercised in a reasonable manner; in other words, reasonable suspicion must be more than a mere hunch on the part of the Police.

Mr Speaker, Sir, even in cases where the Police have an undeniable right of arrest and detain persons suspected of having committed an offence, their powers

cannot be exercised as a matter of course. A Police Officer effecting an arrest is, therefore, expected, whenever practicable, to take into consideration the totality of the circumstances, including the explanations of the suspect and the motive of the declarant.

The Police must, therefore, ensure that there are legal grounds for the arrest and that it is effected in a professional and competent manner. A total neglect of the explanations that the suspect may have to offer may well lead to the conclusion that the suspicion is not reasonable and such arrest would, therefore, be unlawful. A civil action, including claims for damages, can always be lodged against the Police and the State if an arrested person feels that he was arrested without reasonable cause. There is the case of *Dahoo v the State of Mauritius and the Commissioner of Police* in 2007. Redress can also be sought before the National Human Rights Commission. A person unlawfully arrested and detained may also apply for a writ of *habeas corpus* to a Judge of the Supreme Court for the Judge to order his release. That is according to two sections of the Criminal Procedure Act - sections 185 and 190.

Mr Speaker, Sir, although, in theory - and I say in theory - there appears that there are enough legal restrictions on the Police powers of arrest, nevertheless I am referring the matter to the Attorney General's Office to study the advisability of making the criteria of arrest more explicit in the law, so that the police are better guided in the exercise of its discretion. For example, the law could provide that, before deciding to arrest somebody, the Police may have due regard to the question whether it can reasonably be assumed that, having regard to the record, to the professional status, to the employment status of the suspect and the nature of the suspected offence, there is no significant risk of an eventual non-appearance of the person before a court for his trial, by reason of his not having been previously

arrested and provisionally charged. The Attorney General and the State Law Office are going to look into that.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the hon. Prime Minister has publicly – it is on record – been dissatisfied with the circumstances of this particular arrest, he must surely have discussed this with the Commissioner of Police. Would he inform the House as to why it took the Police four months in this particular instance to record a first statement from the suspects?

The Prime Minister: First of all, let me correct the hon. Member. I did not say that I am totally - in fact, if the hon. Member had listened to what I said on the radio, I said that the Police have acted within their powers. There is a law; they have acted within their powers. That is a different case from saying that I am not satisfied. I am saying that the Police acted within their powers; there is nothing that the Police have done that I am criticising. The hon. Member may be criticising, but I am not.

Secondly, it takes the time that it takes. Four months, in fact, some people are telling me it is actually short. Do you know there is an hon. Member - he is not here at the moment - Minister in the Government, who has an objection of departure at the moment with the Police at the Passport Office and he has to pay Rs10,000, I think, for every time ...

(Interruptions)

I am saying that this is the situation. It takes the time that it takes.

Mr Obeegadoo: My point was to record a first statement which is the first thing that the Police do when there is a complaint, a declaration. Would the hon. Prime Minister be able to tell us why bail was insisted upon when this is a well-known public personality?

The Prime Minister: I don't think bail was insisted upon. In fact, the Police did not object to bail, as far as I remember.

Mr Obeegadoo: My point was that they insisted upon bail and only yesterday, as the hon. Prime Minister may be aware, the initial charge was struck out, a lesser charge substituted therefore and the requirement of bail dropped. Does the Prime Minister have any explanation?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member knows - was I in the court at the time and asking for bail or no bail? This is a procedure that they have followed and now I understand that there is no bail. In fact, the Police did not object to bail.

Mr Ganoo: I have listened to the hon. Prime Minister very carefully. He has stated what the legal position is. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there are provisions of the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act which make it imperative for the Police to be in presence of a warrant from a Magistrate before arresting a party? So, be it for the Police Act and the District and Intermediate Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act! At the end of the day, it is the Police authorities who use their discretion in certain circumstances where they have to draw the line, whether bail should be granted or not. Sometimes the Police authorities do not use their discretion judiciously. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, therefore, should we once and for all clear all these issues by coming up with a modern Bail Act in order to solve all these issues which can cater for these types of situation?

The Prime Minister: In fact, this is in our programme, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is precisely why we mentioned it in our programme.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that no less than a Judge of the Supreme Court has now publicly gone on record, stating that the standard practice of the Police is first to arrest and then ask the person to disculpate himself, being given that it is very easy for an arbitrary arrest to tarnish the reputation of somebody who is of good repute - and I am not concerned here with any particular individual, but we are talking of protecting the average citizen from the damage that can be caused by unwarranted arrest, tomorrow it might be the Prime Minister, it might be anybody in this House ...

Mr Speaker: Please, put the question!

Mr Obeegadoo: Will the Prime Minister consider giving urgent consideration to the need to issue guidelines as may be appropriate for the Police Force, providing appropriate training because, clearly, this is also a lack of training as to the judicious exercise of the power of arrest and, eventually, appropriate legislation being introduced before the House to better regulate powers of arrest of the Police?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must remind the hon. Member that we are talking about urgent measures. This has existed for so many years. Nobody thought of urgent measures then. Other people had been arrested before. The former Deputy Prime Minister of this country had been arrested before, this has happened. We have said this. That is why I decided that this matter should be reviewed and relooked at. That is why I have asked the Attorney General to discuss with the State Law Office and to see whether we can amend the law.

CABLES – LARCENY

(No. 1B/138) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence,

Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to reported cases of larceny of cables, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, since July 2009 to date, indicating the value of the cables stolen, and
- (b) the measures that will be taken to address the issue.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 260 cases of larceny of cables have been reported for the period July 2009 to 24 June 2010, and the total value of stolen cables amounts to Rs20.6 m. Details regarding these cases are as follows -

- in 218 cases, enquiry is still ongoing;
- 3 cases have been referred to the DDP;
- 34 cases have been filed;
- 23 persons have been arrested, and
- in 5 cases, the accused have been sentenced.

As regards part (b) of question, apart from regular Police patrols, the following additional measures have been put in place by the Police to combat the thefts of cables -

- vehicle Check Points are carried out for systematic search of vehicles which can be used for the transportation of these articles;
- checks at metal scrap yards, dealers, scrap metal collectors are being carried out;

- a daily monitoring meeting at the Police Headquarters which is chaired by the Deputy Commissioner of Police in the Operations Division assisted by Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime) to analyse the situations for the past 24 hours and suggest actions to Divisional Commanders and Branch Officers, and
- a number of high level and operational meetings on security of Mauritius Telecoms network are regularly held with the Police Department.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Police Department collaborates with the Mauritius Telecom in carrying out night patrols to keep watch on its outside networking infrastructure along vulnerable routes and a hotline has been set up - I think, the number is 8989 - for reporting any suspicious activity or providing information relating to vandalism on cables. The control of copper intended for the local and export markets has also been reinforced by the Authorities.

On its part, the Mauritius Revenue Authority supervises the stuffing of containers of scrap metals and suspected containers are checked. A Risk Management Section has been created for enhancement of risk management tools and techniques to control and monitor export of scrap metals. A database of frequent exporters will be created and working relations with the Police for the exchange of information will be strengthened.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Central Electricity Board has tightened its security system, which have led to a considerable decrease in the number of cases of larceny of cables. Surveillance cameras have been installed in areas that are more prone to thefts, and CCTV cameras will also be installed at other critical sites. The security contractor responsible for the surveillance of CEB sites is also having recourse to trained dogs and dog handlers in high-risk sites, such as Ebène, to reinforce security.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, it seems that such cases have mainly occurred in the northern region of the country. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether modes of operation have been established by the Police?

The Prime Minister: The Police have enquired into modes of operation, people they suspect and I don't want to give details of this in the House.

DETAINEE G. K. P. – CHILD BIRTH - REGISTRATION

(No. 1B/139) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to why detainee Mr G. K. P. was, last week, not allowed to register the birth of his child.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, section 46(1) of the Reform Institutions Act 1988 provides that a Magistrate may, by written direction, authorise a detainee to leave an institution under escort for the purpose of declaring the birth of the child.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that, in the case of detainee Mr G.K.P., no court order was obtained to authorise the detainee to leave the Beau Bassin Central Prison for the purpose of declaring the birth of the child. In fact, the District Magistrate of Port Louis District Court No. 3 had refused to issue a court order because detainee Mr G.K.P. had previously escaped from Police custody twice.

I am also informed that, on 21 June 2010, the child was declared by the mother and registered at the Civil Status Office of Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital.

Mr Baloomoody: Mr Speaker, Sir, in this case, it is true that the Magistrate refused a court order. But is the hon. Prime Minister aware that Civil Status Officers are allowed to go to the prison for marriage, but not to register a child?

The Prime Minister: In other words, you can marry, but you can't make children in prison.

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Prime Minister would be aware that the right for a child to bear the name of his father is a fundamental human right. What I am asking the hon. Prime Minister is to look into the matter, to ensure that facilities be given to detainees to declare their children even if they are in prison.

Mr Speaker: But the problem is that the hon. Prime Minister has answered the question and said that, as the law stands, the Magistrate refused to give the order. Now, the question should be whether the hon. Prime Minister will consider amending the law for Civil Status Officers to have access to the prisons for declaration of birth.

Mr Baloomoody: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to look into the matter and amend the law to ensure that Civil Status Officers can enter the prisons?

Mr Speaker: Yes. It is so simple!

The Prime Minister: It is a good suggestion, because it does not make sense that you can go and do marriages, but you can't do so to declare children. I will look into that.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACT - AMENDMENTS

(No. 1B/140) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the last recommendations of the

Economic and Social Council of the United Nations on Human Rights, he will state if Government will consider amending the Protection of Human Rights Act with a view to giving the National Human Rights Commission a specific mandate to deal with economic, social and cultural rights.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that Mauritius was reviewed on its country report on measures taken and progress achieved in observance of economic, social and cultural rights at the 44th Session of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights held in Geneva from 03 to 21 May 2010. This report had been submitted to the UN Committee on economic, social and cultural rights in January 2009, as part of our obligations as signatory of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The review exercise was attended by a delegation headed by our Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, and made up of representatives from the Office of the Attorney General's Office and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, respectively.

Following the review exercise, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights submitted its concluding observations, in which it recommended, *inter alia*, that the Constitution be amended with a view to enshrining economic, social and cultural rights on an equal footing with other constitutional rights, and the Protection of Human Rights Act 1998 be amended in order to give the National Human Rights Commission a specific mandate to deal with economic, social and cultural rights.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the House to the Government Programme 2010-2015, which mentions the need for -

“a constitutional regime that will strengthen our democracy, promote nation-building and further entrench the fundamental rights and freedom of all Mauritians”.

It was further announced that Government would start wide-ranging consultations, and would appoint a team of constitutional experts to assess the application of the Constitution and consider appropriate constitutional reforms. The issue on the need to afford constitutional protection to economic, social and cultural rights will be looked into in the context of these consultations.

Mr Obeegadoo: To follow the same logic, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister state whether Government is considering signing up to the second optional protocol on economic, social and cultural rights, as is being requested by Amnesty International across the world?

The Prime Minister: Not at this point in time.

DATA PROTECTION ACT – SMEs - FEES

(No. 1B/141) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to annual fees payable under the Data Protection Act, he will state -

- (a) the amount of fees thereof collected since its introduction to date, and
- (b) whether Government proposes to exempt the Small and Medium Enterprises from the payment thereof and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, since the introduction of registration fees for data controllers under the Data Protection Act, an amount of Rs6,218,400 has been collected from May 2009 to 23 June 2010.

In regard to part (b) of the question, there is no provision under the law, as it is, for the exemption of fees.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, this law has been passed in order to accreditate Mauritius as an adequate jurisdiction to attract BPO activities from Europe. So, it is meant to attract big businesses. But the unintended consequence is that small proprietorships are also required to register under the Act, failing which they are subject to very severe penalty and even imprisonment. Will the hon. Prime Minister consider amending the law to exempt the Small and Medium Enterprises for which the Act was not intended, and to waive the fees payable under the Act?

The Prime Minister: I understand what the hon. Member is saying about the unintended consequences. I will certainly discuss with my colleague, the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development. I know there is a system of registration being reviewed and simplified at this moment. It is envisaged to come up with the online electronic system to facilitate registration. Maybe we should look as to whether this can be done at the same time.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the problem is that even a single proprietor, so long as he keeps personal data on one client, is required to register under the law, and he is made to pay fees on an annual basis. I would like to add another question to that. In addition to considering the exemption of the fees, maybe what should be done is to exempt all the small enterprises and sole proprietors from registration outright from the Data Protection Act.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would have to discuss with the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development to look at the financial implication. But I have taken on board what is being said by the hon. Member.

PMO – MR J. S., – SENIOR ADVISER

(No. 1B/142) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to Mr J. S., Senior Adviser attached to his office, he will state –

- (a) the date of his appointment, indicating the terms and conditions of his contract, and
- (b) whether he is still in office.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, Mr J. S. was appointed on contract as Senior Adviser on Information Technology matters in my Office with effect from 10 August 2005. I am tabling a copy of the terms and conditions of his contract.

Regarding part (b) of the question, Mr J. S. is no longer in office. His contract was not renewed after 09 August 2009, and was brought to an end on 14 May 2010.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the gentleman has been representing the Prime Minister or his Office on Boards, be it parastatal or Government-owned companies?

The Prime Minister: It might have been when we felt there was a need for somebody from there, but I am not aware of such, Mr Speaker, Sir. As if permanently on a Board, I am not aware.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether this gentleman has represented the hon. Prime Minister or his Office in official missions pertaining to specific duties?

The Prime Minister: For an official mission, it is not an adviser who represents the Prime Minister or my Office. He might be part of a delegation, but he is not the one who represents the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's Office.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has inquired if this gentleman, Mr J. S, has obtained duty-free facilities apart those from his initial office held at the Prime Minister's Office?

The Prime Minister: He is allowed to certain facilities, which he has made use of, I am sure, but nothing additional.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House accordingly whether such facilities are obtained elsewhere in other Boards?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure. Unless he is entitled, he cannot get duty-free facilities.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member is on a fishing expedition.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the Prime Minister whether he is aware - or to inquire - if that person has used his official capacity as Adviser to his office to import horses in Mauritius?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: He has used his capacity as Adviser to import horses! The hon. Member is on a long fishing expedition here, he is going from fish to horses, but I am not aware of this.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that the appointment of such type of advisers leads to conflict of interests....

Mr Speaker: No, this does not arise from the original question! Next question, hon. Lesjongard!

MR J. P. I. - POLICE CUSTODY– DEATH

(No. 1B/143) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the death of Mr J. P. I. in Police custody on 04 March 2006, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the death of late Mr J.P.I. occurred on 04 March 2006 whilst he was at the Beau Bassin Central Prison and not in Police custody as mentioned in the question.

I am also informed that a Police inquiry was immediately instituted to shed light on the matter and upon completion of the inquiry, the case file was, on 21 April 2006, forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for decision for the holding of a Judicial Enquiry into the case of the death of late Mr J.P.I.

On 19 December 2006, the Director of Public Prosecutions advised the holding of a Judicial Enquiry before the Rose Hill District Court. Hearings started on 10 September 2007 and ended on 22 April 2009.

I am further informed that following the findings of the Judicial Enquiry, the Director of Public Prosecutions, on 04 September 2009, advised no further action in the matter.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a reply to a similar question in 2006, the Prime Minister informed the House that in an interim report it was indicated

that this was a case of gross negligence. Do we have the same conclusion for the final report?

The Prime Minister: All that I can say, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the Director of Public Prosecutions, after the holding of the Judicial Enquiry before the Rose Hill District Court, advised no further action in the matter. There must be reasons for that.

Mr Bérenger: I do not know if the hon. Prime Minister has the information, but it is true, as we were discussing the situation inside prisons earlier on, according to my information, that that person was recorded as being alive and having his meals and so on for days after he had died. It was not noticed that he was dead, he was left there and it was recorded that he was present here and there and as having his meals and so on for days.

The Prime Minister: I have heard of this, Mr Speaker, Sir. It just shows exactly, since the question was on prisons, what kind of a system we have. How can Prisons Officers say that somebody was alive when he was already dead?

Mr Baloomoody: Was there any departmental inquiry, at least, to find out whether there has been negligence? There may not have been a criminal negligence, but there must have been administrative negligence following what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said. My question is whether there has been a departmental inquiry?

The Prime Minister: As I said, there was a Police inquiry into the case and this was forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

CENTRAL FLACQ TRAFFIC CENTRE – STUDENTS – VIOLENCE CASES

(No. 1B/144) **Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to reported cases of violence committed on students at the Central Flacq Traffic Centre since the beginning of the year to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number, and
- (b) the remedial actions that will be taken to avert the recurrence thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since the beginning of the year, seven cases of violence committed on students at the Central Flacq Traffic Centre have been reported to the Police. All these cases are under investigation.

I am advised that the following measures have already been taken by the Police to combat violence perpetrated on students at the Central Flacq Traffic Centre -

- (i) policing at the traffic centre has been reviewed and reinforced so as to render Police more visible in the area. Special directives for policing at the traffic centres have been issued;
- (ii) the Divisional Support Unit (DSU) supported by the Divisional Traffic Police (DTP), Emergency Response Services (ERS) and *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs* are performing regular patrols and checks;
- (iii) crackdown operations are organised jointly with the *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs* and the National Children's Council with a

view to discouraging students from loitering around and become easy preys to violence;

- (iv) Police patrols are being intensified at the Central Flacq Traffic Centre and also in the proximity of educational institutions as a preventive measure to combat violence against students, and
- (v) a Safety and Security Week will be organised at the Central Flacq Youth Centre from 26 August to 05 September 2010 with a view to working closely with the community in the fight against crime and ensuring a safer environment.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! Hon. Fakeemeeah!

STATE LAND - LEASE

(No. 1B/148) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State land, exceeding half acre, he will state –

- (a) the number of plots thereof leased during the year 2009, indicating -
 - (i) the names, addresses and the age of the lessees;
 - (ii) the terms and conditions;
- (b) if he is aware that there has been any transfer of the lease thereafter and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken, and
- (c) whether Government will consider inviting tenders for the lease thereof.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, the information requested is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as it is available.

In regard to part (b) of the question, conditions in the offer of lease already provide for lessees to seek the approval of my Ministry prior to effecting any transfer, and transfer is thus not automatic to ensure that it is not motivated by speculation.

In regard to part (c) of the question, the State Lands Act provides that leases of State lands shall be either by public auction or by private contract. But, it has never been the practice to invite tenders for the lease of State lands. Public auctions are no longer resorted to as leases, through this process, would be awarded only to the highest bidders, thus, favouring only the rich and wealthy and running counter to Government policy to democratise access to land.

Leases on State lands are granted after examination of the project proposals, with particular attention to the viability of the project and the proposals are submitted to Cabinet for consideration. Additionally, the State Lands Act, as amended by the Finance Acts 2008 and 2009, sets the rentals of all industrial sites.

MINISTRY OF TOURISM & LEISURE – ADVISERS

(No. 1B/149) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to advisers posted at his Ministry, he will state -

- (a) their names, and
- (b) the terms and conditions of their contract, indicating the allowances drawn by them.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the following five Advisers are in post at my Ministry -

- (i) Mr Bolanath Chureetur, as Senior Adviser on Tourism Development and Marketing Issues;
- (ii) Mr Joel Rault, as Senior Adviser on Tourism Product Development;
- (iii) Mr Roger Marie Lysis Assy as Senior Adviser on Project Implementation and Monitoring;
- (iv) Mr Ranjeet Maybadee as Adviser in Public Relations matters, and
- (v) Mr Yan Vincent Seetaram as Adviser on Information matters.

Their contracts of employment are governed by the usual terms and conditions as approved by the PRB and the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am circulating the details being requested at part (b) of the question.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Minister lay on the Table of the Assembly the number of special advisers recruited in the year 2009-10 and their qualifications and past employment?

Mr Bodha: This is being done.

Mr Speaker: The contracts are being circulated as for the question that the hon. Member has asked. If he has any other new question, he can come with it.

TOURISM AUTHORITY – CONSTRUCTION WORKS

(No. 1B/150) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the construction works carried out by the Tourism Authority, during 2009 and from January 2010 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to –

- (a) the nature of the works in each case, and
- (b) whether any tendering procedures were followed and, if not, why not.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that during 2009 and for the first six months of 2010, the Tourism Authority has carried out construction works in connection with the following projects -

- (i) renovation and rehabilitation of the Citadel, and
- (ii) renovation of the Ex-SMF Museum

I am informed that the Citadel needed major repairs and renovation. The objective of restoring the Citadel which had been constructed in 1840 and classified as a national heritage site is to recreate, what we call, *l'atmosphère d'antan*. The works which started in August 2008 comprise the following -

- (1) waterproofing;
- (2) partitioning works;
- (3) renovation of toilet blocks;
- (4) pipe works and drainage amenities;
- (5) handrails;
- (6) windows and doors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the works at the Ex-SMF Museum were meant for the rehabilitation of the building which had fallen into disuse with a view to

transforming it into a modern facility for the purpose of holding concerts and plays and to be used by other artists among other activities. The works consisted mainly of repairing the flooring and replacing the windows and doors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that in addition to these projects, embellishment works have also been undertaken by the Tourism Authority across the island. In fact, I answered a question on this last week, Mr Speaker, Sir. The works included planting and maintenance of trees and shrubs, supply of tubular bins for maintenance of cleanliness of the destination, fixing and installation of poster panels around the island for the control of illegal fly-posting, for example, during the elections.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that prescribed tender procedures have been followed in respect of the above-mentioned projects, where appropriate.

PORT AREA - CEMENT PROJECT

(No. 1B/151) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the new cement project in the Port Area, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board of Investment, information as to –

- (a) the extent of the land involved and its exact location;
- (b) the names and addresses of the Promoters, and
- (c) the date the Environment Impact Assessment Licence was approved and issued, indicating the conditions attached thereto.

The Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr D. Virahsawmy): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

The EIA application for the new cement project was received at the Ministry of Environment & Sustainable Development on 08 March 2010. According to the EIA Report and Letter of Reservation from the Mauritius Ports Authority, the land involved is of an extent of 6.5 hectares, comprising two contiguous plots of 4.0 hectares and 2.5 hectares within the zone 1 of the Free Port Area.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Binani Cement Factory (Mauritius) Ltd is the promoter of the cement project. The address is 3 Port Zone I Marine Road Mer Rouge.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c), the grant of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) licence was approved by the Minister on 30 April 2010. The EIA licence was issued on 03 May 2010 subject to a set of 25 conditions. I am tabling the list of conditions attached thereto.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether clinker will be imported and used in the process of making cement?

Mr Virahsawmy: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the views of the City of Port Louis and the Port Authority have been taken concerning the use of clinker within the region of the Port and Port Louis?

Mr Virahsawmy: Mr Speaker, Sir, all these have been taken into consideration.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister who prepared the EIA Report?

Mr Virahsawmy: This is personal for the promoter. I must say that the promoter is also operating a major cement plant in Jebel Ali Free Port area in 2 million metric tonnes plants in Rajasthan in India and a 2.5 million metric tonnes project in China.

Mr Bhagwan: When somebody prepares and submits an EIA report, in terms of transparency, it must be known to the public, stakeholders and all those who want to have information on the EIA.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bundhoo is not the Minister! He has been downgraded!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please! Let the hon. Minister answer the question. Carry on!

Mr Virahsawmy: Mr Speaker, Sir, the EIA report is published on the website of the Ministry and it is public.

Mr Bérenger: Is the hon. Minister aware whether there were objections when the EIA request was made? If yes, how many and whether there has been any appeal against the granting of the licence?

Mr Virahsawmy: Mr Speaker, Sir, seven public comments were taken into consideration by the EIA Committee and there have been two appeals in front of the Tribunal. One of the companies, Holcim, has withdrawn its appeal. The second one, La Farge, has still its appeal and has asked for some time.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: The Minister of Housing informed the House that there was a mega project, the 'Neotown' project. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the views of the promoter have been sought?

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member is not the Minister! Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the views of the promoter of 'Neotown' have been sought concerning that project?

Mr Virahsawmy: Whatever views which are required have been taken care of by the EIA Committee.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether a transport impact assessment has been prepared and submitted to Government with regard to the transport of clinker in and out of the factory?

Mr Virahsawmy: This has been considered. As it is within the Port area, there won't be long distance of transport.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the fact that such a clinker plant has been implanted in the Dubai Port and Rajasthan, there is no excuse because Port Louis is a different set-up. It is a small area and surrounded by mountains and the situation will be more difficult in winter time with the winds. Is the hon. Minister aware that the cement industry is responsible for about 5% of the world industrial climate change emission and that this cement clinker project will impact on Port Louis by releasing toxic organic compound such as furans and dioxide?

Mr Virahsawmy: It is a clinker plant, Mr Speaker, Sir, not a whole cement factory and all these have been taken into consideration. I do not understand why the Opposition is against competition when we are trying to reduce

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

FLAT ISLAND – RESTAURANT

(No. 1B/152) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to Flat Island, he will state –

- (a) whether a restaurant is operating thereat and, if so, by whom;
- (b) if the land on which stands the restaurant has been the subject of a lease indicating -
 - (i) the name of the lessee;
 - (ii) the terms and conditions of the lease, and
- (c) whether he will table a copy of the recent joint Report of the Mauritius National Park and Mauritius Wildlife Foundation, following their last visit to the island.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the lessee, i.e. Discover Mauritius Ltd., that a restaurant is being operated on Flat Island.

With regard to (b), the answer is yes. In fact, the islet has been leased to “Discover Mauritius Ltd”, a private company fully owned by Government, for the purpose of developing an eco-tourist project while reinstating and preserving the natural environment of the islet. The lease agreement contains no less than 50 conditions including a provision that the lessee shall not be allowed to use 135,000

m² on Flat Island for eco-touristic and recreational purposes, whereas the remaining area of the islet would be under conservation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, I have to inform the House that there is no such institution as the Mauritius National Park. If the hon. Member is referring to the National Parks and Conservation Service, there is a joint report by this Service and the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation on a problem of shrews at Flat Island and appropriate action is being taken. This expedition was commissioned by my Ministry following report received that rodents had been seen on Flat Island. A copy of the report is being tabled.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must also inform the House that before the lease, Flat Island was in a deplorable and neglected state. There were regular fire outbreaks and abuse by the public who were illegally camping there. There were also reported cases of bird poaching, including the "Paille en Queue". I am also informed that at the time of the lease, some ten tonnes of garbage were laying waste on the islet which was subsequently removed by Discover Mauritius Ltd. Since Flat Island is both a recreational destination, highly popular among Mauritians and tourists, and a Nature Reserve, Government decided to lease the islet to Discover Mauritius Ltd, a fully Government-owned company. This was done with a view to safeguarding the biodiversity on the island and maintaining it in a clean and tidy state. The lease agreement provides that Discover Mauritius Ltd should reinstate and preserve the natural environment of the islet, while at the same time develop an ecotourism project on part thereof. I must also inform the House that since the islet has been leased, most of the above problems have been contained.

Since the signing of the lease in July 2007 by the Conservator of Forests and Discover Mauritius Ltd, a Monitoring Team comprising officers of the NPCCS,

Forestry Services, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Mauritian Wildlife Foundation has been set up to ensure compliance with the conditions of the lease agreement.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is agreeable to table the report made by the National Parks and Conservation Service?

Mr Speaker: The hon Minister has said yes.

Mr Faugoo: I am tabling the report.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: One supplementary question, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether his attention has been drawn to the lessee, the one who has obtained the contract to run a restaurant, and the non eco-friendly things that have been installed on the island which are against all environmental norms?

Mr Faugoo: This is not true, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: One last question!

Mr Bhagwan: Is the hon. Minister agreeable for a joint Parliamentary surprise visit on the island?

(Interruptions)

'Alle guetté ki pe passé lor l'île, nek fer tapaz!'

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is a question from the hon. Member asking whether the hon. Minister is prepared to have a joint Parliamentary surprise visit. Would the Minister please answer?

Mr Faugoo: I do not see the need of any such expedition at this stage. If the hon. Member wants to go and visit, he is welcome.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let me listen! Order! There is a supplementary question! Wait, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, if when calculating the annual rental value of the lease, the valuer did take into account the profitability and monopoly of operating an exclusive restaurant mainly for tourists on that island?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please! Order!

Mr Faugoo: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, before the lease, the state of the islet was in a very deplorable state. So, one of the main ideas behind leasing the islet was to support the conservation, it was proclaimed a conservation area, Mr Speaker, Sir. As far as the rent is concerned it is Rs60,000 per annum since it is a Government company. But I must point out to the House that this has fetched some Rs2,425,000. to Government in the three years, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Bhagwan!

SOLID AND HAZARDOUS WASTE - COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL

(No. 1B/153) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to solid and hazardous waste, he will state -

- (a) the measures taken for their collection and disposal, and

- (b) if Government proposes to review the measures, in line with the *Maurice Ile Durable* Project.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée):

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the collection and disposal of solid wastes and hazardous wastes is carried out in three phases, namely –

- (i) collection of wastes which is effected by Local Authorities and my Ministry, through both in-house services and contracted out services;
- (ii) transportation of wastes, which is effected by vehicles owned by Local Authorities and those of contractors from across the islands. Hazardous wastes are transported by the generators themselves under secured conditions and in accordance with the appropriate hazardous waste regulations and under the guidance of my Ministry, and
- (iii) disposal of the wastes at the Mare Chicose sanitary landfill, which is the only disposal site on the island.

Mr Speaker Sir, as far as hazardous wastes in particular is concerned, at present only certain categories of solid hazardous wastes are disposed of in a special hazardous waste cell at the Mare Chicose Landfill, in accordance with international norms and specifications.

In regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House, that in line with the Government Programme 2010-2015, my Ministry is currently working on a coordinated and integrated solid waste management programme focussing on the concept of *Maurice Ile Durable*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am also laying a statement on the Table of the National Assembly on that matter.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Minister, at present, how many transfer stations are operational?

Mr Aimée: There are five, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that normally a transfer station is supposed to be environmental friendly? But, because of the volume of waste, the existing transfer station has been converted into open dumps which are causing a lot of hardships to the inhabitants of the region surrounding the different transfer stations.

Mr Aimée: Yes, the decision over the five transfer stations has been taken before my arrival at the Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: The present state of the transfer station was supposed to crush waste. The transfer station has been converted into open dumps. Wastes are stockpiled, causing a lot of havoc in the region.

Mr Aimée: Actually, we are upgrading certain transfer stations and if there is any open air landfills, as the hon. Member said, I will see that the needful is done.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like the hon. Minister to state to the House if there is any national policy for the collection and disposal of solid and hazardous wastes? If not, why?

Mr Aimée: I have already answered to that question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Regarding hazardous wastes, is the hon. Minister satisfied that the collection and disposal of hazardous wastes in Mauritius are being done

according to international norms, that there are no hazardous wastes which are being dumped in the open air, as is the case now?

Mr Aimée: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, all precautions have been taken and there is no disposal, as the hon. Member said, in open air for hazardous wastes.

Mr Speaker: Yes, last question!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Minister what is his policy concerning e-waste - scrapped computers, IT materials, old televisions and so on? Is there a policy of Government as far as e-waste is concerned?

Mr Aimée: We are working on a policy for that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Minister has just replied that hazardous wastes are well disposed of and are not thrown in the open air. I am stating that, in fact, not only hazardous wastes are thrown in the open air, are dumped in open fields, but also e-waste is thrown anywhere.

Mr Aimée: I do not have this information, Mr Speaker, Sir. If the hon. Member informs me where it is, I will check it.

Mr Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.42 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair

HIGGINSON ROAD, QUARTIER MILITAIRE - UPGRADING

(No. 1B/154) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the upgrading and rehabilitation of Higginson Road from Quartier Militaire to Saint Julien d'Hotman, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, tender document is under preparation. In the meantime land acquisition procedures are on.

**VUILLEMIN FOREST OFFICE-PITON DU MILIEU RESERVOIR –
ROAD**

(No. 1B/155) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the road from Vuillemin Forest Office to Piton du Milieu reservoir, he is aware of the hardships caused to planters of ex-tea belt for the transportation of sugarcane and, if so, state where matters stand regarding the upgrading thereof.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to this question.

In a reply to PQ No. B/602 in June 2009 on the issue, the then Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands had indicated that the Moka-Flacq District Council was not in a position to undertake the resurfacing of this road estimated at Rs15 m. due to financial constraints and also because the road was not frequently used by commuters except sugarcane lorries.

I am informed by the Moka-Flacq District Council that the road which is 8.2 kilometres has been overgrown with bushes and there is a river crossing it which implies that a new bridge will have to be constructed. All these works are estimated to cost Rs54 m. and the Council has maintained its decision not to proceed with the implementation of the project due to unavailability of funds.

Nevertheless, after consultation with my colleague, the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, we are looking into the formula of joint venture to implement the project in a very near future.

Mr Dayal: Can I request the hon. Minister to speed up matters? Otherwise, it defeats the whole purpose of leasing the land to the small planters.

Mr Aimée: Yes, Sir.

CIRCONSTANCE, ST PIERRE - MUSLIM CEMETERY & INCINERATOR

(No. 1B/156) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the fencing of the land earmarked for a Muslim cemetery and incinerator at Circonstance, St Pierre, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a plot of land of the extent of 3A 48 at Circonstance, St Pierre had been acquired on 09 November 2009 and vested on 20 November 2009 in my Ministry for extension of the existing cemetery and the construction of an incinerator with parking facilities and other amenities by the Moka-Flacq District Council.

I am also informed by the Moka-Flacq District Council that the fencing of the cemetery, construction of an incinerator and building to house same and toilet will cost around Rs20 m. Given that the required funds are not available, the project has been included in the list of priority projects of the Local Infrastructure Fund for year 2011.

Mr Dayal: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again I will request the hon. Minister to speed up matters because this problem has been dragging for more than a decade and, as we say, the degree of a nation's civilisation also depends on how it treats the deceased.

Mr Aimée: I will see to it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

CAMP FOUQUEREAUX-ALMA – WATER PIPES

(No. 1B/157) Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the replacement of water pipes from Camp Fouquereaux to Alma, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to where matters stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Camp Fouquereaux-Alma pipeline consists of a very old pipe (400 mm and 300 mm diameter) made of asbestos cement and cast iron laid more than 50 years ago.

I am informed by the CWA that it will replace the pipeline to cater for water demands of Alma, Dagotière, Verdun, Nouvelle Découverte/Ripailles, part of Quartier Militaire, and the future demands of Highlands development.

I am further informed that CPB has approved the award of the contract on 03 June 2010 and the letter of award will be issued to the contractor in the coming days. I am glad to inform the hon. Member that following his sustained efforts the works are scheduled for completion within 18 months.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received a request from the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development to the effect that Parliamentary Question addressed to him be taken out of turn. I take it that there is no objection and I call hon. François.

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY – COMPANIES - CONTROL

(No. 1B/159) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to private companies set up by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to –

- (a) whether there is any formal control and monitoring mechanism, set up to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Ministry of Finance and, if not, why not;
- (b) if any financial statements are available, and
- (c) if any audit has been carried out in their activities.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Executive Council of the RRA has set up seven private companies between June 2006 and April 2010. These companies are Rodrigues Trade and Marketing Co. Ltd, Discovery Rodrigues Co. Ltd, Rodrigues General Fishing Co. Ltd, Rod Clean Co. Ltd, Rodrigues Water Company Ltd, Air Rodrigues Ltd. and Rodrigues Housing Property Development Co. Air Rodrigues Ltd. incorporated in April 2009, is dormant.

My Ministry informed the RRA, on 05 June 2008, that these companies would have to -

- comply with the provisions of the Companies Act;
- follow a policy of transparency and good governance;
- be financially sustainable and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly should not provide any subsidy directly or indirectly to the companies, and
- submit a Business Plan together with an Annual Audit Report.

I am informed that the RRA has set up control and monitoring mechanisms with respect to the private companies created by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The House may wish to note that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has, on 16 December 2008, voted the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (Investment

Management) Regulations to devise mechanisms for exercising control over the investment of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. Investment, in this context, refers to shareholding in a company. The following provisions have been made in the Investment Management Regulations -

- any company in which the Rodrigues Regional Assembly shall hold investments shall be registered in accordance with the Companies Act 2001;
- in the exercise of its functions, the company shall adopt and follow a policy of transparency and good governance;
- the Board of Directors of a company shall ensure that sound financial principles are adhered to and as far as possible the operating costs of the company are covered by the revenues generated from activities of the company, and
- the Commissioner to whom the responsibility of the company is assigned by the Executive Council shall table the Business Plan of the company in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly within a year of the setting up of the company.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is the responsibility of the Commissioner to whom the responsibility of the company is assigned, to ensure that appropriate control and monitoring mechanisms are put in place to ensure compliance with instructions relating to public money. In this context, under Section 17 of the Investment Management Regulations relating to the Powers of the Commissioner, the Commissioner to whom the responsibility of the company is assigned may give general policy directions to the Board of the private company as he considers

necessary in the public interest. In addition, the Board needs to furnish such information in respect of activities as the Commissioner may require.

The Regulations, further, specify that the accounts of the company shall be audited by a qualified auditor in accordance with the Companies Act 2001 and the annual financial statements should be examined and audited not later than four months of the end of every financial year. The Board of Directors shall then publish a Report in relation to the company's function, activities, affairs and financial position in respect of the previous financial year and include, therein, a copy of the audited accounts. A copy of the report shall be tabled at the Rodrigues Regional Assembly by the Commissioner to whom the responsibility of the company is assigned.

The accounts of the RRA for every year are audited by the National Audit Office. The Director of Audit is required to satisfy himself that all the laws, directions, or instructions relating to public money have been and are duly observed.

I am also informed that the Director of Audit has already reviewed the setting up of these private companies for the period ended June 2009, and has submitted his findings and recommendations to the Island Chief Executive of the RRA. As part of the scope of work, the existence of the formal control and monitoring mechanism was reviewed. In its reply to the Management letter from the Director of Audit, the RRA has stated that the Regional Assembly has voted the RRA Investment Management Regulations to provide for the proper framework and mechanism for these companies to operate efficiently and effectively.

As regards part (b), Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the financial statements of the companies have been prepared and submitted to the RRA on a

regular basis and also filed with the Registrar of Companies, as required under the Companies Act 2001. As at date, with the exception of one dormant company, namely Air Rodrigues Ltd, and the Rodrigues Housing & Property Development Company, which has been set up only this year, all the other five companies have filed their financial statements.

As regards part (c) of the question, I have been apprised that the accounts of the companies are audited annually before filing to the Registrar of Companies, as is required under the Companies Act 2001. However, the responsibility with regard to “audit of activities” rests with the respective Board of Directors of the companies. I must point out also that the “audit of activities” is different from the “audit of accounts”. Nevertheless, I am informed that the RRA monitors the activities of these companies, as provided for in the Investment Management Regulations.

Mr François: Despite the fact that these companies have been created by the RRA, finance is not an area of responsibility of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, but that of the Ministry of Finance. I would like to ask the vice-Prime Minister whether the control mechanisms he mentioned have been reviewed or set up, and if he still has a direct control on the way finance is being used by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for these companies?

Mr Jugnauth: The Ministry of Finance has no direct control over that matter, and it is precisely the objective to have the Rodrigues Regional Assembly acts as an autonomous body. It is with that in mind that we, of course, have the powers vested with the RRA to have such companies in operation. But we, as Ministry of Finance, cannot interfere with the running of those companies. But, as I have said, as far as the use of public money is concerned, precisely the Ministry of Finance made certain recommendations. I must say that I am happy that those

recommendations have been taken on board, and they have resulted in the investment management regulations of 2008. I can only hope now that the objectives that have been set up in the regulations will be adhered to quickly.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Li Kwong Wing! Page 13!

REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES – LICENCE FEES

(No. 1B/183) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to annual licence fees payable to the Registrar of Companies by domestic companies, he will state if Government will consider exempting dormant companies and the Small and Medium Enterprises from the payment thereof and, if not, why not.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr P. Jugnauth): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, currently, out of a total of 44,422 local companies on the register, only 33 are dormant. The Companies Act provides that, for a company which has been recorded as dormant, a flat fee of Rs2,000 is payable, irrespective of the type of companies.

As there is a cost associated to keeping dormant companies on the register, it is not proposed to exempt payment of registration fees to these types of companies, as they already benefit from a reduced fee of Rs2,000.

As regards small private companies, i.e. companies with a turnover of up to Rs50 m., they also benefit from an annual registration fee of Rs2,000, as compared to Rs 6,000 for large private companies, and Rs9,000 for public companies.

In addition, to encourage small enterprises registered with SMEDA to convert into companies, the registration fees payable at the time of registration/incorporation was waived in June 2009 under the Companies (Waiving of Fees)

Regulations 2009. This exemption will lapse in December 2010. There are currently some 624 such companies registered with the Registrar of Companies, i.e. those registered as SME, following the recommendations of SMEDA.

The House may wish to note that we are currently reviewing support to small enterprises generally, and any decision on whether to exempt or not these small enterprises will be taken in the light of the review.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Precisely, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that the euro crisis is likely to impact essentially on small enterprises in the textile and tourism sectors, would the hon. vice-Prime Minister consider exempting all annual fees that become payable by these new start-up companies for which the incorporation fees have been exempted? As the stimulus package funds are available for big businesses, they might as well be allocated to small businesses too.

Mr Jugnauth: As I have just said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the support to the small and medium enterprises is being reviewed and, in the light of this review, we will take whatever decision best suited in the interest of the SMEs.

The Deputy Speaker: We go back to page 7.

RODRIGUES - TRUST FUND FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS - PROJECTS

(No. 1B/158) **Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues)** asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the projects financed by the Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups in Rodrigues, since July 2006 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House -

- (a) obtain from the Trust, information as to

- (i) the number thereof;
 - (ii) the cost per project;
 - (iii) the total amount spent as at to date, and
 - (iv) the eligibility criteria and,
- (b) table a list of the beneficiaries.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, in accordance with its mandate, the Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups has financed a series of projects in Rodrigues covering, *inter alia*, assistance to vulnerable families with immediate basic needs in terms of housing units, rainwater harvesting facilities, educational support to schoolchildren and micro credit facilities as a means to increase the household income.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a)(i), (ii) and (iii) of the question, I am tabling detailed information obtained from the National Empowerment Foundation.

As regards part (a)(iv) of the question, I am informed that the eligibility criteria vary depending on the project and the type of assistance required. For instance –

- (i) for a housing unit consisting of concrete walls with CIS roof, the eligible beneficiary should not be earning more than Rs4,000 monthly, and he should hold a land lease from the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. The beneficiary should accept responsibility to provide labour for the construction of his house;

- (ii) for rainwater harvesting and provision of school materials, the household income of the beneficiary should not exceed Rs4,000 monthly excluding social aids/benefit, and
- (iii) for micro credit projects, a soft loan of up to a maximum amount of Rs50,000 is granted by DBM to each beneficiary, with a view to increasing his household earnings. The monthly household income of the applicant should not exceed Rs8,000.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the list of beneficiaries since July 2006 to date, and which concerns over 6,000 persons, is being compiled and will be tabled shortly.

Mr François: I have just one question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that none of those projects - especially for housing projects - approved since October 2008 have not been completed yet, because of the problem of shortage of money. Will the hon. Minister consider revising the management of the Trust Fund and mainly with the collaboration of NGOs in Rodrigues?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, perhaps the hon. Member can let me have a list of the projects which apparently have not been completed. Certainly, we are looking at the whole thing and I will be travelling to Rodrigues soon to see what is happening there.

RODRIGUES - MARÉCHAL SWIMMING POOL – COMPETITIONS

(No. 1B/160) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the practice of sports, he will state if it is proposed to –

- (a) organise national and international swimming competitions in the Maréchal Swimming Pool, and
- (b) make optimum use of other existing sports infrastructure and, if not, why not.

Mr Rittoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been advised that the Maréchal Swimming pool meets the Olympic norms and can be used for national and international swimming competitions.

However, as the hon. Member is aware, water supply remains a major problem for the operation of the pool, especially at a time when the inhabitants in the vicinity of Maréchal are facing acute shortage of water for domestic use.

I am further advised that the swimming pool has not been optimally operational since November 2009. However, with the recent onset of the rainy season, arrangements are being made for the pool to resume its activities shortly.

As regards part (b) of the question, all the other sports infrastructure are being optimally used by the Regional Sports Committees, *École des Sports* and sports clubs for the organisation of sports activities and training sessions, including the Malabar Gymnasium and the Camp du Roi Stadium which are the two other major sports infrastructures in Rodrigues and are in high demand.

Mr François: I have one supplementary question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Minister says that there is a water supply problem. That is correct, but the swimming pool is being supplied with water at least once. May I ask the Minister whether he considers using his good offices to support the Regional Swimming Committee to obtain their affiliation with the Swimming Federation here for the good promotion of this discipline in Rodrigues?

Mr Rittoo: As I have stated, the swimming pool has not been optimally operational since November 2000, but now, with the recent onset of the rainy

season, arrangements are being made for the pool to resume its activities shortly. As regards the affiliation, I will take the matter with the local federation here.

Mr Leopold: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can inform the House about the running costs of the swimming pool monthly and for one year in Rodrigues?

Mr Ritoo: From the information gathered, I understand that the electricity bill is Rs80,000 per month. I understand that the running costs for the swimming pool are approximately Rs200,000 per month.

Mr François: May I ask the hon. Minister whether this high cost prevents the running of the swimming pool?

Mr Ritoo: As I have stated, the cost is very high, but we are now planning to reopen the swimming pool so that all the Rodriguans can benefit from it.

MARE CHICOSE – INHABITANTS - RELOCATION

(No. 1B/161) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the relocation of the inhabitants of Mare Chicose, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as announced in the Government Programme 2005-2010, Government has been considering sympathetically the plight of the inhabitants of Mare Chicose village who have been suffering from the nuisances caused by the proximity of the landfill site. In this context, a plot of land of an extent of 12A86P at Marie Jeannie, Rose Belle, was acquired in July 2007 at the cost of some Rs39 m. for relocating the inhabitants of Mare Chicose village. Infrastructural works for the *morcellement* at the relocation site which had cost about Rs27 m. were completed in February 2009.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the exercise for the relocation and payment of compensation to the inhabitants of Mare Chicose village is being carried out in a phased manner. The first phase relates to the swapping of land of same size from Mare Chicose to Marie Jeannie, Rose Belle and the payment of compensation at replacement value of the buildings, as assessed by the Valuation Department in favour of the residential landowners. At that date, 37 letters of offer for land exchange and compensation were issued to the residential landowners, out of which 31 offers have been accepted. These cases have been referred to the Attorney General's Office for the appointment of a public notary for the drawing up of the deeds of exchange for the land and the deeds of sale for the existing building/s on the said land at Mare Chicose.

I am given to understand that some families have already been contacted by the notaries for the submission of their legal documents for the purpose of drawing up the relevant deeds. Land swapping and payment of compensation will be effected upon signature of the respective deeds.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a next step tenants and extended families living at Mare Chicose village will be offered the opportunity to purchase land at Marie Jeannie for residential purpose. In this connection, some 22 lots have been reserved at the relocation site. It should, however, be pointed out that the exercise would require an amendment to the State Land Act.

Mr Bérenger: May we know whether there are any families who are not agreeable to what is being offered?

Mr Aimée: Out of 37, 31 accepted; there are six that are not agreeable.

Mr Bérenger: May we know what is going to happen in the case of those six families?

Mr Aimée: This issue will have to be looked into by a Ministerial Committee to be chaired by my Ministry and other Ministries as well as the MPs of the region.

KENYA, VIEUX GRAND PORT – WATER SUPPLY

(No. 1B/162) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether he will state if he is aware of the difficulties encountered by the inhabitants of Kenya, Vieux Grand Port in regard to the water supply thereat and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CWA that the village of Kenya in Vieux Grand Port is supplied from Cluny borehole and that some 50 houses, situated at high elevation, experience difficulties and have to be supplied by tanker service.

Investigations carried out in the past to other ground water sources in the region have been unsuccessful.

To provide regular supply to the inhabitants of high elevations, CWA will replace some 8 kms of old pipelines from Cluny borehole towards Vieux Grand Port subject to the availability of funds.

ROSE BELLE - BUSINESS PARK PROJECT

(No. 1B/163) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the Business Park project at Rose Belle, he will state if it is proposed to revamp same and, if so, when.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Board of Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd. has already resumed action on the project which was put on hold in April 2010 for obvious reasons.

The project which concerns the construction of an office block within the Business Park in Rose Belle has already reached an advanced planning stage and the necessary onsite road network and utility development has already been undertaken.

An Expression of Interest exercise to potential tenants will be carried out prior to the implementation of the project, which is, indicatively scheduled to start during the second half of 2010.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister saying that the project was put on hold for obvious reasons. Can we be informed what were those obvious reasons?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Of course, we cannot start a project during the period of elections, otherwise it may account that it is an electoral bribe and all that.

SCHOOLS - TRUANCY

(No. 1B/164) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to truancy, he will state if his Ministry has carried out a study thereinto and, if so, the outcome thereof, indicating the measures that are envisaged to address the issue.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like, first of all, to thank the hon. Member for this question on truancy which is, in fact, linked with absenteeism and indiscipline in schools.

Indiscipline at school encompasses, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a range of issues ranging from misbehaviour, acts of violence, flouting of school authority to

truancy which is intrinsically linked to absenteeism. Often, it becomes difficult to differentiate between a genuine absence and truancy operating under the cover of an absence. Indiscipline, absenteeism and truancy have become issues of concern for the education sector in particular and the society at large.

Conscious of the need to address these issues holistically, I have, since March 2009, personally chaired a number of high-level meetings with the various stakeholders, namely, the Police, the *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*, the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, the Probation and After Care Service and the State Law Office.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to reckon with the fact that the issue of truancy cannot be seen in isolation, but rather as part of a global concern that needs to be addressed. In fact, we want to give a strong signal to the nation on the matter. Our strategy to curb indiscipline must, therefore, involve the participation and partnership of all stakeholders and society at large. The focus of this well-thought through strategy rests on -

- (i) networking between the National Education Counselling Service of my Ministry, the *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs* and the Child Development Unit;
- (ii) sensitisation;
- (iii) prevention;
- (iv) intelligence-led policing and community participation;
- (v) enforcement and educational rehabilitation, and
- (vi) 'real time' communication with parents.

The networking established between these institutions provides a platform for exchange of vital information and much headway has been made in dealing with this issue. Hence, as such the need was not felt indispensable for a study.

The meetings held with the various stakeholders on the matter have served to engineer better coordination and concerted efforts in the strengthening of the surveillance system. Progress has definitely been noted as there has been a decline in the number of cases of truancy from 712 in 2008 to 548 in 2009 and standing at 270 for the first half of this year.

An aggressive sensitisation programme has been initiated and sustained in partnership with the stakeholders at school level since 2008 to date. This programme has covered some 36,000 students and has proved its efficacy and certainly contributed towards this declining trend. However, we are not contenting ourselves with this positive result. Efforts are being pursued to bring the situation further under control with the re-orientation of the sensitisation process so as to focus as much on the responsibilities of the parents and students as to their rights.

At the school level, an internal mechanism exists on discipline related issues and it acts as deterrence to truancy, with its graded system of sanctions. We want to work towards uniformising such a mechanism through the elaboration of a Charter for discipline, therefore, empowering the schools to better deal with the problem.

Networking with the Police, particularly with the *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs* is also being reinforced and patrols and crackdown operations have been intensified in the vicinity of schools which are considered at risk and public places likely to lure students into truancy.

The Police, on their part, are adopting a three-pronged strategy based on prevention, protection and prosecution. In line with these strategic pillars, they are

having recourse to intelligence-led and community policing so as to circumscribe further cases of truancy-related indiscipline.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House will appreciate that community support is essential in this endeavour and is instrumental in helping the Police to act promptly by providing information they are privy to. Further, we are working with the Child Development Unit and the Ombudsperson for Children to better increase students' awareness of their responsibility and improve their civic behaviour, whether at school or outside.

I am glad to state that, along with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, we are finalising the details pertaining to 'real time' communication with parents through the introduction of an SMS service. This will instantly apprise parents of unexcused absences of their wards with a view to further curtailing the risk of truancy.

On a much larger scale, my Ministry is having in-depth discussions for a review of the existing legislations, including the Juvenile Offenders Act so as to find ways and means of curbing truancy, through the institutionalisation of community service and the organisation of retreats. This, I believe, will indubitably serve as a strong deterrent to juvenile offenders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the spate of measures being acted upon, while sufficiently broad and comprehensive, are certainly not exhaustive. There will undoubtedly be other avenues that will have to be explored such that truancy and its resulting ill effects can be effectively combated.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am shocked that we are becoming the only country in the world where school truants are described as juvenile offenders, where school discipline has become a matter of policing. Will the hon. Minister not agree that the fundamental problem is that of induced

absenteeism whereby students in State Secondary Schools in Form V and Form VI do not attend school - and this is not a recent problem – and it is tolerated and some even say: abetted, encouraged? Will the hon. Minister not agree to address the fundamental problem of school leadership, management, discipline so that students are encouraged to attend, and are made to find schooling relevant and interesting?

Dr. Bunwaree: Of course, this is being done, but if I go into all this, I will never end. If a proper question is put, I can tell the hon. Member what is being done to go in that direction. I never called the students, offenders, but I said that the Juvenile Offenders' Act is being looked into to take care of certain aspects of truancy and certain activities in the vicinity of schools.

Mr Obeegadoo: Will the hon. Minister tell us whether he is envisaging a new initiative to work with the Rectors of these State Secondary Schools to make sure that students do attend school which is not - and I am sure the hon. Minister will agree - the case right now?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is being done. It is the case right now. But it has not taken *la vitesse de croisière*. I can assure the hon. Member that this also is, of course, very seriously, being looked into.

Mrs Ribot: M. le président, je voudrais savoir du ministre ce qu'il compte envisager comme mesure puisque plusieurs élèves qui font école buissonnière se retrouvent dans des maisons de jeux qui sont ouvertes toute la journée. Est-ce que le ministre envisage des mesures à l'encontre de ces maisons de jeux qui sont ouvertes toute la journée?

Dr. Bunwaree: Comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, cette question a été soulevée dans plusieurs réunions de haut niveau et les résultats sont là. J'ai

mentionné des chiffres. Je suis sûr et convaincu qu'on va continuer à les améliorer et à y mettre de l'ordre. Cette question est en train d'être étudiée par le gouvernement parce qu'on a mentionné dans le discours-programme qu'on va prendre des actions importantes. En ce qui concerne la fréquentation des maisons de jeux par les enfants de l'école, je pense qu'on va très vite agir sur ce problème.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at a particular point in time, it was question to come with regulations so that students attend a particular number of days to take part in SC or HSC examinations. May I know from the hon. Minister where matters stand regarding this issue concerning the number of days to be attended before taking an examination?

Dr. Bunwaree: La régulation existe déjà en ce qui concerne des enfants qui vont prendre part aux examens de la *HSC* pour être lauréat ou non. On est en train de voir si on peut étendre cela à toutes les autres classes aussi. Une étude a déjà été faite, mais on va prendre des actions en même temps que l'établissement de carnets scolaires pour les étudiants des écoles.

Mr Leopold: Can I ask the hon. Minister, once the SMS service is fully operational, whether it will be made available in Rodrigues?

Dr. Bunwaree: Sûrement, car on est en train de voir cela, M. le président.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just answered that this is actually the case for the HSC students, because I also mentioned SC students. If it is the case, what is the percentage or number of days that these students must attend schools? We are all aware that during the third trimester, there are no pupils in schools for SC and HSC, even as from the second part of the second trimester. May we know the percentage?

Dr. Bunwaree: C'est défini en ce qui concerne la *HSC*, mais c'est à l'étude pour les autres classes. Il y a plusieurs autres choses à voir en même temps pour qu'on puisse mettre de l'ordre dans cette affaire.

Mrs Ribot: M. le président, nous savons très bien que la loi existante préconise que l'élève ne peut s'absenter, plus de jours *unaccounted for*. Il y a la complicité des parents et des médecins puisque les élèves reviennent à l'école avec des certificats médicaux. Ils s'absentent pendant trois mois et ils sont toujours éligibles pour les bourses. Je voudrais savoir quelles sont les mesures que vous préconisez pour aller à l'encontre de cette pratique malheureuse ?

Dr. Bunwaree : Comme je l'ai dit, M. le président, cette pratique n'est pas appliquée à la lettre. Je ne sais pas si on peut appeler cela 'complicité', mais il y a aussi la difficulté que les éducateurs eux-mêmes ne veulent pas prendre des actions contre les enfants à cause d'un jour en plus. Mais cet aspect doit être vu dans un ensemble de panoplie de mesures qu'on est en train de mettre sur pied pour pouvoir régler le problème fondamentalement.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. 1B/205 and 1B/216 have been withdrawn. Now we move on to PQ No. 1B/168!

PUBLIC OFFICERS – EMBEZZLEMENT – ALLEGED CASES

(No. 1B/168) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to alleged cases of embezzlement since 2004, to the prejudice of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Employees Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Limited, he will state –

- (a) if some Public Officers have been interdicted from duty in connection therewith and, if so, state their names and their posting, indicating the dates of their interdiction, and
- (b) whether interdictions have been waived in some cases and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Mr Gungah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that several cases of alleged mismanagement of funds to the prejudice of the Ministry of Health Multi-purpose Cooperative Society Ltd have been reported to the Police.

A charge of embezzlement was lodged against the President of the Society, Mr Druivendranath Bhugul, Regional Development Officer at the National Development Unit and the Secretary, Mr Mohammad Maleck Dowlut, Executive Officer, Health Services.

The case is still pending before the Intermediate Court. Mr Bhugul was arrested on 17 May 2004 and bailed out on 19 May 2004.

Mr Dowlut was arrested on 25 June 2004 and bailed out the next day. He was interdicted from the exercise of the powers and functions of his office as from 24 November 2004. He is still under interdiction pending the trial on 30 August 2010.

As regards part (b) of the question, no interdiction has been waived.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the case for which Mr Dowlut was interdicted has been struck out on 10 March 2008?

Mr Gungah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, the documents for Mr Dowlut are not at my Ministry and the prerogative of interdiction rests with the responsible officer of the particular Ministry.

Mrs Labelle: I am really surprised, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because I was expecting to know why- if the case has been struck out - this person has not been reintegrated in his post and he is being paid all this time. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned Mr Bhugul, may I know whether this gentleman too has been interdicted from duty?

Mr Gungah: No, he has not been interdicted.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is any particular reason? I think that the case regarding Mr Bhugul is a case of embezzlement for some Rs5 m. Why has he not been interdicted? May I know why there is a case of Rs235,000 which has been struck out and the person is still interdicted while, on the other hand, there is an alleged case of Rs5 m. and the person is still in service?

Mr Gungah: As I informed the hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the prerogative of interdiction rests with the responsible officer of the respective Ministry and, in this case, it is the NDU. At my Ministry level, we do not have any information.

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH EMPLOYEES MULTI-PURPOSE CO-
OPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED – INTERIM MANAGING
COMMITTEE**

(No. 1B/169) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise, Cooperatives and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the interim Managing Committee of the Ministry of Health

and Quality of Life and the Employees Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society Limited, set up on 10 June 2004, he will state –

- (a) whether the mission assigned to the Committee has been completed, and
- (b) if any monthly allowance has been or is being paid to the members thereof and, if so, indicate the quantum and the reasons therefor.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and Employees Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society Limited does not exist. However, it has been brought to my attention that it is the “Ministry of Health Employees Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society Limited” which is registered with the Co-operative Division of my Ministry. The mission assigned to the interim managing committee of the co-operative society has yet to be completed.

As for part (b) of the question, I am informed that the members of the interim management committee are being paid monthly allowances from the funds of the society for the management of same under the provisions of the Co-operatives Act 2005. However, given that a co-operative society is an autonomous private organisation, it would not be in order to disclose detailed information on the fees paid.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the allowances that are being paid have been approved by any AGM of the society as per the law?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: In fact, I do not have the information, but I will look into the matter.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether it is in order that an interim committee holds office for more than one year at a cooperative society?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: In fact, why it took so long a time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is because the turnover of the cooperative society is more than Rs10 m. and its audit has to be done by a licensed auditor. In this case it was Baker and Tilly represented by Halim Ramakhan. It took the auditor a long time to complete the work because there were many discrepancies in the accounts of the cooperative society and books of accounts and documents of the society were in the Police custody.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to the Cooperative Act 2005, section 41 (7(b)), it is clearly stated that an interim Board should hold office for a period not exceeding one year. May I ask the hon. Minister why his Ministry has let such a situation prevail for six years now and what are the measures that are being taken to put things in the legal way?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: It is not the Ministry which is at fault. It is Baker and Tilly who did not have all the documents in hand.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister who appointed Baker and Tilly or whoever auditor he has just mentioned?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: It was the caretaker Board.

Mrs Labelle: The caretaker Board has been appointed by whom?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: By the Registrar of Cooperatives.

**ERADICATION OF ABSOLUTE POVERTY PROGRAMME –
CHILDREN – SCHOOL MATERIALS**

(No. 1B/170) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme, he will state –

- (a) if all the children aged between three to five years identified under the programme have received their school materials and, if so, when, and
- (b) whether their school fees are being paid on a monthly basis regularly.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) that one of the objectives of the Eradication of Absolute Poverty (EAP) Programme is to ensure, with the collaboration of relevant stakeholders, that pre-primary school aged children not attending schools are provided appropriate support so that they can attend school regularly. The EAP offers a package of incentives to children between three and five years of age as follows –

- A meal on each school day.
- Refund of transport costs to those children who need it.
- Payment of school fees for children attending private schools.
- Provision for school material.
- Provision for pedagogical materials.
- *Accompagnement scolaire.*

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that out of 291 cases referred to NEF in January 2010, some 163 pre-primary schoolchildren under the EAP Project have received their school materials during the period January to

March 2010. However, in addition to the above, about 660 new cases have been referred to the EAP Project thereby raising the number of children to be covered as at 24 June 2010 to 823.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, clearly there has been an unfortunate delay in the provision of school materials. However, every other service mentioned above, such as meals, transport and *accompagnement* have been provided on a timely basis. I have nevertheless given clear instructions that this issue be fast-tracked and that all outstanding cases be processed within a period of two weeks.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the EAP pays school fees in respect of those children who attend private schools and that as at 24 June 2010, there were 537 children covered by EAP and going to private pre-primary schools.

As per records of the NEF, as at 25 June 2010, school fees amounting to some Rs500,650 have been paid for all zones up to the month of May 2010. Those for the month of June 2010 are being processed for payment.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that those children who have not received school materials, have been under the programme since last year? They are not new cases. I would like the hon. Minister to confirm that those who have not received, are not new cases only, that is, newly identified.

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for bringing this to my attention. I will also take up this matter to know whether there are some who long ago have not received the school materials.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a proper record which is kept by the National Empowerment Foundation on a regular basis regarding the distribution or payment effected? Do we have a proper record?

Mr Duval: We should hope so, but I will check.

Mrs Labelle: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether – according to my information - social facilitators, field workers were convened on Saturday last from 09.00 a.m. to noon to provide materials in reply to this PQ? It is only on Saturday and they were convened from 09.00 to noon to give information, which led me to believe that records are not being kept properly. Will the hon. Minister confirm whether this information is correct?

Mr Duval: I will look into it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since there is a risk that information has been compiled in the way that I have just stated, may I ...

The Deputy Speaker: This has not been stated by the Minister. The hon. Minister has said that he is going to check.

Mrs Labelle: He will check the information that officers have been convened only on Saturday to prepare information for him. I think we can doubt as to the reliability of this information.

The Deputy Speaker: It is a question of opinion.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will check to what extent this information is correct since the information has been collected in such a hasty manner?

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that this information has been done in good faith by the civil servants who were doing it. I do not think they would have said that, especially as they are admitting themselves that there has been a big delay, but I will look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has further been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. 1B/198, 1B/199, 1B/200 and 1B/201 have also been withdrawn. Now we move on to the next question. Hon. Obeegadoo!

SCHOOLS - FORM VI – ADMISSION

(No. 1B/171) **Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to admission to Form VI, he will state if Government is proposing to lower the eligibility criteria.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in line with the announcement made in the Government Programme 2010-2015, we are working towards the establishment of new and innovative pathways for students who have successfully completed the O-level/School Certificate either in the academic or technical/vocational stream, in order to improve access to upper secondary education.

The overall aim of this measure is to ultimately improve such an access without sacrificing the quality of education. Hence, it is not intended, per se, to lower the current eligibility criteria in any way, but to review these and provide more opportunities to students having passed the School Certificate by introducing a form of flexibility for their promotion to the Lower VI stream taking into account their diverse aptitudes and inclinations.

Such flexibility to facilitate movement to an upper grade will allow for possible consideration of -

- (i) a broad subject combination than what currently prevails; hence implying a wider choice among the subjects in line with the student's predilections;
- (ii) allowing students to take only two subjects at Principal Level and two at subsidiary level, and
- (iii) offering Professional HSC as an option at school.

In this regard, a Technical Committee has been set up to look into the implications of the new scheme and make recommendations for the implementation modalities.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I welcome the idea of new pathways as opposed to reducing entry requirements for a Higher School Certificate. But I would wish to ask the hon. Minister in this regard whether there has been assessment of the practice over the last few years of allowing students with only three credits at SC level to go on to the traditional HSC?

Dr. Bunwaree: In fact, the idea of coming up with this project is based on what has been happening in the last few years. I, myself, have asked for an assessment. I do not have the result with me, but it is being looked into.

Mr Obeegadoo: Will the hon. Minister consider questioning the very concept of group certificates, since Mauritius is one of the few countries which still have group certificates SC and HSC, whereby you need to pass at one and same sitting on a number of subjects? Will the hon. Minister consider the possible advisability of replacing same for instance by 'O' and 'A' Levels as was done by the UK and many Commonwealth countries years ago?

Dr. Bunwaree: This matter has also been taken up. In fact, there is a committee working on that.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, five long years ago, the idea of alternative pathways was mooted by the MSM/MMM Government with polytechnics along the Singaporean model. Do we understand that this is one of the possibilities now being envisaged?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, as much as the Foundation Programme also which has already started.

SCHOOLS - KREOL MORISIEN LANGUAGE

(No. 1B/172) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Kreol Morisien language, he will state-

- (a) if Government proposes to hold a national forum thereon, indicating its objectives, and
- (b) whether a time frame for the introduction thereof within the curriculum has been agreed to.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ No. B/92 on 30 March 2010 on this issue, I informed the House that my Ministry would be embarking on a national consultation process involving all stakeholders, namely, members of academia, researchers, pedagogues, linguists as well as those who, in one way or another, can contribute to the debate and whose inputs would be central to the discussions and deliberations of the National Forum to be organised.

The main objective of this Forum is thus to build a consensus on the implementation of the policy enunciated in the Government Programme 2010-2015. In effect, in that Programme, we have reiterated our commitment to work towards the introduction of the Kreol language and Bhojpuri as optional subjects in schools. The Programme highlights the need to consolidate and supplement existing research work so as to develop a standardised spelling and grammar essentially for the Kreol language.

As a first step in this direction, my Ministry, by way of a Press Communiqué dated 10 June 2010 has already invited interested parties to send their contributions on the matter by the 24 June 2010. In fact, we have received quite a number of contributions and they are still coming despite the date has elapsed, but we are still accepting them because a Committee is working and is looking into all these.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as pointed out in my previous reply, the implementation of the proposal for the introduction of Kreol, will have many implications in terms of the production of teaching and learning resource materials, recruitment and training of teachers, and above all, a nationally accepted and standardised written form of the language, including grammar, orthography and

other linguistic mechanics required for both spoken and written Kreol. All these will be carefully scrutinised during the Forum and, subsequently, the curricular orientation and a time frame for the introduction thereof will be worked out, in the light of the findings arising therefrom.

I propose to appoint a Steering Committee comprising, *inter alia*, experts determined consensually who will be mandated to undertake the process leading to the introduction of Kreol as an optional subject, and to propose an implementation schedule.

Mr Obeegadoo: I have a few supplementary questions, Sir. There appears to be some confusion even in the Presidential Address and in what the hon. Minister just said. Reference is being made to an optional subject, which is good, but the Presidential Address also refers to use of mother tongues to facilitate teaching and learning. Do we understand that the National Forum will address both issues, that is, use of mother tongue as medium of instruction, teaching and learning, and teaching of a subject?

Dr. Bunwaree: Of course, it will take into consideration both. In fact, the *graphie de l'harmonie*, which everybody knows now, mentions itself that "it should not be confused with the written language or the written norm of the language. The latter develops over time through a gradual process of elaboration of the written code". This is what we are doing. In fact, we have two aspects; one is the linguistic aspect, which is not ready yet. In fact, I hope that we will go very quickly. Then, there is the pedagogical aspect, where we have to set up the programme of training of teachers, looking for the resource materials and so on. It has already been mentioned in the Government Programme and I think that is a big step ahead.

Mr Obeegadoo: My good friend, the hon. Minister, has not addressed the supplementary question I just put. There are two distinct issues. One is the use of Mauritian Kreol or even Bhojpuri as mother tongue medium of instruction, to which the Presidential Address appears to commit Government. On the other hand, there is the more complicated issue of introducing subject learning of Kreol or eventually Bhojpuri. My question was: is the National Forum meant to address both issues?

Dr. Bunwaree: I said yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But what is more important is to get the Kreol language to be able to establish it as a medium of instruction. For the time being, it is the oral Kreol that is being used as a medium of instruction. But we do not have the written Kreol. We are moving in that direction.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree that we are not starting from scratch? Will the hon. Minister agree that, since 2004, there has been the standardised form of writing agreed by everybody? There has been a *Diksyoner Morisyin* produced; there has been the experience of the BEC in using the Kreol language in the pre-vocational stream and on a pilot basis in primary schooling. Therefore, will the hon. Minister agree that we need not await the conclusions of this National Forum, which may take months, and then await the Steering Committee, to start preparatory work in terms of developing the grammar, in terms of preparing manuals for teachers, in terms of preparing a teacher training programme? That can be started in parallel right now, while the National Forum, which is a good thing, goes on.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we start making a dictation in this Assembly on the Kreol language, then you will find the difficulty. All this is interesting; there is no problem on that. People come forward with various ways of

looking at it. But I think the best thing is to go in the direction of the National Forum, bring all people together, and then establish an expert committee to continue the work that has already been started. The *graphie de l'harmonie* is already a good thing. But we should work from there as quickly as possible, to be able to introduce this language *dans la panoplie des langues à l'île Maurice d'abord* and then, of course, as an optional language in school.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not mean to doubt the hon. Minister's words, but I fear it will be a repeat of the 2005-2010 experience of '*bouge fixe*'. My question is: since there was a pilot project for the use of Mauritian Kreol as medium of instruction in three schools, with the agreement of parents in 2005, under the MSM/MMM Government, which was abruptly stopped after the elections of 2005, will the hon. Minister, at least, consider starting such a pilot project, which was supported by UNESCO, right from January 2011, while the National Forum goes on with its debates?

Dr. Bunwaree: I think the hon. Member means Government schools. But, in Government schools, we need much other preparations, as I said. Materials, resources, training of teachers, educationists, and so on, have to be looked into. In fact, the MIE has already started to work in parallel, without waiting for the Forum to come, thinking of how to train the trainers, the educators. But we cannot do it offhand like this. It is interesting if it is in one or two schools, but for us to move ahead, I think we are in the right direction in what we are doing. In fact, we have gone quite steps further.

Mr Obeegadoo: Do I understand the hon. Minister to agree that a pilot project in a select number of schools can be started in January next year?

Dr. Bunwaree: I did not mention in January. We will wait for this Forum and then we will decide on the course of action.

ROAD DECONGESTION PROGRAMME – GRNW - BRIDGE

(No. 1B/173) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Road Decongestion Programme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority if consideration will be given for the erection of a bridge over the Grand River North West from the A1 Road at Beau Bassin to join the M1 at Sorèze.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this project is included in the Road Decongestion Programme.

LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY & ROAD DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

(No. 1B/174) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Road Decongestion Programme, he will state where matters stand regarding the setting up of -

- (a) the Land Transport Authority, and
- (b) the Road Development Company.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following a competitive tender exercise, SIPU International AB, a Swedish firm, has been selected to plan and design the organisational structure of the MLTA. My Ministry is presently having discussions with the consultant.

As regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the Road Decongestion Programme is being implemented through the PPP concept. At present, we are at the stage of procuring the Private Service Provider. This

procurement is done by the Central Procurement Board, as per the Public Private Partnership Act.

Once appointed through international competitive bidding, the Service Provider will build, partly finance, operate and maintain the network of tolled roads in the Road Decongestion Programme. Consequently, it may not be necessary for Government to set up its own Road Development Company.

TOLL TAX

(No. 1B/175) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the introduction of toll tax, he will state –

- (a) the name of the Financial Adviser appointed to look thereinto, indicating the fees paid to him, and
- (b) whether the Report is now ready and, if so, will he table copy thereof.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, following procurement procedures initiated in June 2008, the Road Development Authority (RDA) appointed Messrs SPP Project Solutions Ltd (South Africa), as Transaction Advisor for the Harbour Bridge and the Ring Road projects in March 2009. The cost of the services of the Transaction Advisor at the end of its assignment will amount to USD2,117,301, that is, less than one percent of the whole project value.

There is no specific report on the toll system. However, it forms part of the feasibility study report on the Road Decongestion Programme. The feasibility study cannot be tabled at this stage, as we are in the process of appointing service providers.

PARISOT ROAD, HIGHLANDS - BRIDGE

(No. 1B/176) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the reconstruction of the bridge at Parisot Road, Highlands, he will state where matters stand, indicating when works are likely to start.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following representations made by hon. Minister Soodhun, PPS hon. Assirvaden, and hon. Dr. Hawoldar, RDA has initiated actions for the reconstruction of the bridge at Parisot Road.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state when the works will start?

Mr Bachoo: Site visit was conducted by the PPS, hon. Assirvaden, and officers of the NDU on 21 June 2010. The consultants have been instructed to carry out a survey and come up with their proposals. Thereafter, we will go for tenders.

HAJJ PILGRIMAGE

(No. 1B/177) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the forthcoming Hajj pilgrimage, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to -

- (a) where matters stand in relation to the arrangements being made in connection therewith;
- (b) the composition of the delegation of the pre-Hajj mission and its outcome, and
- (c) the criteria set for the granting of licences to Hajj organisers.

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC) that the following arrangements have been made in connection with the forthcoming Hajj pilgrimage -

- (i) an awareness programme is held once monthly from April to October to sensitise prospective pilgrims;
- (ii) request for proposal for travel arrangements was launched on 20 May – closing date 09 July;
- (iii) three meetings have been held with potential organisers on organisational and logistic arrangements, and one particularly to disseminate all information on the outcome of the pre-Hajj mission;
- (iv) registration of Hajjis and potential organisers have been carried out;
- (v) 19 provisional licences have been issued to potential organisers;
- (vi) an inspection mission of the ICC is scheduled to leave Mauritius on Friday 02 July 2010 to inspect hotels booked by the Hajj organisers, and
- (vii) the ICC will depute the Hajj officer, together with three organisers to attend a workshop on the new transportation system following a request of the Saudi authorities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the ICC that the pre-Hajj mission comprised Mr Rashid Soobadar, the Mauritian Ambassador in Cairo and Saudi Arabia, Dr. F. Aumeer, Chairman of the ICC, Mr H. Beebeejaun, the representative of the National Airline and Mr I. Jeeawoody.

The outcomes are as follows -

Quotas

The pre-Hajj mission was informed by the Saudi authorities that the quota for Hajj was an extremely sensitive issue which was being handled exclusively by the King's Cabinet. As for the past years, the initial quota of 1,300 was agreed upon for Mauritius for Hajj 2010. A request for an additional 500 Hajj visas has been made and a reply is expected around 10th Ramadan (i.e around 20 August 2010).

Transport

A new transportation system will be operational on a pilot basis for Hajj 2010. It consists of a bus shuttle service which covers Makkah, Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah. It is expected that the Hajjis will thus have access to regular transport facilities to access these holy sites. The Mauritian Hajjis will form part of 127,000 Hajjis who will benefit from this new transportation system.

Accommodation

The pre-Hajj mission had meetings with the Muassassah for accommodation. One of the prerequisites of the new transportation system is that all Hajjis will have to be lodged in the same region in Makkah. This will facilitate communication amongst the Mauritian Hajjis.

Special Services

The Saudi authorities have made the following special services mandatory for the five days of Hajj: The Mauritian Hajjis will be provided food in takeaway packs and will be accommodated in tents in Mina and Arafat in specifically designated areas with amenities such as mattresses, dedicated baths and toilets.

Direct Return Flights

A meeting was also held with the Adilah establishment in Madinah for direct return flights for our Hajjis from Madinah to Mauritius. A response is awaited from the Saudi authorities.

Reducing Formalities at Airport in Saudi Arabia

The United Agents Office has been requested to look into the possibility of reducing time taken for formalities at the airport in Saudi Arabia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (c) of the question, I am informed by the ICC that the criteria used for the granting of licences to Hajj organisers are as follows -

- past experience in Hajj;
- the number of Hajjis catered for in the past;
- complaints and sanctions recorded against organisers;
- leadership skills;
- attitude and behaviour, and
- the level of services provided compared to the price charged.

The selection is done by the Hajj Sub-Committee of the ICC.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have a few supplementary questions. Regarding the criteria set for Hajj organisers, can I know from the hon. Minister, how come in 2008 we had nine organisers and, in 2009, we had eleven organisers and this year, with the same number of pilgrims, we have nineteen organisers compared to other countries like Malaysia, Indonesia where there are hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and there is only one organiser?

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the case of Mauritius there were requests from certain organisers to cater up to 400 Hajjis. But ultimately the Saudi authorities decided that, in the case of Mauritius any organising group will be entitled to between 50 to 200 Hajjis at a time. This is a decision taken by the Saudi authorities and I have record of this which I can table where the Saudi authorities said that, in the case of Mauritius, we have to have more organisers and the total number of hajjis would be between 50 and 200.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sorry to say that the hon. Minister has not answered my question. This year, compared to the last two years, we have the same number of pilgrims, but we have 19 organisers. How is it that this year it has increased by almost 100%? What the hon. Minister is circulating from the Muassassah is that there is a quota of 50 to 200, but there is no set criteria as to the number of organisers that a country can have. Can the hon. Minister tell the House how come that this year we have 19 organisers?

Mr Choonee: I already replied to this question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is simple. Though we have the same number of Hajjis, we are having more organisers because the number of Hajjis per group is limited between 50 to 200, which means that automatically it brings an increase in the number of organising groups.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Minister has any report from the pre-Hajj mission, can he table it?

Mr Choonee: I don't have a report as such, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But, in my reply, I was clear enough with the number of points I put forward concerning the pre-Hajj mission and how well they did. We have to congratulate the ICC and the pre-Hajj mission for that.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister if can state the cost involved in terms of air tickets, allowances to members of the pre-Hajj mission?

Mr Choonee: I do not have the details at hand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister reconcile the fact that Government has its say in the organisation of Hajj?

Mr Choonee: The Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, definitely acts as a facilitator. But I believe my hon. friend should be aware that the Islamic Cultural Centre Trust Fund Act puts it explicitly how the ICC has to operate. It has a parameter of operation and they have even regulations as to how they have to organise Hajj and that is something done by Government, that is, the powers are given to the ICC.

Mr Ameer Meea: Recently, the Chairperson of the ICC said : *“Je ne reçois pas d’ordre de l’hôtel du gouvernement.”*

Mr Choonee: I am not aware of that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ameer Meea: This has been said in the papers.

The Deputy Speaker: No, it is not a question. Hon. Fakeemeeah!

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister if, in fact, he is in presence of the previous Hajj missions report before allowing the existing team to carry out this year pre-Hajj consultations to prevent future damages caused to the Community?

Mr Choonee: Of course, I don’t have the previous report at hand, but I can always have it for the hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I believe the ICC

has acted very professionally this year. I know that, at least, from this year onwards, problems which we have had in the past will not crop up.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister has just tabled the documents. He was adamant in saying that it is the Saudi authorities that decided that in the case of Mauritius organisers: minimum 50 pilgrims and maximum 200 pilgrims. He insisted that it was the Saudi authorities that imposed that condition. Now, the document from the Saudi authorities is in Arabic. There is an approximate translation next to it. And, what the approximate translation says, I quote –

“I would like to remind you concerning the quota given by you (ICC) to each agency and organisation to be between 50 pilgrims as the minimum number and 200 pilgrims as the maximum number”.

So, it is an approximate translation, but it seems to say that it was a Mauritian request that there be a minimum 50 and maximum 200 and that they have agreed to this Mauritian request, whereas the Minister said that it was imposed by the Saudi authorities. Can we know which is which? Can we have a precise translation of the Arabic text sent by the Saudi authorities?

Mr Choonee: Do I understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this translation is not precise?

Mr Bérenger: It is approximate. It is more or less the same thing.

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a translation from Arabic to English by the authorities in Saudi Arabia. I cannot, on my own, challenge that Government authority.

Mr Bérenger: The question is not to challenge. I am saying that it seems to mean that it is the Mauritian authority that made the request and they agreed to it.

If the translation comes from the Saudi authorities, so much the better, but it seems that the Minister said that it was imposed by the Saudi authorities.

Mr Choonee: Yes, it seems rightly so, but the request was made, or whatever meeting they had, when the pre-Hajj committee went to Saudi Arabia; the meeting ended into something like this.

Mr Bérenger: Yes, they made the request. This is a very serious matter. When you have little groups of 50, you can imagine what can happen much more easily. So, I am sure that is the reason why the Saudi authorities have a general rule of minimum 400. I am asking the Minister to be very careful and to double-check, triple-check whether it is not a request from Mauritius that they agreed that this minimum 400 was brought down to minimum 50.

Mr Choonee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is the ICC that handles the Hajj pilgrims definitely. It is something very sensitive. The Leader of the Opposition is very aware of it. We have had a lot of problems in the past, we are solving the problems. This approach of having more organisers to facilitate the travel of pilgrims from Mauritius to Saudi Arabia is the ideal solution. I believe we can recheck. I don't mind sending the papers to Saudi Arabia to check, but this is an approach which is facilitating the pilgrims.

Mr Bérenger: My question is simply whether it was a request from Mauritius to the Saudi authorities that the minimum be brought to 50, whereas the general rule for Saudi authorities is a minimum of 400. The simple question is whether the request was made by Mauritius - ICC or Ministry - and agreed to by the Saudi authorities.

Mr Choonee: I will check with the ICC and report, Sir.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now that I am an elected Member of this House...

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should put his question, please!

Mr Fakeemeeah: I would like to tell the hon. Minister that one cannot continue sending on Hajj mission people or giving licences...

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should put his question.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Yes. I want to be part of the mission in view of the fact that I am graduated in the Hajj pilgrimage and I have 22 years' experience in this. I would like to offer my free services. I would like the hon. Minister to answer this question so that it will ease...

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has made his point.

Mr Fakeemeeah: ... further questions to the House.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: It is a humble request.

Mr Choonee: It is a humble request. Definitely, I know we have problems at the ICC. As far as the Hajj pilgrimage is concerned, we have problems with the organisers, we have to educate our pilgrims and I am sure if the hon. Member can offer his services free of charge, definitely I will convey the message to the ICC and it will be for them to consider.

**SIR SEEWOOSAGUR RAMGOOLAM STREET, PORT LOUIS -
PONT DE PARIS - STALLS**

(No. 1B/178) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to stalls to be constructed on the Pont de Paris at the Sir

Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Street, Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to -

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the expected date of delivery;
- (c) whether hawkers operating at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Street during the day and at night will be allocated a stall, and
- (d) the criteria set for the allocation of the stalls.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as part (a) of the question is concerned, I am informed that the number of stalls is 37, which will be accommodated in 19 kiosks.

As regards part (b), the expected completion date was scheduled for 07 April 2010, but the project has been delayed due to flooding of the *La Paix* Stream, which affected the progress of work after heavy rainfall and delay in obtaining the clearance from the Conservator of Forests for uprooting a *cassia fistula* tree on the project site. The project is, therefore, expected to be completed and delivered by mid-July 2010. Only after the completion of the project, the consultant of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and shipping, PI Division, will be in a position to apply liquidated damages.

As regards part (c), the food sellers operating at the Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Street during the day and night would be relocated on the project once it would be completed. As per the survey of the Municipal Council of Port Louis in June and August 2008, i.e. at the project conception stage, there were 35 food sellers working during day time and 35 food sellers at night.

As far as part (d) is concerned, as regards the criteria for allocation of stalls, the Municipal Council of Port Louis has set up a subcommittee to work out the criteria, taking into account that the project was initially designed for food sellers.

Mr Bérenger: I did not get exactly what the Minister was saying. Can we have the total number of stalls at that place?

Mr Aimée: 35.

(Interruptions)

No! 19, sorry!

Mr Barbier: The Minister stated that a subcommittee has been set up at the Municipal Council of Port Louis to look at the criteria for the allocation of stalls. May I know who is at the Head of this committee?

Mr Aimée: I don't have the information. But once I have it, I will send it to the hon. Member.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hawkers working during the day are being unfairly booked by the municipality of Port Louis inspectors, whereas those working during the night are working freely. Can I make an appeal to the hon. Minister so that the hawkers working during the day can work freely pending the delivery of the Pont de Paris?

Mr Aimée: I think this is not part of the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member was asking only the number of stalls at the Pont de Paris.

Mr Ameer Meea: My appeal is that hawkers working at night are working freely, whereas hawkers working during the day are being booked. They are being given fines by the inspectors of the municipality. My appeal is: can the hon.

Minister deal with that so that pending the delivery of the Pont de Paris, hawkers working during the day are not being booked like the hawkers working at night?

Mr Aimée: M. le président, il y a des instructions claires. Personne n'a le droit de travailler à la rue Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam que ce soit la nuit ou le jour.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can the hon. Minister tell us the total cost of the project?

Mr Aimée: It's Rs24 m.

Mr Baloomoody: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister just mentioned that there is a committee which is going to set the criteria for the allocation of the stalls. May I press upon the Minister to have the criteria made public so that prospective applicants are aware of the criteria which they have to satisfy before acquiring a stall?

Mr Aimée: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the stall will be on a rental basis and, if so, can he state the monthly rental?

Mr Aimée: I cannot do so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because, as I have just mentioned, there will be a committee which will be set up to look into this aspect.

PLAINE VERTE GARDEN – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. 1B/179) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) ask the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Plaine Verte Garden from the swimming pool to the Paul et Virginie Street, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if it is proposed putting up a football ground thereat.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that there is no official football ground in the area mentioned.

I wish to inform the House that the Plaine Verte Garden is not at all intended to be used as a football ground. The Municipal Council is looking into an appropriate site for the setting up of a football ground of national or international standard.

TRUST FUND FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS – BENEFICIARIES

(No. 1B/180) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Trust, information as to –

- (a) the number of persons who have benefited therefrom, constituency-wise for the past five years, and
- (b) the number of applications pending before the Trust, indicating in each case, the date thereof.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, information obtained from the National Empowerment Foundation concerning the number of persons who have benefitted from services under the Trust Fund is being tabled.

The House will note that information is available on a district-wise basis except for micro credit facilities which are recorded on an island-wise basis.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the NEF that, at present some 1,477 pending applications for housing units and ten applications for micro credit facilities are being processed.

Information with regard to the dates of these applications is being compiled and will be tabled in due course.

LAW REFORM COMMISSION - REPORTS

(No. 1B/181) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Attorney General whether he will give the number of reports submitted to Government by the Law Reform Commission, for the past five years, indicating what action, if any, has been taken following its recommendations.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2005, Government saw it fit to restructure the Law Reform Commission into a fully fledged body corporate.

In accordance with the Law Reform Commission Act 2005, the Law Reform Commission was given greater operational autonomy in order to better fulfil its mandate. The Commission has been operating under the new institutional arrangements as from October 2006.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the necessary research, discussion and consultation on any aspect of the law reviewed, the Commission normally submits one of the following publications –

- (a) discussion paper or consultation paper;
- (b) research or working paper;
- (c) issue paper, and
- (d) report.

The question of the hon. Third Member for Grand River North West and Port Louis West pertains to the number of reports submitted by the Law Reform Commission.

I wish to inform the House that as from 2007 up to this date, the Commission has submitted eight reports to the Attorney General.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, recommendations for reform of the law such as setting-up of law firms, relationship of children with grandparents and other persons under the *Code Civil Mauricien*, forensic use of DNA and operational autonomy of the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions have already been implemented.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a number of recommendations are about to be implemented such as the law on divorce and bail.

Others are still being considered or may, in due course, be considered, as they give rise to policy issues and have legal and financial implications and implementation, if any, will be in the context of Government priorities as per its programme.

Mr Baloomoody: In the last report which has been around for more than a year now, the Law Reform Commission recommended that we should do away with the two years bar when it comes to prosecuting or suing the public officers. As you are fully aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are two years limitation period. This does, in fact, cause considerable prejudice to victims vis-à-vis the tortfeasor, if the tortfeasor is a civil servant. Now, my question is whether the Government is prepared to do away with that recommendation?

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I cannot speak for the Government, but the Law Reform Commission submits reports to the Attorney General, and the matter mentioned is being considered.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister one question? I know all these reports are on the website, but could the hon. Minister see to it that these reports which have been referred to are also laid on the Table of the Assembly?

Mr Varma: We are moving towards e-judiciary, e-parliament. I suppose the hon. Member has got access to the internet, and the reports are easily available on the internet, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Not all the reports are on the website; I have checked. The hon. Minister can go and check. I repeat: not all of these reports are on the net.

Mr Varma: I will transmit the message to the Law Reform Commission that all the relevant papers be on the website, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have been advised that PQ No. 1B/197 has also been withdrawn. Time is over!

MOTIONS

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph 2 of Standing Order 10.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L. Duval) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

At 4.09 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.48 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME 2010-2015

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following motion of the hon. Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal (Ms S. Anquetil).

“This Assembly resolves that the Government Programme 2010-2015 presented to this Assembly on Tuesday 08 June 2010, copy of which has been circularised amongst Honourable Members, be and is hereby approved”.

Question again proposed.

Mr M. Peetumber (First Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Mr Speaker, Sir, to start with, I would like to congratulate you upon your election as Speaker of the House afresh. Allow me to place on record my appreciation for the poise, skill and impartiality you showed in the conduct of the business of the House between 2005 and 2010. And I have got no doubt whatsoever that you will continue to prove equal to the task in future. I also congratulate hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun upon his election as Deputy Speaker, and I wish him all the best. My congratulations also go to all the hon. Members of the House for their success in the polls held on 05 May. The fact that he announced his retirement himself, I wish hon. Bhagwan a happy and serene retirement. In the same breath, I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister for the trust he has vested in me by maintaining me as candidate in Constituency No. 13 and also for recommending me for nomination as Parliamentary Private Secretary responsible for

developmental projects in Constituencies Nos. 5 and 13. I will fail in my duty if I don't express my gratitude and thankfulness to the electorate of Constituency No. 13 for their unflinching support and help, which have been instrumental in our electoral victory.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the artless simplicity with which this Government has obtained two successive mandates highlights the invisible force of the intellectual acumen and organisational skill of the Prime Minister who led us to victory. The unparalleled manner in which he invested himself, his time, his physical, intellectual and emotional resources, campaigning relentlessly for all his candidates across the country, commands the respect and appreciation of his allies, foes, as well as the impartial observers. As for me, I place on record my thankfulness to him, for his participation in two important meetings we organised at his request at Bois Chéri and Camp Diable in Constituency No. 13 on the eve of the elections, and the galvanising effect it generated on the electorate for our ultimate, spectacular win.

I seize this opportunity to congratulate the Leader of *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* who has won the trust of the population a second time in a row. The Opposition has placated its disarray and shock by concocting excuses and maligning *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* for faults that have tarnished their own actions. It is known that the Opposition has an obsession for projection. They tend to find in their opponents the flaws that they themselves suffer from.

They accuse us of practising the communal divide, when they are themselves 'gurus' in the art of balkanising the population into groups and subgroups. The MMM had always pretended to stand for national unity, brandishing the slogan '*Ene sel le pep ene sel nation*' at one point in time, but which slogan has evaporated now.

In fact, when one takes cognizance of their communal strategies during electoral campaigns in specific constituencies, one is shocked beyond measure to realise how they are bent upon dividing and subdividing *le peuple admirable* into bits and pieces along communal, provincial and caste lines, with a view to receiving some political mileage. The SMSs that were sent to members of a specific subgroup in several constituencies, including Constituencies No. 13, 14, 18 and 19, with a view to fanning the flame of communal hatred, bear testimony to this fact. The MMM accuses *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* of having given '*largesses*' to voters as a bribe, when their candidate in a constituency of the capital was on the brink of suing his co-candidate for having spent beyond the limits authorised by the Electoral Commission. Surely, the Leader

of the Opposition has not taken the pains to enquire about the colossal amount one of his candidates has spent in one constituency in the south of the country. That was probably the reason why that particular candidate was 'perplex' over his electoral defeat.

Despite the MMM's contention to the contrary, the international electoral observers, namely the SADC, the African Union, the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the SADC Election Commission Forum and the Electoral Institute of South Africa have all highlighted in their reports that the general elections of 05 May were free, fair and transparent at all levels of the electoral process. I wonder why it is difficult to see what the Mauritian population has understood for a long time: that Dr. Navin Ramgoolam's leadership is more credible than that of his contestant.

The five years that have elapsed have amply demonstrated that the people are happy with our policy of democratising the economy, that the people have appreciated our efforts to face the credit crunch of rich countries and weather its impact with solid reasonableness and unswerving wisdom. The people have rejoiced over the fact that our employment potential has not only remained stable, but also created further job opportunities when rich countries have plummeted down with thousands of job losses. People have realised that the *l'Alliance sociale* Government has performed during its tenure of office between 2005 and 2010.

We had promised to re-establish universal old age pensions, grant free transport to the senior citizens and to the school-going children, the legislation of the Equal Opportunities Bill and the Public Bodies Appeal Tribunal Bill, the reconstruction of the Dr. A. G. Jeetoo hospital, improvement of the road infrastructure across the country, and we have translated all these into reality.

The construction of the Macondé bridge at the cost of Rs190 m., the reconstruction of the Wooton-Belle Rive road, which necessitated the investment of Rs140 m., the Triolet bypass estimated at Rs225 m., the Goodlands bypass, which cost Government Rs290 m., the Terre Rouge-Verdun mega project to the tune of Rs2.2 billion, and the widening of the highway from Pailles to Caudan, all bear testimony to the fact that the Social Alliance Government has delivered. That was precisely why the population, in its wisdom, decided to renew its trust in Dr. Navin Ramgoolam as Prime Minister once again in the last general elections.

Should the House be reminded that we created 40,000 jobs between 2005 and 2010? The Cane Democratisation Fund, where small planters, labourers and artisans will become proud owners to the tune of 35% in the cane sector, is yet another major achievement of the *l'Alliance sociale* Government, along with the 2,000 *arpents* of land that the Prime Minister successfully negotiated with the Mauritius Sugar Producers' Association for social housing and agricultural projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us not obfuscate ourselves with the simplistic opposition of majority versus minorities, which the Leader of the Opposition is constantly bent on seeing.

At this juncture of our history, I venture to say that too often we criminalise or demonise endeavours to reinforce bonds within ethnic groups, while openly and very blatantly we assert our affiliation with our community in our private lives. I do not find any contradiction in this country between communal interests and nationalism. That a person should in private practise his communal traditions and customs does not exclude him from identifying himself with the nation. Mauritius is not what we know of countries where citizens engage themselves in internecine conflicts at all levels in the public domain.

No community has indulged in separatist movements and wishes to be autonomous. We have always asserted and celebrated our identification with a Mauritius that is whole and united socially, economically, culturally and politically, though we practise subcultures at different levels.

This is why I confidently state that, on 05 May 2010, the people of this country chose a leadership that they identified their personal, communal and national welfare with. They rejected categorically the division of the nation, the parcelling of a national conscience into that of a majority opposed to a conglomerate of minorities. The people of Mauritius have said in unequivocal terms: 'We do not believe in this bogus divide. We belong to one Mauritius'. So, this electoral victory of *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* is the victory of the whole of Mauritius, of the entire population, because it has won a significant number of seats in rural, urban, semi-rural and semi-urban constituencies. In contrast, the MMM has cut a very sorry figure in the rural constituencies, with its high profile candidates biting the dust in Constituencies like Nos. 5, 6, 8, 10, 13 and 15. The MMM drew its strength mainly from Constituency Nos. 1, 17, 19 and 20. So, the writings on the wall could not be clearer.

Government's programme for this mandate gives a new lease to our sustained effort to modernise the country. With the MSM as our new partner, we believe that we have created a new partnership for a flight at yet a higher altitude. We have been attentive to the joys and the difficulties of the population. We have auscultated their pains, and created a new configuration to bring further happiness to the people and gain renewed strength to confront the challenges of a new world.

At this stage, I would like to place on record my congratulations to the Prime Minister for having created a whole Ministry of Social Integration to mitigate poverty, and to have conferred this important Ministry upon a person no less than the vice-Prime Minister himself, who is known for his assiduousness.

If we look at the profile of criminals, the nature of crime committed, we realise that poverty goes beyond the mere fact of destitution. There is a gradual decay of values that accompanies the loss of a personal moral identity in the welter of poverty. A poverty reduction strategy should reconcile the purely financial with the moral, the physical with the psychological, the individual with the societal, and the purely essential with the cultural. We must develop in the 8% of the population living at the threshold of poverty the motivation to wage a personal war against their poverty. They have to awaken from the easy self-pity in which they lapse. They need a morsel of pride to boost their self-esteem. We should not believe that, because education is free and compulsory, we have solved the problem of illiteracy in the country. Illiteracy is a pernicious epidemic that clings to us, in spite of free and compulsory education. There are those who are not encouraged to take what Government so readily gives. It is not that the taker is as important as the giver. We need to review the role of our parent mediators and ensure that the children of the poor attend classes. This is not enough. Gross enrolment ratios are just figures; there is a wide curriculum divide separating the children living in abject poverty and the rest of the class. Our teaching methods are out of focus. The MES reports on the performance of our children at CPE are eloquent; they have been harping on the mismatch between teaching and learning, and yet the school is paying a deaf ear to the crying truth.

I believe this country is right for a pedagogical revolution; otherwise, our education will have failed to salvage the poor. Let us remember that all children do not learn the same way. Unfortunately, they are all being taught in the same way. It is not the individual who is poor;

poverty plagues the family. The individual becomes a victim of the family. So, we need to think in terms of family relief. We need mediators to enter families, and extricate children from the tentacles of illiterate parents, who ignorantly push their own children into the darkness of ignorance. The foothold of the ladder that will take the child out of poverty is no doubt education.

The family needs a home, and I am glad that Government has decided to multiply low-cost housing facilities. The poor family needs either philanthropic or voluntary organisations that can provide mentoring to heads of families. We cannot expect parents of the poor to come to school to learn about parenting.

We need to penetrate that world, break the shackles that paralyse the heads of families. We need 'social missionaries' who combine house holding and psychology in order to negotiate with the poor, in order to help them, see the work beyond the screen poverty has created. Mauritius is small; we should take advantage of the exiguity of the country to eradicate poverty, and make this island poverty-free.

When school complains about children playing truants, it is not only the school that is guilty. Children who are victims of truancy are also victims of alcoholism and sexual promiscuity. The tip of the iceberg hides sores that poverty has inflicted at home. Progress does not have the same effect on all; many are left behind. The home of those who are casualties is, very often, the breeding ground of deviant behaviour. What we see at school is only the product that the home generates. That is why our poverty reduction programmes must be family-oriented.

The election of 05 May 2010 has revealed that the population has an impatience for better infrastructure, more leisure facilities, sustained economic stability that guarantees job creation, strengthens purchasing power, and preserves peace and security. We understand that we have earned the trust of a nation that will make more and more demand on better services, at a faster pace at village and town levels, through the District Councils, the Municipalities, the Ministry of Environment, the MPI, the NDU and, of course, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

Granted that when projects involve public funds, transparency and accountability become overriding concerns, but the implementation of projects should by no means be delayed through redtapism, overlong procedures and unwarranted centralisation of clearance formalities. When

solutions to problems afflicting the people in their daily lives are not forthcoming, people grow impatient, frustrated, recalcitrant and even violent. It is imperative that decision making at the level of public service providers becomes fluid, to ensure rapid development and, at the same time, avoid an outburst at the level of service receivers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the population would like our civil service to re-engineer itself in order to meet our changing needs. Old-fashioned notions of civil service will have to disappear. A conservative civil service is over-meticulous about procedures and precedents. While complying with existing rules and regulations and being within the framework of what is legal and permissible, our civil servants must think outside the box, be logical and realistic. They should develop their indispensable virtue of empathy to understand the citizen who needs a service. Authority has its place, but not at the expense of service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not enough to obtain a Diploma in Public Administration. I am proposing to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, that every Ministry should define the professional standards for different categories of works. The scheme of service is not sufficient to identify quality action. The civil servants must be able to evolve and develop towards standards of excellence. I shall go as far as to suggest that a national framework of quality action at different levels should act as an inevitable corollary of the Performance Management System, so that the workers may progress from one level of efficiency to another throughout their career. I lay stress on the needs for professional standards because they are needed in the school, in the hospital, in the office, everywhere. We should devise a training programme that produces efficient service and effective action.

I would like to congratulate my colleague, the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources, upon his courage to transform the landscape of education which forces children to take private tuition as early as Standard IV. I know it has not been an easy fight, because he has had to challenge a deeply embedded and tenacious conservatism that equates the teaching vocation with the mercenary motive at the end of the month. However, I am confident that forces of regression are still burning under the embers of profit making. We need to be vigilant over what is happening during normal class hours. We have been paying a deaf ear to the needs of learners who learn differently. Our system is not able to satisfy the learning needs of

otherwise able learners in mainstream schools. We need to be able to carry out research in education, an area which is heavily misunderstood.

Can't we research on our teaching methods? What is wrong in a school where four out of every ten students fail? At times, these four cannot even write their names. Quality is the new challenge. We have won the battle of access; we have established equity as a cornerstone of our system. We need to tackle the problem of quality. Let us see what it is that provokes failure and wastage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has been recognised as a force to reckon with in Africa. We have justified ambitions of outgrowing these proportions. We want to be quoted beyond the continent and maintain this enviable place forever. That is why I warmly welcome the wish of the hon. Prime Minister to have a graduate in every family.

The Government Programme 2010-2015 lays the conceptual foundation for a new Mauritius. Beyond the words of the Government Programme is the determination and vision of our hon. Prime Minister. The road ahead is studded with thorns. It is not just the hope to win that must be sustained at all cost. It is also the fear that the thorns may one day evaporate our hope that must be abated.

The Labour Party, the MSM and the PMSD constitute a strong, impressive and impeccable team, which proved its mettle in the past. No doubt there are new challenges looming at the horizon, but with the vision and determination of our hon. Prime Minister, the lucidity and pragmatism of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and the assiduousness of the second vice-Prime Minister, this Government will forge ahead to ensure progress, development and stability in the country, and further promote the weal of the nation.

To round off, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish this august Assembly a fruitful partnership.

Thank you very much.

(5.10 p.m.)

Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me, at the very outset, to congratulate you on your unanimous re-election to chair this august Assembly. I think we can rely on your expertise and guidance, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the smooth running of

the affairs of this House. I would also like to congratulate hon. Members on both sides of the House on their election, particularly those who have been elected for the first time.

Having said so, let me come to the main subject of my intervention, that is, the Government Programme. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have read attentively this Government Programme and, as I was reading, I had a feeling of *déjà-vu*, *déjà entendu*. I went and checked the Government Programme read in 2005, and my feelings were confirmed. I will come to that a bit later.

The big innovation of this new Government is a new Ministry. True it is that we have more Ministries this time; some Ministries have got to be split because we have to accommodate more Ministers - *l'Alliance oblige* - but we have a new Ministry which is that of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, sometimes there is no need to have long speeches to say the truth and, by creating this new Ministry, this Government is saying: "Sorry, all that we have said regarding economic empowerment, democratisation of the economy and so on and so forth, five years back, have not worked, except for a few privileged ones." You know, Mr Speaker, Sir, like those persons who have received two, five, ten *arpents* of *Pas Géométriques* and then just sell their rights for millions; they have been privileged ones, and true it is that we have seen these persons who have benefited a lot. For these persons, of course, we can talk about economic empowerment, democratisation of the economy and so on. We know of persons who have got 42 hectares for only Rs60,000 per annum. This is factual. And so, except for these privileged ones, Government is saying: "We have failed, so much so that we realise, after five years, that there is an increasing number of people who have to be integrated into society; so much so that Ministries such as Social Security and National Solidarity will not be able to do the job, and we need a full-fledged Ministry to take care of the increasing number of people who are socially excluded because of their economic situation and for other reasons." So, Mr Speaker, Sir, there was no better way for this Government to confess their failure regarding poverty alleviation and social integration than the creation of the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment.

D'ailleurs, M. le président, la répétition de certains paragraphes - je parlais au début de ce sentiment de déjà-vu, déjà entendu - en dit long. A titre d'exemple, en 2005, nous avons eu droit

au discours-programme le 29 juillet 2005. Je n'ai pas l'intention de parler de l'atmosphère, des conditions dans lesquelles le Président avait lu ce discours; tout le monde s'en souvient. Je me réfère tout simplement à ce qui avait été dit en 2005 au paragraphe 73 -

“Government will also ensure that there is greater synergy and coordination in its poverty-reduction strategies and programmes to achieve higher efficiency and effectiveness in the national drive against poverty.”

Et qu'est ce qu'on voit en 2010? Je cite, M. le président, le paragraphe 71 -

“Government will build greater synergy and coordination in poverty reduction strategies and programmes in order to achieve higher efficiency and effectiveness in the national drive against poverty.”

It is a copy and paste exercise, and this is factual. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, if, after five years, we see a paragraph being repeated in a new Programme, it is a clear indication that the situation has not only remained unchanged, but has deteriorated. *Sinon, pourquoi cette répétition? Why this copy and paste exercise?*

I am glad that after five years, after having evaluated this alarming situation of the most vulnerable, of those marginalised citizens, Government has set up this new Ministry. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, when I look at the 'main areas of interest and intervention' announced in the Government Programme, I cannot prevent myself from asking some questions. Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to quote these areas of interest and intervention. I quote paragraph 71 -

“The main areas of interest and intervention will be in social housing, training and education, capacity building and employment, infrastructural development and provision of public utilities, and health and recreation (...).”

The first area mentioned is social housing. Mr Speaker, Sir, here too I am glad that, after five long years, this Government realised that social integration goes through social housing, that a shelter is a basic need for a human being. But, it is unfortunate that, during five long years, social housing was not high on the agenda of this Government. In reply to Parliamentary Question No. 1B/134, the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands stated, I quote -

“I am informed that the NHDC started the construction of 533 low-cost housing units in October 2006 over six sites (...).”

And he named the six sites.

“These housing units have already been allocated to eligible beneficiaries.”

And then, he talked about 550 low-cost housing units which will be ready by 2011, that is, next year. This means, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, during five long years, this Government has built and allocated only 533 social housing units. And this, Mr Speaker, Sir, in contrast with 3,052 social housing units built when the MMM was in Government with the MSM between 2000 and 2005. *3,052 par rapport à 533 ! Il y avait 1,578 du type Firinga et 1,474 appartements connus sous the EXIM Bank Project.* This is factual. I remember that I visited these apartments. They were nice apartments, and I was told that it was the best NHDC project at that time, and I can add as at now, because since then, nothing has been done regarding social housing.

What is sad, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that when we left power in 2005, in the last Budget presented, that is, for 2005-2006, social housing programme was so well on track. *Ce n'est pas l'actuel ministre des finances qui me dira le contraire.* Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to remind the House what was scheduled at Paragraph 334 -

“Some 2,000 more housing units will be constructed during the next two coming years. NHDC has raised a loan of Rs400 m. to that effect.”

NHDC had already raised a loan of Rs400 m. for the construction of 2,000 additional social housing units. On top of that, in the 2005-2006 Budget, the then hon. Minister of Finance - who is the present hon. Minister of Finance - said -

“I am providing Rs105 m. for provision of site infrastructure for housing projects for the very low income, and Rs30 m. for the development of 300 additional sites for low income households to build their own houses.”

Of course, I am not talking about housing units built through the Trust Fund for the more vulnerable who could not benefit from the Firinga-type. I am not talking about the number of these houses.

Despite these budgetary provisions, after five years, only 533 housing units have been built and allocated. What was said five years back in the Government Programme of 2005-2010? Mention was made about social integration, and we know that social housing is important for social integration. The Government said in 2005 -

“Government is committed to creating the necessary conditions for the setting up of social housing at reasonable and affordable cost”.

They even said -

“Government will, therefore, lay emphasis on the construction and development of social housing”.

Laying emphasis on the construction and development of social housing, and they end up, after five years, with 533 social housing units! *Il y a de quoi surprendre, M. le président.*

Above the fact that only 533 housing units have been allocated during these past five years, we have witnessed how the most needy have been deprived of these social housing units. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, during these past five years, it has been a policy of “*met fort, gagne fort*”, that is, if you have the highest deposit, then you are going to have a social housing unit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if someone is at the bottom of the ladder, is paying a rent and, despite all this, is trying to save some money, has been making regular deposits in his housing savings account (PEL), and after some time has managed to have some Rs25,000. At the time, Rs40,000 were required as deposit for a social housing unit, and this person was being told that his deposit was not high enough - *bizin met plis!* This has brought forward some dangerous situations. I have known some persons who had taken a loan, put the money in the PEL Account, and had Rs80,000 or Rs100,000 for the deposit. When they had to refund the said loan together with the housing loan, they found themselves in difficulties. But it was the only way for them to ensure that he or she be allocated a social housing unit. I think that we have to revisit this way of allocating a social housing unit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like most humbly to make a suggestion. My suggestion is that the amount of deposit should not be the overriding criteria for the allocation of a social housing unit. We have to bear in mind that those at the bottom of the ladder will not be those who have the highest deposit. The criteria such as the evolution of the *Plan Epargne Logement* Account (PEL), the number of children, the type of family, that is, a nuclear, extended or single parent family, economic activities, have to be taken into consideration and not the amount of deposit as overriding criteria.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that if, after a given period, the house is not being occupied, it has to be reallocated, because we can see on the different sites that houses have been allocated and these houses are closed for years. If someone does not need the house, let us give it to those persons who really need it. Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't intend to dwell further on this chapter of social housing. There is a lot to be said. I only wish to add that I sincerely hope that, during this present mandate, Government will catch up the delay and go by its promises in this Government Programme 2010-2015. At paragraph 122, Government has said -

“10,000 additional housing units will be constructed for lower and middle income groups.”

I sincerely hope and wish that the Government goes by its promise, and also, without forgetting the island of Rodrigues, where it has said -

“1,000 low-cost housing units will be constructed over the next five years”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there won't be social integration if we don't satisfy the need for a shelter. If we want a society for all, we have to cater for the housing needs of the most vulnerable of our citizens.

Again, under the chapter of social integration, Mr Speaker, Sir, I said earlier that the second area of interest mentioned in the Government Programme is training and education.

M. le président, tout le monde est d'accord que l'éducation est l'outil par excellence pour l'ascension sociale. Tout le monde le sait. Mais, lorsque nous parlons de formation et d'éducation dans le contexte d'intégration sociale, nous devons dépasser les clichés tels que « tout le monde a les mêmes chances ; le gouvernement offre la même chose à tout le monde ; l'État offre les mêmes facilités à tout le monde. »

M. le président, c'est justement là où le bât blesse ! L'orateur, avant moi, l'honorable Peetumber, disait tout à l'heure avec raison que *all children cannot be taught in the same way*. Tout le monde est d'accord là-dessus. Il est impératif, M. le président, d'analyser et d'évaluer les besoins de ceux que nous voulons intégrer, ces besoins qui ne sont pas les mêmes, et répondre à ces besoins si nous voulons aider ces citoyens qui n'arrivent pas à intégrer la société et qui sont marginalisés.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that limited access to education puts people in the path of social exclusion, that lack of educational opportunities for children impedes integration, that low levels of educational attainment and high illiteracy are major exclusionary factors to both integration and participation in society. We also know that we have several groups who are at higher risk of low educational attainment, thus of social exclusion. There are children experiencing homelessness. There are children in dysfunctional families and those with disabilities, those with learning difficulties and so on and so forth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when I mention ‘children experiencing homelessness’, *comment ne pas se rappeler que l’une des premières actions de ce gouvernement a été le démantèlement de ce réseau de ces travailleurs des rues - the street workers, the street kids ? Il y avait tout un réseau pour accompagner cela, et l’État a voulu que ce soit le privé qui s’en occupe. L’État s’est déresponsabilisé de ce problème, on a facilité leur accès au financement à travers CSR et à travers ceci et cela. « Ecoutez, ce n’est pas tellement notre problème, on n’a pas tellement du temps pour cela ! » Voilà ce qui a été dit concernant ces enfants qui sont, as everyone knows, at higher risk. Et voilà une des premières actions de ce gouvernement et, M. le président. I am being factual.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, we know of these needs, and we are talking about education and training in the context of social integration. We know that there are special needs that we have to cater for.

In March 2006, based on most recent documents that were produced at that time, we had recommendations for special needs following a task force set up in 2001. We had papers on children with special needs; July-August 2004. There was a report on seminar on inclusive education. I think there was a first draft report on inclusive education. There were many, many reports, and, based on that, the Ministry of Education - I am talking about March 2006 - published a document entitled “Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education in Mauritius, the Policy and Strategy Document”. This document, Mr Speaker, Sir, rightly laid emphasis on a quote from a UNESCO document, which talks about the concept of children with special needs, and which stated that this concept extends beyond those who may be included in handicap categories to cover those who are failing in school for a wide variety of other reasons that are known to likely impede a child optimal progress.

It is also being mentioned in this strategy paper that schools need to adapt their curriculum, teaching and organisation to provide additional human or material resources. Mr Speaker, Sir, in that document, a lot of good measures was announced. We were talking about developing human resources for special needs, setting up special education needs, and intervention team with medical and para-medical personnel. We were talking about recruiting, training or contracting personnel for detection and early screening. A lot of measures were mentioned in March 2006. The then Minister of Education, Mr Gokhool, said in his foreword “Through this national policy and strategy paper on a special education needs, the way being shown forward is clear.” Everything is clear; everything is ready, now we go! What have we seen, Mr Speaker Sir? What have we seen during these past five years? Training of special needs? Training in prevoc? There was nothing, Mr Speaker, Sir!

In 2002, while the MMM was in Government with the MSM, the Teacher’s Diploma Special Needs was introduced, and a number of teachers were trained. It is most unfortunate that, during the past five years, such trainings have mostly been set aside. If we are serious about integrating those who are facing difficulties, we need trained personnel, and since the second area of interest and intervention of the poverty reduction strategy is training and education, I would humbly request that we don't lose another five years. We have enough documents; we know what are the needs, one of which is training. So, let's do it. And here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like once again to make a suggestion, that in all schools we have, at least, one special education needs teacher to whom children facing difficulties, be it reading, writing or mathematics, could be referred to for appropriate help.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a lot still can be said on this special education needs. But I would like to have some words on the prevocational sector, because this too is a sector where much can be done for social integration and participation in society. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, during the past five years, we have seen more of exclusion than of integration. Let me explain myself.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at a particular point in time when we were in Government, when my colleague, hon. Obeegadoo, was Minister of Education, what was decided? For integration, each school will have a prevocational class, so that we work towards social integration. What has happened during the past five years? Presently, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is not one single State Secondary School which is running a prevocational class. We can't mix, and we are talking of

social integration on the one hand and, on the other hand, we are talking of children aged 12 years. No, we have to separate the groups! Of which integration are we talking about?

Mr Speaker, Sir, many private schools have followed the examples set up by State Secondary Schools, and they said: “No, we are not going to have prevocational classes”. Finally, we are going to see these kids being dumped - the word is not too strong - in a particular place! Are we going to reach social integration this way? Allow me to differ, Mr Speaker, Sir.

True it is that prevocational centres are ongoing, and here what do we see? Those children who need more are getting less. It is only children attending prevocational classes who have part-time courses. They go there for half day, and these are the neediest children of the Republic. Prevocational teachers: they are those who receive the worse treatment. During five long years, there has not been one single permanent appointment of prevocational teacher. They have been on contract on a month to month basis, Mr Speaker, Sir. At the end of the year, they wait for January to receive a letter. They don't receive any bonus, no holidays. Nothing! And they are those who work with the most difficult children, children who are facing difficulties! So, how do we think that those persons can give the best of themselves? Above that, they are even deprived of training, because for the teacher diploma there is need to be a practising teacher on a permanent basis. Since they are only on a month to month basis, they are not considered to be permanent to have access to the course; they don't have the training at the MIE. True it is that there hasn't been much training for prevocational up to now. Where is this new curriculum announced for prevocational? Nothing, Mr Speaker, Sir! These children are being taught in the same way which has failed them during seven years, because most of them have failed seven years and nothing has been done to revisit, to help these children.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if we want to integrate, if we want to give the best chances to these kids, we have to revisit, and we have to do it at the earliest. Too many generations have been lost, and we cannot afford losing more. Mr Speaker, Sir, do we think that, by providing vocational courses in English language, we will attract those who have never, never passed one single English language exam or any subject because of their poor knowledge of English? And we keep on giving these courses in English. The end result is that, after three years, so many of these kids going to the prevoc are barely literate. Spending money, wastage of money, resource, and we are not helping these children.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we know the success of prevoc *BEC*. What has happened? The use of mother tongue has helped these kids, but we are now going to wait for a forum, for other committees and so on and so forth instead of using what has proved to be right.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do hope that this Government comes up with appropriate training, different from the second chance programme announced and implemented. *Ça c'est honteux!* There is no proper curriculum, not even qualified teachers. Mr Speaker, Sir, go and see who teaches the second chance programme! I was shocked to learn that. Okay, there's a second chance programme; take one person. 'You are going to work for some hours, come!' 'Come do it!' '*Péna problème to capave faire ça, faire li*'. They don't know where they are. What's that? It's just for the sake of saying we are providing a second chance programme and you do that. *M. le président, pour moi c'est révoltant d'abuser de la misère de l'autre*. This second chance programme *c'est abuser de la misère de l'autre, de l'ignorance de l'autre. C'est mauvais, M. le président*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not talked about the *ZEP* project. *Deux mois de cela*, I met a lady who lives in the surrounding of Port Louis, and I think what she told me is a very good summary. Do you know what she told me, Mr Speaker, Sir? '*Madame Labelle, projet ZEP in vine ZEB*'; *et nous savons que le zèbre a la réputation d'être paresseux. Donc, projet ZEP inn vinn ZEB*, and I think there cannot be any better summary for what has happened to the *ZEP* project.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Peetumber was talking of the need for mediators between parents and schools and so on and so forth. Sorry! We did that! We know it is important and that is why we appointed *les parents médiateurs avec tout un programme. Ces parents médiateurs devaient faire la liaison entre l'enfant et l'école. Non seulement cela, mais aussi s'assurer de l'éducation parentale de ces parents. Cotte zot zordi*, I don't know. So, put aside! I am happy that the Private Parliamentary Secretary of the Government is saying: 'hey guys, we should do that!' I am very happy, and I thank him heartedly for that. So, this, too, is an area for social integration. *C'est un outil*. It's a tool for social integration; please let's do it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, so much has been said regarding social integration, and I think that Government, above what has been said here during years, can inspire from the Copenhagen Programme of Action for Social Integration. This dates back as 1995. We are talking about the first summit of social integration which was held in 1995, and Mauritius participated in that. The

action plan is there. It is straightforward. *Maintenant on va attendre les assises de l'intégration sociale. On va organiser ceci, on va organiser cela. Lorsqu'on parle des assises de l'intégration sociale, je souhaite que ces assises ne connaissent pas le même sort que les assises du tourisme, dont les recommandations sont restées lettre morte.*

Je reviens à l'intégration sociale. Some measures can be implemented easily, I would say - I am talking of the Copenhagen Programme of Action for Social Integration. For example, organise training courses for the most vulnerable to increase their employability. *Là aussi, M. le président, il nous faut être sérieux. Ce n'est pas en passant un communiqué dans un de ces journaux - et là aussi, je ne fais pas de commentaire sur quel journal - que ces personnes vont être au courant. Elles ne savent pas lire, M. le président.* And then you're going to tell me "Oh, we have advertised in the newspapers". They don't read. We must know that they don't read. If we want to help them, if we are serious about it, we go to them. We propose them attractive courses. They have to see that these courses are going to get them out. But all these communiqués should not be in English. And we say we are helping these people! *Soyons sérieux, M. le président.* We have to provide background material on the labour market on education, on training, and this, in the way which will reach these people. So, a lot can be done, and if we are serious, if we want social integration, these are things that have to be done.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before resuming my seat, allow me to say a few words on my constituency. I want to thank the electors of Constituency No. 16 who have, once again, placed their confidence in me, and they can rest assured that I am going to do my utmost to represent them as they deserve in this august Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during these past five years, I have repeatedly brought to the attention of the House the problems faced by the inhabitants of my constituency. Amongst these problems, there is the land erosion at Rivière Sèche; there is the access road to Camp Savanne. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, nothing has been done. Regarding the access road to Camp Savanne, in reply to PQ No. B/354, dated 18 October 2005, the hon. Minister informed the House, and I quote his answer, Mr Speaker, Sir - it's so sad -

"On 15 April 2005..."

This was while the MMM/MSM Government was in power.

“...a survey was carried out by GIBB (Mauritius) Ltd, and the officers of the NDU. A scope of work and the cost estimate has been submitted by the consultant on 29 April 2005. The project will be considered, subject to availability of funds.”

Et, pendant cinq ans, dois-je comprendre that, because of unavailability of funds, this has not been done? *Il y a cinq ans les consultants ont soumis* the scope of work and cost estimate, and it is the answer of the hon. Minister. *Excusez-moi, M. le président, je trouve cela presque ‘fichant’ de dire: on a reçu, tout est là, on va le faire quand on veut.* This place called Camp Savanne is near Bord Cascade. People don’t have an access road. Now, we are talking about social integration and infrastructural development! Let’s hope, it will come under that.

Do you know what happened in April this year, Mr Speaker, Sir? An inhabitant of Camp Savanne, while crossing the river - because they have to go up and down to have access to the main road - fell down, hurt himself and, after some weeks, passed away. No comments!

Regarding the problem of soil erosion at Rivière Sèche - we have two Ministers and another Member there - I am sure that when we go there, we fear to fall down, because as time passes by, the road is becoming narrower due to soil erosion. It is so difficult to get into Rivière Sèche. I have talked about that since five years, and nothing has been done. I can only hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that nobody will lose his life at Camp Savanne or Rivière Sèche because of the bad state of the access roads.

Another problem which is still ongoing, Mr Speaker, Sir - there was a question this morning - is the Shakers Club at John Kennedy Avenue. We remember the serious incident that occurred last year, where there were fire shots and so on. Up to now, this problem is ongoing. It seems that the authorities have not been able to do anything because, not later than Friday, there was a big dancing party and, of course, cars being parked to block the access of the inhabitants. I can only hope that, one day, the inhabitants will not be aggressed there. This is what I fear, Mr Speaker, Sir.

M. le président, j’ai une dernière suggestion concernant cette Chambre. Tout à l’heure, on parlait de e-Parliament, e-environment. I am just wondering, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether it is not time, for example, to consider putting answers to Parliamentary Questions on CDs instead of all these papers. I think it is less costly, less bulky, and it could be one measure that parliamentarians could take for *Maurice Ile Durable*. What’s the use of having all these papers?

It is going to be online. But, of course, we can have a survey. Maybe, there are some parliamentarians who would need hard copies, but other Members could have it on CDs. I think this will cut down costs and, at the same time, it will be a concrete action for *Maurice Ile Durable*.

M. le président, je conclus en disant que je souhaite que les plus démunis de notre société soient mieux servis au cours de ce mandat, que des actions concrètes soient prises tant au niveau du logement, de la formation, de l'éducation qu'au niveau de l'emploi, afin que l'intégration sociale ne demeure pas dans le registre des bonnes intentions.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: A question has been raised by hon. Mrs Labelle about getting rid of papers. I must inform her that, after having introduced the e-Parliament, which is rare in Africa - we are being praised for that - now, we are working on a paperless Parliament. I hope it will be materialised soon.

(5.56 p.m.)

Mrs B. Juggoo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Speaker, Sir, let me congratulate you on your re-election as Speaker of the House like my colleagues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the electorate has given a clear mandate to *l'Alliance de l'Avenir* to govern for the next five years. This manifests the confidence people have in the Government, in its programmes, in their representatives and, above all, in the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the two vice-Prime Ministers. Throughout this campaign, it was increasingly evident that three central issues dominated the debate, which ultimately influenced the decision of voters in general. In spite of the economic crisis, lack of funds, etc. - to remind hon. Mrs Labelle - there were the performance and achievements of the Government, including housing, education, etc; the programmes it presented to the nation, including the manner the people wish to be governed, and who is more apt to shape the destiny of the country and assume the supreme responsibility of leading the nation on major issues that affect each and everyone.

While everyone contributed to the return of this Government back to power, one man, through his decisive role, his leadership and his presence, emerged as a tower of strength,

inculcating confidence wherever he went and whoever he met. He invested his scarce and precious time not only in his own constituency, but also in other constituencies, and managed either to reverse the trend or accentuate the lead. It is not surprising that he was rewarded with a comfortable victory. It is, therefore, opportune to thank him for providing an inspiring leadership and steering the party to triumph against all odds that were there.

Yet, I was quite surprised at the irony one editorialist displayed when my colleague, Stephanie Anquetil, had expressed her gratitude and admiration for the Prime Minister. The strenuous efforts Dr. the hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam added to every candidate's local campaign is a sign of unselfish leadership.

It cemented the union between the electorate and the candidate, creating the dynamism that echoed in every house, every street, and charted the road of victory of this country. What's wrong then, if candidates of *Alliance de l'Avenir* express their appreciation and gratitude towards their leaders? As the others before me, I wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister for the support and leadership he has provided. I take this opportunity to thank my electorate too for returning me back to this august National Assembly, and wish to reiterate that I shall serve the constituency with the same zeal and dedication I displayed during the five years that passed, and remain at the service of all my constituents, immaterial voted or not voted, as rumours have it.

The Government Programme 2010-2015 is an ambitious package that consolidates the central pillar upon which the Labour Party stands, namely the Welfare State. With the support of its allies, it seeks to accelerate economic growth and place Mauritius on a wider and stronger trajectory of sustainable growth based on modernisation, unity and sharing of all wealth created. Indeed, sustainable growth is such a central concept in our programme that Government has come with an innovative project, the *Maurice Ile Durable* - as hon. Mrs Labelle was mentioning, or we call it *MID* for short - to which Rs1.3 billion has been earmarked. Both UNDP and the European Union have found this project to be a model for other countries, and have not hesitated to provide technical and financial support to Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would have liked to comment on as many issues raised in our voluminous document, but this is virtually impossible in the circumstances. I shall, therefore, limit myself to some selected few.

I will start with law and order. Law and order, Mr Speaker, Sir, is an intangible complex factor too critical to be ignored. Social stability, inter-ethnic harmony, regional balanced development, export, economic growth and sustained development are all intertwined and dependent on law and order. That is why Government attaches high importance to this issue. Safety and security of both local citizens and visitors is of primary concern to this Government. Yet, in spite of all the efforts, you cannot stop things to happen; and headlines on a daily basis that create havoc in the country, although on a long term basis, the statistics show that crimes and assaults have not changed. It is years and years that this goes on and on. The Prime Minister has a more apt attitude by his phrasing and gestures to reflect how information is transmitted rapidly in Mauritius. We gossip too much, and I believe that we believe in what does not exist and rumours have it after that.

Moreover, certain regions where law and order is concerned can be tagged hot areas, like in my constituency where lots of things are happening daily; but, it again stems from poor education, broken homes and abject poverty. It is all a matter of mind setting, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is not only security, but it is also based more on criminality as well. It is security and criminality which one has to differentiate. We need to educate the nation to change the mentality. I think that the installation of Closed Circuit Television Surveillance System in strategic regions appears to yield positive results. It is cost-effective and protects society. So, we really rely on Government to expedite matters on this matter, so that it can transform the island into a safer place to live in.

The community also has a vital role in helping to maintain law and order. Today, we find that citizens are joining hands with criminals and assaulting policemen. They are buying goods that are being stolen, and they are hiding criminals instead of denouncing them. If society does not condemn crime, we cannot expect a decline in the proliferation of crime. Nobody will be safe if the community does not assist to combine together with the law. We are living in a pathological social context. Many policemen have displayed anti-social behaviour as well. Such outliers are clearly unfit to join the Police Force, because they do not command respect. Therefore, it is a two-way issue; it is the community and the civil servants as well. It is important, therefore, to have proper screening done before people get into the Government. The community as a whole has to participate in maintaining law and order.

In certain countries such as Singapore or Canada, Mr Speaker, Sir, we rarely see any policeman on the street. Yet, both have a record of low crime and high human development index. In Canada, for example, the community plays a proactive role, often denouncing even minor breach of the law such as poor or inappropriate parking. It is minor, but it helps to create law and order when it is reported by just anybody.

Sanctions must give strong signals, and those who are in breach of the law and are sanctioned must feel what they are going to lose in terms of financial losses, freedom or respect in the community. The police too may need to revamp its role, be more stringent with harder tests, including physical exercises, academic performances, etc. To help the community, the Police Force may adopt a more judicious approach of communion between the community and themselves. Like in the past we have been having the Police Partnership Programme, more of these could be practised. There have been other practices which have been abandoned, like in the past we used to have a special squadron to start a campaign in schools with children to teach them the basics of good citizenship, law and order, community harmony, safety and security and regional development. So, that could also be one good way of teaching the community as a child from roots.

The Police Force is already well staffed, more importantly we must ensure that equipment is not lacking or poorly maintained, and that they act effectively and efficiently. The Police Force has the potential to build their image and improve their productivity if more training is provided, their daily operations are computerised, their infrastructure in which they operate is upgraded and modernised, and better access to travelling is provided to lower grade policemen. Policemen should be taught and should be proud to belong to the organisation that they work. There is no compromise if we are to stay by our slogan of modernisation; we need to help to get better service to modernise and to uphold law and order, and command respect.

I will now talk about poverty alleviation. I would like hon. Mrs Labelle to listen to it carefully. Mauritius has made giant strides in overcoming poverty. Starting in the late 1950s, when the foundations of the Welfare State was laid down, the progress had moved on relentlessly with free health service, a national basic pension for all, free education at all levels, access to drinking water, and grant to meet costs of slabs for needy citizens. The list is by no means exhaustive. I would take a day to mention it. This is just to tell my friend. Mauritius remains

one of the three countries in the world where old people benefit indiscriminately from universal basic pensions. Yet, poverty continues to be a major central issue that does not leave people indifferent. Despite the growing affluence, begging has not stopped. It has not disappeared. It is in every country. This Government is too conscious of the abject poverty that exists, a poverty trap that cuts across all ethnic groups, but often more pronounced in certain regions like my constituency. Various regions of my constituency, Mr Speaker, Sir, are marked by a more acute level of poverty that, in turn, has engendered myriads undesirable social behaviour.

Government has pondered on this question, and the hon. Prime Minister, in particular, is determined to alleviate poverty, notwithstanding that poverty is relative. Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am referring to abject poverty, the destitute, those who are not able to lead a normal life and are denied access to basic necessities, sometimes including food. Government's vision is that every human being should be at the centre of sustainable development. That is why it has redoubled its efforts in its fight against poverty. In a recent past, it identified some 229 regions and adopted a targeted approach. However, while this approach has served a few, it has not given satisfaction to everyone maybe. I would like to tell hon. Mrs Labelle that Government is determined to uplift more people...

(Interruptions)

...and bring them in mainstream development. The hon. Prime Minister, in his wisdom, has created a separate Ministry to look specifically after social integration and economic empowerment. He chose for this challenging post someone who has already delivered and is result-oriented. I have no doubt that, once more, we shall see results after results, as more and more people will be empowered and fend for themselves. Already, there are tangible signs that things are moving steadily. The mission of this Ministry is to enhance the quality of life of the vulnerable groups through greater social justice and human development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the President once pointed out, poverty is relative and, by comparison with his neighbour, he is poor. I am, therefore, submitting to this august House for reflection why we do not consider a more practical paradigm to, at least, eliminate abject poverty. Sir Arthur Lewis, a Nobel Prize winner in economics, has advocated 'An Essential Needs' approach. My newly appointed colleague may give some thought to this concept. Hon. Mrs Labelle - for the last time I will speak on this - would remember that nine years back she mentioned about

that. It was in 2001 or 2002, if I am not mistaken. So, many things could have happened at that time. People have a right to food, shelter and clothing. We all know, but we all should have been conscious of it nine years back. Poor children need access to education, basic sanitary conditions to live in and a minimum of leisure. Besides the essential needs I referred to above, old people require elementary health care and expeditious attention relating to basic administration, be it in banks, welfare offices, post office or utility services. We all agree that we need to put a smile on everybody's face. Government's intention to create the propitious conditions to alleviate poverty, promote inclusive and sustainable growth, and secure social progress is indeed magnanimous. Time will tell, Mr Speaker, Sir. However, we need to ensure that these intentions are translated into actions.

There are three prominent persons who come to my mind when we speak of the issue of poverty alleviation: Professor Muhammad Yunus, the founder of Grameen Bank and a practical technician in promoting micro-finance, Amartya Sen, an economist on poverty and welfare and, President Obama, of course, during his apprenticeship as a grass roots social worker before becoming President of the US. All of them were Nobel Prize winners. I am sure we have something to learn from their experience.

The experience of Professor Muhammad Yunus is of critical importance in combating poverty and empowering them. That is why it is equally critical to re-examine the role of certain organisations funded by taxpayers' money. This is why I say we have to be inspired by Professor Muhammad Yunus and Amartya Sen. We have to show people how to fish and restrain ourselves from fishing for them. The Chinese were no fools to have come with this adage. Microfinance and empowerment create jobs and eliminate poverty. I think that my own constituency, where poverty and its sequels are rampant, and Rodrigues would be highly suitable to implement a poverty alleviation programme through the vehicle of microfinance, now that we have reorganised a new Ministry under an able Minister.

We come to the subject of women and family matters, Mr Speaker, Sir. The role of women has changed dramatically, and women have successfully met the challenges. Time is the best healer, and in many places which were traditionally dominated by males, women have been able to show they can do the job as well. This Government has passed the Equal Opportunities Act, which also implies gender equality at all levels. However, when we look at the trends, there

are some disturbing elements, which appear at odds with the very intention of the Act. Yet, there remain a few dark spots which call for reflection.

First, for the Act to be implemented successfully, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to analyse what is going on in different areas. The need for a proper education and for a civilised treatment of women cannot be overstated.

Access to education will equally hit women. Again, the intention to run universities on Sundays and late at night is a very laudable initiative to give opportunities to everyone. However, without addressing the problems of security, safety and transport, women cannot expect to benefit from such schemes. So, everything will have to be taken into consideration so that women can progress further. We compare unfavourably with SADC countries, unfortunately. Note that most women from leading parties who stood for election were returned back to this Assembly; in one or two cases only, narrowly missed being elected. Women Ministers are performing extremely well. The press says it; we all see it, and we all believe in it. We need to come to a consensus about how more women can enter the National Assembly as elected Members. But if women do not get nominations to stand as candidates, we cannot expect them to be elected. With the help of my dear colleague, hon. Mrs Sheila Bappoo, dynamic Minister, this Ministry will surely continue progressing and we, women, look forward for more steps to be taken in favour of women.

Before leaving this topic, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to comment on a problem that affects hundreds of children every year and call for a national reflection on it, as it is often very touching to the heart. In this same House, I raised the problem of children suffering from dyslexia in my speech on the Budget last time; children who face tremendous difficulties to adapt in standard schools. Many of these children and their parents often have to lead a tragic life. It is our duty to brighten their lives. We can help them by providing the specialised and specific infrastructure and by creating the conducive environment for them to live a day at a time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these children have special abilities. I said it before, Abhishek Bachchan was one of them, and we cannot allow their talent to remain dormant. Since my last speech during the Budget debate where I first mentioned this issue, we have initiated some actions to relieve the pain on parents and help these children adapt themselves to everyday life. We have set up an organisation grouping parents and children under one umbrella. We have also

established contact with an NGO, which is willing to offer their expertise from UK. I believe that this is a golden opportunity, and we cannot afford to miss the train. We cannot miss it in the interest of these children. We want to give them the opportunity of leading a happy normal life. We shall approach the relevant authorities, especially those relating to land, infrastructure and education at the appropriate time in due course.

Now, I come to the environment and infrastructure issue. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have embarked on a major ambitious infrastructure programme. For many years, critics from all quarters pointed out, with reason, the deficit in our infrastructure. This was costing the country huge sums in terms of productivity losses, extra fuel imports and imports of vehicles, spares and unnecessary outflow of much needed foreign exchange. Government has addressed the problem with neither the speed nor the finishing touch needed to meet the satisfaction of users. Government's intention and decision are laudable, of course. However, the Government alone cannot accomplish everything. The private sector has failed to live to people's expectations, thereby jeopardising the good intention of this Government.

Our slogan is modernisation, and we need to live to this goal. Good and timely infrastructure is a prerequisite to sharpening our international competitive edge, but also to facilitate the lives of the common people. They are the ones who often have to bear the brunt of the deficit in infrastructure. Our duty is to create the enabling conditions for people to lead a cosy life, in harmony with their environment.

Yet, we look at our planning; we cannot but think that planners and engineers often take a short term vision. We are not asking them to create a utopia for us, but please spare us a dystopia. By the time one road project is completed, we have hardly a breathing time of two to three years before a new level of congestion sets in. Every time, the provision of infrastructure has fallen woefully short of the pace of development. We are back to square one like the *Mythe de Sisyphe*. So, we have to start all over again. Yet, ironically, we dismally fail to learn from our own experiences. We need to address this issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, with a grander vision, a long term approach, not a firefighting strategy. We have got a mandate, and let us distil lessons from previous projects and correct them when designing new roads in order to avoid perpetual road congestion.

I believe engineers, planners or architects should have a broader socio-economic and human development approach rather than limit themselves simply to engineering aspects. Otherwise, we shall be repeating the same mistakes we have done for the past 40 years, and squandering taxpayers. As Mauritius reaches higher development levels and makes sharp economic shifts, every nook and cranny of the country, all roads are likely to be congested with bottlenecks rising throughout the day and sometimes causing unnecessary accidents. Many developments totally ignored the rights of pedestrians.

Take the case of Ebène City, a place already congested and where we are implementing sunrise industries and green buildings. Yet, we will not have a proper pedestrian crossing, a simple thing like that, or a pavement. The pedestrians are exposed to serious hazards or accidents on the access roads to the motorway. We cannot repeat our mistake of a fatal accident before initiating actions for the safety of pedestrians in a fast developing zone. The roads are already congested. Why didn't we conceive flyovers and underpasses? Today, we place the population at risk. The recent accident at Union Park could have been averted, and experts say that road configuration is poorly conceived and designed. We should think of, maybe again, the monorail system and so forth.

Let me be a little more explicit, Mr Speaker, Sir, about my earlier observations on the private sector's vision and performance. Very often, when we award a contract, we are faced with a dearth of competent private sector contractors. The few we have often need to subcontract their activities. One result is that road developments in the North were considerably perturbed. Numerous projects, especially in areas that are vulnerable to adverse weather conditions, have been left unfinished. It is not because the Minister did not want to do it. No! It is all the effort that should have come from the private sector that was being awarded the contract. Many projects were left unfinished because of that. Bituminous products were unavailable too frequently, for instance. Why? Everyone is aware of the delay in our infrastructure development. The MCB Focus underlined the deficit in infrastructure. Government announced its intention to endow the country with modern infrastructure. The Minister stated on various occasions that the entire Mauritius has become '*ène chantier*'. Then why could not the firm take the necessary initiative to meet demand? Was it to maintain monopolistic prices? It is time that the Competition Commission of Mauritius enquires into this. Why are not more firms venturing to invest in this area?

The irony, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that Government at one time had invested in the manufacture of bituminous products for strategic reasons. I do not want to go into the detail of this, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, most probably, I will have an opportunity in my speech on the Budget to go on with this. But, if we want to make fast development conducive to achieving the democratisation process, we will require more firms to produce materials that we need. We equally need people who do not limit themselves to objectives of financial gains, but have a broader development goal that responds to the aspirations of the people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is also another problem linked to the issue of awarding contract to private sector firms. We follow the normal procedure of calling for bids on a competitive basis. While the procurement system is marred with heavy administrative procedures and takes long time delays before reaching a decision, too often it is the lowest bidder that obtains the contract. We should, at least, try to see in which manner this can be tackled.

The result is that, once they obtain the contract, they fail to finish the project on time, to the detriment of everyone. In the meantime, the poor inhabitants residing in the project implementing area have to endure considerable inconvenience and face accident. I have this problem even in my own constituency, where bridges like in Long Mountain and drains were being constructed, and were left unfinished. It resulted in many accidents. As Member of Parliament, our constituents pressured us and had resort to a very critical press, which is welcomed, of course, and shows healthy democracy.

I take an example from my constituency, Mr Speaker, Sir. A project is implemented; there is no access for children going to school between Robinson and Boulingrin. How can the children walk from one place to the other when the Verdun-Terre Rouge road is coming up? Once the road is finished, there will be no decision taken of how the road will come up, to see where they can have the children passing through to go to school.

Again, in my constituency, in Congomah, there is a *ravin* which is left without safety guards, and we hope this time that these issues will be tackled and children won't fall into it again.

I move into another topic, Mr Speaker, Sir, but it is a long thing. We need to address problems to enable environment for society to live in our slogan. The *MID* concept is a very important concept, and we need to uphold it in whatever sectors so as to reduce the utilisation of

fossil fuel and slowly shift towards the low carbon economy. However, we need to ensure that our sustainable development strategy does not jeopardise our economic growth. We have to remind ourselves that sustainable development is economic development, with due regard to environmental quality and social upliftment. It is based on a lot of issues, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I would not go into it again. It is a long thing, as I say, with the *MID* project, and provision infrastructure is inextricably linked, and these two Ministries should have enough funds ultimately to see that we have a proper change of the island.

To end up, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come to the economic performance. I will not spend too much time on the economy. While we have shown resilience, it is important to recognise that we performed below the potential growth or the trended rate of development we were used to in the past. As the world economy picks up, we need to position ourselves to ride on the crest of the world economy. Mauritius has the potential of a 6% growth rate. Our growth rate during the last decade was below 4.5%. Unless we grow, we cannot distribute, and our objective of poverty alleviation will be jeopardised.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to say *l'essentiel* to end up. *L'essentiel, c'est de bien faire son travail*. We cannot just give people hope and fail to deliver, because at various levels others have not done justice to their parts. And this applies to both public and private sectors, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I quote Mahatma Gandhi –

“Always aim at complete harmony of thought and word and deed. Always aim at purifying your thoughts, and everything will be well. Honest differences are often a healthy sign of progress. Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress. So, let's all work together and make progress for our country”.

Thank you.

(6.34 p.m)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me, first of all, to express my appreciation and thanks to the His Excellency, the President of the Republic, who, during nearly one and three quarter hours, so staunchly and clearly articulated Government's vision for this new Parliament.

I would also like to seize this opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, to congratulate you on your re-election as Speaker of this august Assembly. We have no doubt that you will live up beyond the standard that you have yourself set, the more so when Parliament and politicians in other mature democracies are decried by their own public.

I am also very thankful to the hon. Prime Minister to have reiterated his trust in me, and wish to assure him and the population that I will not fail them in the responsibility placed upon me.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 06 May last, the country spoke clearly and loudly; it renewed the verdict it gave us on 04 July 2005. In other words, the country told us to carry on with the tasks we started five years ago.

The hon. Member for Savanne & Rivière Noire, in his comments on the President Address, lamented the under representation of his party in the Assembly with 42% of the popular vote.

(Interruptions)

Suppose it is 43% or 42.95%. Should I remind him that the Labour Party in 1991 general election returned only three Members with 40% of the popular vote, and in the 2000 general election it did a shade better with only six Members returned for 38% of the popular vote? We accepted them gracefully, since it was the rules by which we entered the electoral contests.

Disheartening as it may feel, the more pertinent explanation seems to be in circumstances beyond the Opposition control, that it is the nature and competence of Government. In other words, not in the message, but the messengers.

First, the whole world got hit in the recession, and we were no exception. Marooned without ideas and mired in obsolete ideologies, unfortunately, the Opposition was often missing from action and is yet to comprehend the cause of its defeat. On the other hand, Government, with political stability at the centre, has weathered the economic storm better than even developing countries or developed countries.

Second, it was a victory over communalism and casteism. A victory over what I would term “quotacracy”. The message was clear. Mauritian voters were looking for a vision. They do not want to be lured with instruments of division. Mauritius needs political parties or

politicians who are there to address the real issues rather than devoting time to create divisions like flyovers, to overcome incumbency for a smooth ride. Quota politics is the enemy of an open society. The population has put a lid on it, and I hope we will never confront such episodes. Let future electoral campaigns be a confrontation of different ideas, visions and goals for a mature society, as it was in Constituency No. 13, Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac. There, we fought a much civilised campaign, although initially the odds were against us, my colleague and myself. He was supposed to be swallowed up by the Gargantua of local politics, and I was to be butchered.

Fortunately, there was not a single drop of blood that was shed. No butchery was committed. Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say how we fought with respect to our adversaries. It was a battle of ideas and trying to persuade. I agree that I and my colleagues had an uphill task, but we did it with determination, and we are very thankful indeed to the hon. Prime Minister who gave us a helping hand, which was decisive in our victory.

Third, a smarter Mauritius needs a smarter Government, and that's why we are here. We are capable of bringing together the best and the brightest from all the realms of human endeavour - politics, economics, culture and science - and become a republic of innovation, imagination and turn expectation into realities.

Finally and very importantly, it boiled down to leadership. Leadership consists of motivating a group to construct ideas and formulate them into action plans, and then work as a team. This is precisely what we did, and we are here; that's what we will be doing in the next five years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are at the dawn of a new decade, with great expectations ranging from political emancipation to economic consolidation and from the safety of the nation to the safety of the planet. The decisions we take today will shape the future. A future where societal values will be based on - I quote from the President's speech - unity, equity and modernity. The road to national unity, equity and modernity will continue to be as challenging and rewarding. There is no easy solution, but hard choices.

The broad policy outline is clear. All the major policy reforms are on the agenda –

A constitutional review, including reform of our electoral system.

Law and order. There should be no reason for any citizen of this country or for any visitor for that matter to feel insecure. The Police Force will be transformed into a well trained and equipped Police service. The combat against crimes and drugs will be relentless. Appropriate pieces of legislation will be passed, though my earnest hope is that morality should take precedence and legality a backseat.

All efforts are being undertaken to tap and optimise the use of renewable energy.

The creation of a Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment can leave no doubt in anybody's mind as to the sincerity of this Government in the fight to eliminate poverty. All resources of the State will be used to that effect. Cynics are arguing that, because poverty is on the rise, that is why the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment has been created. No! This Ministry will have a holistic approach to poverty reduction and social cohesion. The social housing project will form an integral part of its activities.

The completion of the New Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, the creation of new specialised hospitals for women and senior citizens and the review of pieces of legislation in the health sector testimony to the importance this Government attaches to the health of the population. No doubt, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Health will expand on that.

A modern Mauritius cannot exist without infrastructure development which includes the challenges to be met in the transport system.

Recent outcome in regard to Tromelin is a major breakthrough in our foreign policy. This is a Government which takes decisions and I have no doubt, in my mind, that time will prove us right. On the other hand, we have a security interest to eliminate sea piracy, particularly in the Indian Ocean, and we have started that goal, and already we have a unit which I am sure has already been trained to take care of this.

We are living in a decade which saw the birth of a new green consciousness. An environment protection and preservation are high on the agenda of this Government. Mr Speaker, Sir, the ecological carnage of the of the oil spill in the gulf of Mexico, which I call the Bhopal of the US, rightly described by President Obama as their ecological 9/11, illustrates the

price the world is paying for its unquenchable thirst for energy. We must pause to reflect where the thirst for oil/energy will eventually take us to.

Whilst illiteracy is the root of all evils, we do not, on the other hand, need academic toppers, but generations of confident and capable personalities who proved to be assets to this country. Our education system is aiming at producing future generations who will be creative and innovative. My colleagues, the Minister of Education and the newly appointed Minister of Tertiary Education, have already started the ball rolling. And no doubt the efforts will pay handsome dividends in the years to come.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are worldwide facing a problem of food inflation. The reason why food costs so much is simple. Demand for food is outpacing production. Today, a country like India, where a majority of the population is employed in agriculture, is facing the danger of food stress; not shortage yet. This Government has already felt the heat and is taking all necessary measures to cope with food security. Scientific development is producing new food varieties with unknown consequences to our population, hence resistance to genetically modified food items.

Across the rich world, an era of budget austerity beckons. Government debt is rising faster than any time since the world war. According to the IMF, public debt of rich countries will, by 2014, reach an average of 110% of GDP. How to alter this bleak trajectory will be policymakers' most difficult task over the next decade. Shrinking global growth has hit demand, affecting exports and investments. The Euro zone is threatened by a sovereign credit crunch, nasty enough to plunge the entire economies into misery. The economic woes of Greece, Spain and other Euro zone weaklings might be followed by those of resilient economies like UK, Germany and France.

Only last week, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer has presented an emergency budget containing the most drastic cut in spending, to reduce its budget deficit in the history of peacetime Britain. In some European countries, public sector salaries are simply being reduced; something never heard before. The biggest challenge of all, in my opinion, is maintaining equilibrium between economics and politics. Government has a capability to meet this challenge and is sparing no effort to do so. Even during the last week, it was very difficult to have a consensus about drastic cuts in spending, which may provoke a recession as opposed to stimulus

package which Americans are following. Eventually, there is no one cap that fits all. Each and every country will find its own solution to sort out its problems.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in my first intervention as Minister of Housing and Lands, I mentioned that I was blessed to have been assigned that portfolio. I wish, here, to place on record, my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude, particularly to the hon. Prime Minister, to return me to that Ministry, and to all those who have put their trust in me and supported me all the way along. God willing, I will not let them down. When the words 'low cost affordable housing' appear in print these days, politicians know problems are rarely far behind. Low cost affordable housing is not all about constructing housing units only. The temptation of proposing simplistic solutions more often leads to demagogy. All humans need a basic shelter, a house as we call it, convert it into a home where there is peace and *où il fait bon vivre*. Bringing supply and demand into equilibrium is and will always be painful.

On the one hand, we are faced with increased demand from people who do not have the capacity to pay. On the supply side, difficulties start with shrinking availability of buildable land. Let us not lure ourselves. Finance is yet another constraint even in developed countries of the North. Availability, if not readiness of reliable construction firms, is a rare commodity, as my colleague PPS, hon. Mrs Juggoo, just pointed out. Rising costs of building material and labour are non negligible variables in this equation. Last but not least, new concepts like 'energy efficiency' and 'green' make things not easy. It is a commodity whose cost varies according to locality and other circumstances. However, I believe 'green' and 'affordable' are one and the same. We are working towards a national framework for healthy, efficient, environmentally clever and affordable houses. The framework will include water conservation, energy efficiency, and the use of environmentally friendly building materials. It may be argued that housing construction cost may increase, but this will be rapidly paid back by lower running costs and a cleaner environment.

In the meantime, we have already embarked on the construction of low cost housing units, and the provision of fully serviced sites around the island. The aim is to supply 10,000 housing units and 1,000 lots of fully serviced sites to the low and middle income groups. Government, conscious of the shrinking land availability, has negotiated 1,000 *arpents* of land from the MSPA in this attainment.

I am all out for development, but we cannot take squatters for a ride or cause them pain. We should first understand their plight. Ultimately, they are part and parcel of development. We will one way or other come to solutions acceptable to everyone. However, I sound a note of caution here. There will be no surrender no retreat approach towards new squatters. Land is a prerequisite for all economic and social development of any country. Indeed, industrial development, extension of the tourism sector and social housing are amongst the major consumers of land. There is, therefore, a need to ensure a judicious utilisation and management of this scarce and valuable resource. Land is one of the commodities where enough is never enough and, more importantly, we cannot create, except at heavy unrealistic costs, as it is in Dubai.

The State Land Act has been amended to provide a fair return on prime land assets. In this context, we have harmonised rentals applicable to *campement* and industrial site leases, which are now based on zoning. Furthermore, to reduce the risk of speculation on State land to a minimum, Government has provided for an Article 18 to be inserted in all industrial lease agreements, whereby change in ownership or shareholding may impact on the control or management of a company is not allowed, unless approval has been sought from my Ministry. Where approval has not been sought at my Ministry, my Ministry has got the right to cancel the lease or revise the term of lease agreement, including an increase in rent in case of change of purpose.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has provided a unique opportunity for enabling owners of ex-CHA houses to become owners of the land on which these houses stand for the sum of Rs2,000. Already 12,800 cases have been dealt with by my Ministry, and some of them are waiting to have their lease sorted out by the Attorney. However, there are certain problems pertaining to a number of owners, and I think my colleague, hon. Ganoo, had raised, in his intervention, the issue of *Pas Géométriques*, on which stand ex-CHA housing units. The hon. Member has requested that we consider the sale of the land to the owners of these housing units.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry has been looking very seriously into the matter. I am informed that there are some 900 such units in 16 different sites on *Pas Géométriques* around the island. A recent survey conducted by my Ministry indicates that around 50 of them have been converted into commercial outlets. More than 600 of the 900

have been upgraded, with additions horizontally and vertically. Given the specific characteristic of the housing units on the *Pas Géométriques* and the potential that these sites offer in terms of touristic development, it is imperative that a different approach be adopted.

Already, in a number of cases, the ownership of the housing units has changed hands, involving huge sums of money. There is always the risk of speculation. To cut it short, Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue is complex, and requires further reflections. For example, we have had people selling their houses for half a million to three-quarter of a million, and guess how much they are paying as rent. Rs12! Whereas, next door, people are paying industrial leases amounting to hundreds of thousands! This is where we have to be very, very careful, because otherwise we may create havoc. I propose to look into the matter thoroughly, examining in the process all implications which may be far-reaching.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry will ensure timely acquisition of private lands, to enable implementation of major infrastructural projects for the benefit of the population.

Our nautical charts dated as far back as the last century. Following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2005 with the Government of India, hydrographic surveys, including pioneer surveys, have been undertaken in our Exclusive Economic Zone. In addition, the Indian naval ship also carried out bathymetric surveys for the Land-Based Oceanic Industry. This has resulted in updated charts being produced, and they are now available for sale. I think Mauritius is unique in having all its shores scientifically assessed by the hydrographic help we have had from the Government and from the Republic of India, and we are as ever grateful for this. These documents will undoubtedly contribute to safe navigation, and to the fishing and tourism activities. Actually, it has not only been done for Mauritius but also for Agalega and St. Brandon, and we will do it soon in Tromelin when the Mauritian flag will float there. Moreover, my Ministry will soon set up a Hydrographic Unit to conduct minor surveys around Mauritius in the first instance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot miss this opportunity to make mention of the Land Administration Valuation and Information Management System (LAVIMS) Project, which is probably the flagship of my Ministry. This is a major Rs620 m. project; its implementation started in January 2009, but there had been a lot of preliminary works done in the previous one

and a half year, and it is due to be completed in December 2010. It will produce a modern Land Administration and Management System for the Republic of Mauritius.

My Ministry has already acquired a new aerial imagery produced by state-of-the-art technology for the whole island of Mauritius. The imagery is a considerable advance on what has been available to date, even better than what Google is providing. In fact, even Google is trying to negotiate with us. My Ministry has put on sale different digital and printed versions of the aerial maps at very affordable prices, to allow a wide use of this new imagery both by Government, including hon. Members of this august Assembly, and private organisations. They will be finding each and every aspect of their constituency: the roads, the beaches, the forests and the docks.

Ultimately, we will be in possession of a complete cadastre of all private State lands; a parcel-based deeds registration system; a valuation roll of all properties in Mauritius. To allow for the optimum use of all the deliverables of the LAVIMS Project, a Cadastral Survey Bill will be introduced and will provide, *inter alia*, for the establishment and maintenance of a cadastre system for all land parcels in Mauritius, and the setting-up of a mechanism to regulate the lodgement of survey reports and plans.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a draft Land Planning and Development Bill takes on board the relevant provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2004, the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006, the Local Government Act 2003 and the Finance Act, and provides for a Planning Appeal Tribunal.

This piece of legislation will give legal status to the national land development strategy and power to local authorities to prepare their own local plans. It also provides for the setting-up of a strong Land Planning and Development Commission, which will also act as a watchdog/guardian of public interest and to protect the common good.

My Ministry has already launched a request for proposal for consultancy services to review all the five Urban Outline Schemes, to take on board the present day needs and major infrastructure projects.

My Ministry will continue to assist both developers in preparing their projects in compliance with Planning Policy Guidelines and local authorities in assessing applications for permits. This will reduce delays at all levels.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would appeal to everyone of us to put our heads together, and that ideological disagreement is no longer equated with personal attacks, that we do away with the mentality of everything is someone else's fault, and that each of us takes responsibility for our actions. These are the hallmarks of conviction politicians.

A new generation of young politicians, on both sides, has just joined this House – they are imbued with a sense of patriotism, expectation and search for solutions to our problem. The future belongs to them. Please join us in lifting the natural aspiration to new and exhilarating heights. The nation will remember.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

Mrs Labelle rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 06 July 2010, at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Bachoo rose and seconded.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Question put and agreed to.

MATTERS RAISED ON ADJOURNMENT

COROMANDEL - TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, j'ai trois requêtes concernant la circonscription No. 20, adressées au ministre des infrastructures

publiques. La première concerne la région de Coromandel. Des feux de signalisation, situés à l'angle de la rue Royale et Richelieu Branch Road, ne fonctionnent pas depuis plus d'une semaine. Je demande à l'honorable ministre s'il peut faire le nécessaire.

MORCELLEMENT LA CONFIANCE, COROMANDEL – SPEED BUMPS

La deuxième requête concerne la rue Albatros à Morcellement La Confiance. Il y a une requête des habitants pour que des ralentisseurs soient installés. Je sais, M. le ministre, que la politique de votre ministère est d'enlever des ralentisseurs, mais vu que j'habite la région et que je suis au courant de ce problème, il serait souhaitable effectivement que des ralentisseurs y soient installés.

CHEBEL – TRAFFIC FLOW

La dernière requête concerne la circulation à Chebel, principalement à la rue des Figuiers. C'est une rue étroite, très passagère, où des véhicules sont stationnés à longueur de journée. Ces véhicules roulent à vive allure matin et soir, et causent beaucoup d'inconvénients aux habitants de la région, mettant en danger la vie des piétons aussi. Il serait souhaitable à mon avis - mais je laisse le soin au *Traffic Management Unit* de décider de la marche à suivre - si possible, d'effectuer un *survey* dans la région et de considérer la possibilité de convertir l'avenue des Figuiers en un sens unique et, en même temps, considérer aussi de faire de même à une autre rue parallèle à la rue des Figuiers, c'est-à-dire, la rue Orangers, principalement à l'angle des rues Orangers et Poiriers.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of the requests of the hon. Member. I will look into all these problems.

L'AGRÉMENT ST PIERRE - FOOTBALL GROUND

Mr S. Dayal (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have received lots of representations from the inhabitants of St. Pierre regarding the l'Agrément St. Pierre football ground, which is not properly fenced. I understand that way leave has been obtained.

My request will be that the football ground be properly fenced and provided with lighting facilities.

ZIKIRIA ROAD, QUARTIER MILITAIRE – RAINY WEATHER – FLOODING

Mr Speaker, Sir, the inhabitants of Zikiria Road at Quartier Militaire have sent several representations to the Ministry also. The Zikiria Road is impracticable during rainy weather as running of water from Bonneveine Road finds its course there. During rainy weather, Zikiria Road is flooded, causing much inconvenience to pedestrians as well as schoolchildren.

My request will be that an absorption pit be placed near the junction Zikiria and Bonneveine Roads, as this will prevent water to flow to Zikiria Road, and also if resurfacing of the road could be effected.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will look into the issues, and a site visit will be carried out shortly.

LE MORNE VILLAGE - SCABIES OUTBREAK

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to raise an issue of urgent nature afflicting one part of my constituency. I refer to the outbreak of scabies in part of the west coast of the country, especially in the village of Le Morne.

Mr Speaker, Sir, two weeks ago, during my speech on the Presidential Address, I drew the attention of Government on the issue. Two weeks have gone by, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I am sorry to say that, from the information I have, the situation has not improved at all. On the contrary, the disease has gained ground and is propagating. The percentage of schoolchildren affected by this outbreak has been on the rise, so much so that more children are absenting themselves from school. The PTA and parents have taken the necessary steps to sensitise all the authorities concerned, and they have knocked at the doors of all those concerned. The outbreak has, unfortunately, remained unchecked. It is a feeling of despair and frustration that prevails among the parents and social workers of the village, the more so since this *démangeaison* is also spreading among part of the adult population of Le Morne. The percentage of patients attending Le Morne dispensary amounts presently to about 80%. Worse, some inhabitants have even been

complaining of lack of medicines. I can read from an article which appeared in one of the dailies of last Friday, Mr Speaker, Sir, I quote -

«La raison principale est que les parents qui se rendent dans les différents centres de santé de la région pour prendre des médicaments prescrits retournent les mains vides. Il y a toujours une pénurie de ces médicaments.»

Mr Speaker, Sir, the question that one has to raise is how safe are the neighbouring villages from this outbreak. Today, we know that the buzz word and the mantra of everybody in this House is to eradicate poverty. I am raising this issue to appeal to the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life and to the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources to attend urgently to the serious degradation of the health situation of the children and adult population in this village.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Le Morne has been '*l'actualité*' since its inscription as a world heritage site in 2009. The village has received the visit of so many local and foreign dignitaries, but, unfortunately, its inhabitants *méritent mieux que cela*. So, true it is that the outbreak of scabies is not only a health issue, it transcends a purely health dimension. Indeed, Le Morne has been categorised as a least developed region, as measured by the Relative Development Index. This is why I also appeal to the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment to organise a visit at Le Morne, and to make of this village a living example of Government's will to eradicate poverty in the country, and to ensure that the poor families in this particular pocket of poverty be provided with better sanitary conditions and have access to a healthy living environment, in order to empower them to lead a more decent life.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mrs S. Hanoomanjee): Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know when the hon. Member received this information, but I can say that most of the information that is given to this House today is not accurate, because the next day that he had brought up this problem to this august Assembly, I have personally visited Le Morne Government School. The Head Teacher can witness this. It was the next day of the sitting of the Assembly, I went there and I had a meeting with all the parents together with medical officers of my Ministry, and the parents were taught how to clean their children. There was a problem of water; I even contacted the CWA so that this problem also could be solved, because this can be

attributed to unhygienic conditions. That problem also, I believe, has already been solved. So, I have received a recent report from my medical officers to say that the problem is under control. I will now check again, but I cannot say when the hon. Member received this information.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

RICHE TERRE LAND SETTLEMENT - VEGETABLE GROWERS

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Speaker, Sir, if you would allow me very briefly, this matter concerns the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security. It pertains to the plight of the vegetable growers of Riche Terre land settlement.

Today, I asked a question as to whether the Minister will table a copy of the report of the committee comprising Messrs Noël and Ramkissoon. I stand up, Mr Speaker, Sir, to appeal to the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security to put an end to this conflict on humanitarian grounds *et de tourner une page sur toute cette saga*. When the hunger strike was called off, the hon. Prime Minister had announced that the report of Messrs Noël and Ramkissoon shall determine the quantum of the compensation. The hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, in Parliament, answering to a Private Notice Question of the Leader of the Opposition recently said, I quote –

“I have no problem with that, Mr Speaker, Sir. If we have to make it public, (...)”

It means the report.

“(...) we will do so. As I said, it is being done in a transparent manner, there is nothing to hide and we will make it public.”

This is the Private Notice Question of 23 March of this year. Recently, the planters have themselves, in a letter sent to the hon. Prime Minister through their facilitator, Mr Eric Mangar, appealed kindly to the hon. Prime Minister for a fair compensation, and requested that the contents of the report be made public in the name of transparency and good governance.

This present conflict, Mr Speaker, Sir, constitutes a scar on the Jin Fei project. Until and unless this report is made public, the crisis will persist; it will last unduly and will remain an unresolved issue. This is why, in the name of the small planters, I appeal urgently to the hon. Minister to lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the said report.

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Speaker, Sir, on behalf of my colleague, I will certainly take up the matter. But, I must inform the hon. Member that scars can be excised and plasticised; there cannot be any scars. This Government is determined and cares for these people perhaps more than ever. But, we will look at it again together with our colleagues. We have already brought a humane solution to the problem, but there is a limit to what we can do without causing prejudice to other people.

LA VIGIE/WOOTON - OVERHEAD PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a matter for the attention of the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping.

In my constituency, there is the locality of Wooton which is part of the town of Curepipe, but which is closer geographically to La Vigie motorway than to the old route linking Curepipe to Rose Hill via Phoenix. Now, increasingly, Wooton is becoming a built-up area, the land between Eau Coulée and La Vigie motorway being built up, and when the people from that area have to travel for work or other purposes such as educational in the direction of the lower Plaines Wilhems and Curepipe, they board the bus on the La Vigie motorway. So, there is an ever increasing number of people boarding the bus on the La Vigie motorway going down towards Port Louis, but also returning either from school or work from Port Louis. It is obviously very dangerous for these people to try and cross the La Vigie motorway in the vicinity of the Wooton roundabout during rush hours.

Moreover, people coming by bus using the new Curepipe/Quartier Militaire Road, also alight from the buses coming from Quartier Militaire near the Wooton roundabout to catch the bus going towards Port Louis. Because of this problem, and before a tragedy occurs, there is a growing demand for an overhead pedestrian bridge to be made available in that vicinity. I know that the hon. Minister will say that such requests are more and more numerous, but we are trying to become eventually a city State, we know that more and more of our land will become built-up, and so we have to guard against the risks attending to road traffic where people move for reasons of work or education.

So, my appeal to the hon. Minister is whether he will urgently commission a report into this matter and come back to the House to make a statement as to the feasibility of an overhead pedestrian bridge across the La Vigie motorway in the Wootton region.

Thank you, Sir.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the RDA has already taken the decision to put up a flyover in that region, but there are certain difficulties which we are facing. I will look into this issue.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 1 - MUNICIPAL & DISTRICT COUNCIL CENTRES

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): M. le président, je voudrais soulever un problème relevant du ministère des administrations régionales.

Ever since the general election, I have received several complaints from the people of my Constituency, GRNW & Port Louis West, to the effect that access to the municipal centres and centres under the jurisdiction of the District Council are systematically being denied to them. The reasons given by the municipal and village councillors are that they have not voted for *l'Alliance sociale*.

J'ose croire que telle n'est pas la politique du gouvernement. J'ai moi-même parlé au ministre concerné qui m'a assuré que tel n'est pas le cas. Mais la chose s'est répétée durant le week-end dernier à Pailles. Je demande, donc, que cette affaire soit suivie de près par le ministre. Quant à mes deux colistiers et moi, nous allons suivre la situation de près et nous assurer que les électeurs de la circonscription No. 1 ne soient pénalisés en aucune manière.

Merci, M. le président.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): Je remercie l'honorable membre, et je vais m'enquérir de ce sujet.

At 7.23 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 06 July 2010, at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ACT - PROCLAMATION

(No. 1B/145) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the Equal Opportunities Act, he will state if Government proposes to proclaim same and, if so, when, and, if not, why not.

Reply (The Attorney General): The answer to the first part of the question is 'yes'. The answer to the second part is soon.

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - 2009 REPORT

(No. 1B/146) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Human Rights Commission, information as to whether the publication of its 2009 Report is ready and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission that a draft Annual Report for the year 2009 has been prepared and once finalised, it will be forwarded to the President of the Republic.

SHAKERS PRIVATE CLUB - INCIDENT

(No. 1B/147) Mr J. Seetaram (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to the incident that occurred at the Shakers Private Club in the morning of the 20 March last, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission of Police, information as to –

- (a) if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, the outcome thereof;
- (b) if any arrest has been effected, and
- (c) the actions being taken to ensure public safety thereat.

(Withdrawn)

MEDPOINT CLINIC - ACQUISITION

(No. 1B/165) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if Government proposes to acquire the Medpoint Clinic and, if so, where matters stand.

Reply: In line with Government Programme, my Ministry has initiated procedures for the acquisition of two buildings to set up respectively an Institute for Women's Health and a National Geriatrics Hospital.

Consequently, public tenders were floated on 30 April 2010 and prospective owners had up to 03 June 2010 to submit their bids to the Central Procurement Board (CPB). On 10 June 2010, CPB informed my Ministry that five bids had been received in respect of the project for the setting up of the Institute for Women's Health and four bids for the National Geriatrics Hospital.

My Ministry is presently setting up Bid Evaluation Committees to assess the bids and make appropriate recommendations to the Central Procurement Board for a decision.

BALACLAVA - LOTUS RESORTS LIMITED – LAND LEASE

(No. 1B/166) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to State lands on *Pas Géométriques* situated in Balaclava, he will state if Lotus Resorts Limited has been granted a lease of a plot of land thereat

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- (a) indicating the terms and conditions, including the
 - (i) date;
 - (ii) extent;
 - (iii) purpose of the lease;
- (b) the annual rental value of the total area, and
- (c) the amount of taxes and fees paid to Government.

Reply: I am informed that, following a statement made to the police last year by the hon. Member himself, the police has been conducting an enquiry on a number of leases allocated on State land, including the lease of State land at Balaclava to Lotus Resorts Limited.

As the police enquiry is on, it would neither be in order nor proper to make any further statement on this matter at this stage.

**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, ENTERPRISE, COOPERATIVES & CONSUMER
PROTECTION - ADVISERS**

(No. 1B/167) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise, Cooperatives and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to advisers posted at his Ministry since May 2010, he will state -

- (a) their names;
- (b) their qualifications, and
- (c) the salaries and benefits drawn by them.

Reply: Two advisers, namely -

- (i) Mr Dhaneshwar Luchmun – Adviser in Public Relations, and
- (ii) My Yan Vincent Seetaram – Adviser on Information Matters are employed in my Ministry.

I am tabling the information requested for by the hon. Member.

**INTERNET FACILITIES – STUDENTS AND SMALL & MEDIUM
ENTERPRISES**

(No. 1B/182) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the internet, he will state –

- (a) if Government proposes to offer free access thereto to students, and
- (b) whether consideration will be given to reduce the tariff charged to the Small and Medium Enterprises to the same as the one charged to domestic users and, if not, why not.

Reply: As from October 2005, Government is already providing free internet access to students in 172 secondary schools and since early 2009; this internet facility has been extended to 261 primary schools.

A further step to enhance student access to the internet is the “one laptop per child” project for the benefit of Lower VI students, over which project, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, other stakeholders and my own Ministry has just started working. It is expected that this project would lead to the extension of telecommunication facilities in such a manner as to provide access to internet by more and more students.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Telecom Ltd. that the domestic offers and the SMEs offers are two different commercial services. They each have different characteristics and require different levels of investment and operating costs. In particular, the SMEs offers/provide a higher level of comfort access with better fluidity and priority while accessing the internet. The service is designed for facilitation of business. Hence, the difference in prices between the two offers.

I wish to inform the House that during the last five years, Telecom Plus has progressively reduced both its residential and business broadband tariffs and has increased internet penetration at affordable prices. As an indication, the residential tariff has been reduced on an average by 66% and the lowest tariff today is at Rs499, inclusive of VAT for a speed of up to 256 kilobits per second. The business tariff has been reduced on an average by 45% and its speed doubled in 2009.

I shall request the Mauritius Telecom Ltd to seriously look into the issue raised by the hon. Member and examine the possibility of working out other internet packages that will be more attractive for SMEs.

SMES & DORMANT COMPANIES – LICENCE FEES

(No. 1B/183) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to annual licence fees payable to the Registrar of Companies by domestic companies, he will state if Government will consider exempting dormant companies and the Small and Medium Enterprises from the payment thereof and, if not, why no.

Reply: Currently out of a total of 44,422 local companies on the register only, 33 are dormant. The Companies Act provides that for a company which has been recorded as dormant,

a flat fee of Rs2,000 is payable irrespective of the type of companies (Twelfth Schedule to the Companies Act 2001).

As there is a cost associated to keeping dormant companies on the register, it is not proposed to exempt payment of registration fees to these types of companies as they already benefit from a reduced fee of Rs2,000.

As regards small private companies, i.e. companies with a turnover of up to Rs50 m., they also benefit from an annual registration fee of Rs2,000 as compared to Rs6,000 for large private companies and Rs9,000 for public companies.

In addition, to encourage small enterprises registered with SMEDA to convert into companies, the registration fees payable at the time of registration/incorporation was waived in June 2009 under the Companies (Waiving of Fees) Regulations 2009. This exemption will lapse in December 2010. (G.N. 72 of 2009). There are currently some 624 such companies registered with the Registrar of Companies i.e. those registered as SME following recommendations of SMEDA.

The House may wish to note that we are currently reviewing support to small enterprises generally, and any decision on whether to exempt or not these small enterprises will be taken in the light of the review.

CITÉ BARKLY - PAVEMENTS

(No. 1B/184) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to road safety at Cité Barkly, he will state if consideration will be given for the putting up of pavements along roads used by buses.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill that as the responsible authority they are considering putting up pavements along the road being used by buses at Cité Barkly, namely Nelson Mandela Street.

CAB OFFICES – MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT – CONSTITUENCY SURGERY

(No. 1B/185) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Citizens Advice Bureaux, he will state if it is the policy of Government

to put same at the disposal of Honourable Members for conducting their constituency surgery and meeting with the community organisations.

Reply: The mandate of the Citizens Advice Bureaux network consists largely in supporting Government Programme by seeking grassroots support and in responding to the needs and aspirations of the community by bringing Government closer to people.

Currently, these offices are being used by Parliamentary Private Secretaries and Ministers.

Government proposes to have a review of the CAB system on the whole.

Backbenchers of Government do help the PPS in CAB offices at times.

REMPART ROAD, GLEN PARK – WATER SUPPLY

(No. 1B/186) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether he will state if he is aware of the irregular water supply off Rempart Road, Glen Park and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

Reply: I am informed by the CWA that inhabitants of Rempart Road, Glen Park are supplied from La Marie Treatment Plant which is fed by Mare aux Vacoas reservoir.

Prior to 14 June 2010, the supply to the region was on a 24-hour basis.

In view of the low rainfall rate in the past three months, which is below average and the decrease in the water level at Mare aux Vacoas reservoir, the hours of supply in the regions serviced by this reservoir, including Glen Park are presently from 3.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. to 09.00 p.m.

CWA is closely monitoring the situation and will provide a water tanker service whenever required.

To improve overall water supply in the Mare aux Vacoas system during dry season, my Ministry will implement a project to transfer additional resources from Rivière du Poste into the Mare aux Vacoas reservoir. The detailed design will be undertaken shortly and the works are expected to be completed by the last quarter of 2011.

JOHN KENNEDY AVENUE, VACOAS - *PONT DILO SO* - RECONSTRUCTION WORKS

(No. 1B/187) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the reconstruction works of *Pont Dilo So* at Avenue John Kennedy, Vacoas, he will state where matters stand, indicating the expected date of completion.

Reply: I am informed that works to widen the bridge called “*Pont Dilo So*” situated at Avenue John Kennedy, Vacoas and the reconstruction of the footbridge started three weeks ago and are expected to be completed by end of July 2010.

LA CROISEE DIOLLE, GLEN PARK - TRAFFIC LIGHTS

(No. 1B/188) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the recent installation of traffic lights at La Croisée Diolle, Glen Park, is causing traffic congestion during peak hours and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Traffic Management Unit, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

Reply: I have been informed by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit that a set of traffic lights was installed at la Croisée Diolle, Glen Park, and is operational since May of this year to ease the flow of traffic. As is the case with all newly installed traffic lights, this set of traffic lights is under observation for a period of two months to see how well it is regulating the traffic. Thereafter, remedial measures such as phasing of the green light will be brought, if required at peak and non-peak hours. In case long queues are identified during peak hours, the Police will be requested to control the traffic lights manually.

NGOs – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

(No. 1B/189) Dr S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to financial assistance to Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), she will give, for the period 2005-2010, a list thereof which have benefited from assistance from –

- (a) the NGO Trust Fund;

- (b) the National Empowerment Fund ;
- (c) the Decentralised Corporation Programme Fund, and
- (d) the Corporate Social Responsibility Fund, indicating the amount of assistance to each NGO, giving a detailed breakdown for each project.

Reply: I am arranging for placing on the Table of the National Assembly the relevant information regarding the financial assistance provided to Non Governmental Organisations by the NGO Trust Fund, which operates under the aegis of my Ministry.

As regards information requested at parts (b) to (d) of the question, I would invite the hon. Member to put his question to the relevant Minister responsible for these issues.

NGOs - ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

(No. 1B/190) Dr S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to assistance programmes to Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), she will state if her Ministry is in presence of conclusions and recommendations of evaluation reports made by the donor agencies on each project conducted under the NGOs assistance programmes.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that financial assistance is provided to NGOs by the NGO Trust Fund operating under the aegis of my Ministry.

The NGO Trust Fund has an appropriate mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the projects/activities of these NGOs. Disbursement of funds is made to the NGOs by the NGO Trust Fund after taking into consideration the evaluation exercise.

In addition to the assistance provided by the NGO Trust Fund, a few NGOs also benefit from assistance from donor agencies for either running their activities or financing their specific projects. As such, these donor agencies, which operate independently of Government, have their own mechanism for monitoring and evaluating these NGOs and do not submit their evaluation reports to the NGO Trust Fund or to my Ministry.

NGOs - GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR ASSISTANCE

(No. 1B/191) Dr S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to

Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), she will obtain information on the mechanisms in place at the office of the Registrar of Associations to ensure that NGOs benefiting from Government and Private Sector Assistance are *bona fide* ones.

Reply: I would like once again to invite the hon. Member to direct his question to the relevant Minister responsible for the Registry of Associations.

However, I wish to inform the House that the NGO Trust Fund which operates under the aegis of my Ministry provides financial assistance to NGOs and has a mechanism for ensuring that the assistance is provided to *bona fide* NGOs.

CUREPIPE - TRAFFIC CONGESTION

(No. 1B/192) **Dr S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware of traffic congestion during peak hours at the junction of Route du Jardin, Rue Brown Sequard and Rue St Clement in Curepipe and, if so, will he state if consideration will be given for the putting up of traffic lights thereat.

Reply: I have been informed by the TMRSU that there is no such junction as the junction du Jardin, Brown Sequard and Rue. St. Clement. I, therefore, assume that the hon. Member is referring to two separate junctions situated at Route du Jardin/Rue St. Clement and Rue St. Clement/Brown Sequard.

The TMRSU has further informed that the traffic flow at these two junctions is low and, therefore, the installation of traffic lights is not warranted for the time being. However, due consideration will be given if the need arises.

INTERNATIONAL TENNIS FEDERATION - REPORT

(No. 1B/193) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he has taken cognizance of the report submitted by the representative of the International Tennis Federation in regard to the Mauritius Tennis Federation, and, if so, will he state the stand of his Ministry thereon.

Reply: First of all let me thank the hon. Member for his concern about the situation of the Mauritius Tennis Federation.

Yes, I have taken cognizance of a report dated 26 May 2010 submitted by the President of the International Tennis Federation, Mr Francesco Ricci Bitti, addressed to the Mauritius Tennis Federation and transmitted to me by the latter.

With regard to my stand, being given that there are two court cases in connection with the election of the Federation, I do not wish to comment further on the matter, but I can assure my colleague that I am monitoring the situation very closely.

FOOTBALL WORLD CUP 2010 – TRAINING CAMPS

(No. 1B/194) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Football World Cup 2010, he will state if any invitation was launched to participating teams to train in Mauritius prior to the competition and, if so, if there was any response and, if not, why not.

Reply: In the context of FIFA World Cup 2010, in April 2009, it was decided that our country would arrange for training camps for one or two high profile football teams, which would be willing to train in Mauritius.

Accordingly, the Mauritius Football Association in consultation with my Ministry designated an agent, in the person of Mr Jean Garcia, who, in the recent past, arranged for the visit of the national football team of Côte d'Ivoire. Mr Garcia contacted several teams like Spain, Japan, Portugal, Italy, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire on the possibility for them to hold training camps in Mauritius. Also Mr. Paul Leguen, the Coach of Cameroon visited Mauritius and met me personally to discuss the proposed visit of the Cameroon team.

Moreover, during my mission to South Africa for the drawing of lots, I personally established contacts with representatives of the above teams, including England and France.

However, despite all efforts, these teams did not respond to our invitation and decided to conduct their training camp and friendly matches elsewhere.

It is unfortunate that we missed this great opportunity to enable our football fans to appreciate the talent of world class football players. However, this situation was indeed beyond our control.

YOUTH CENTRES – BUDGET ALLOCATION

(No. 1B/195) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to youth centres, he will state -

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) their location, and
- (c) the annual budget allocated to each centre.

Reply: My Ministry operates 22 Youth Centres, two sub-Youth Centres and three Residential Youth Centres which are situated around the country.

The information relating to the location of the Youth Centres is being tabled.

There is no specific annual budget allocated to each centre as such, but rather an overall annual budget is earmarked for the Youth Section of my Ministry. In the 2010 Budget, a total of Rs64,093,000 has been earmarked under Programme 683 - Youth Services comprising of Rs45,986,000 under Sub Programme 68301 - Youth Empowerment and Rs18,107,000 under Sub-Programme 68302 - Recreational and Community-Based Activities. This amount is used to meet all operational costs of the Centres and the activities organised by them.

MINISTRY OF TOURISM & LEISURE - LEISURE ACTIVITIES

(No. 1B/196) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to leisure, he will give a list of activities proposed to be held during the second half of 2010 at regional and national levels.

Reply: As the House is aware, my Ministry has always been ensuring that the population's needs for leisure are met and that leisure opportunities are accessible to one and all.

I am at present working on an Action Plan for the next six months, in partnership with major stakeholders concerned.

Accordingly, I seize this opportunity to welcome any suggestion from Members of this House for any other proposed leisure activity that they would wish my Ministry to organise for the benefit for the local communities and for the population at large.

CONFEDERATION DES TRAVAILLEURS DU SECTEUR PRIVE - COMPLAINT -

ILO

(No. 1B/197) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he is aware of the complaint made by the *Confédération des Travailleurs du Secteur Privé* (CTSP) to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in relation to the provision of the Employment Rights Act which makes of Sunday a normal working day and state whether Government has received any recommendations from the International Labour Organisation in relation thereto and, if so, the measures Government proposes to take.

(Withdrawn)

LES SALINES PUBLIC BEACH - ACCESS

(No. 1B/198) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Les Salines public beach in the village of Rivière Noire, he will state if he is aware that private land owners have blocked access thereto and, if so, will he state the remedial actions that will be taken.

(Withdrawn)

VEHICLES REGISTRATION PLATES - TENDER

(No. 1B/199) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the replacement of existing vehicles registration plates by yellow ones, he will state -

- (a) if any tender has been launched for the supply thereof, indicating the date, and
- (b) if it has been awarded and, if so, the name of the successful bidder and details of the contract.

(Withdrawn)

DISABLED PERSONS – WHEELCHAIRS - ALLOCATION

(No. 1B/200) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether she will state the number of disabled persons who have applied for the allocation of wheelchairs since last year and who are still on the waiting list and say -

- (a) when the last order for wheelchair was made;
- (b) the number received to date, and
- (c) whether any tender has been launched for the supply thereof and, if so, when.

(Withdrawn)

CASE NOYALE - WATER SUPPLY

(No. 1B/201) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether he is aware that the inhabitants in the region of Case Noyale do not have an adequate water supply and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the remedial measures that will be taken.

(Withdrawn)

TERRE ROUGE-VERDUN HIGHWAY- REPRESENTATIONS

(No. 1B/202) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if he has received representations from the inhabitants of Boullingrin, Montagne Longue in regard to the alignment of the Terre Rouge-Verdun Highway and, if so, will he state if a meeting with the inhabitants is envisaged before the works start and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed that on 10 October 2008, a few planters of Boullingrin, Robinson and Rivalland villages made representations on the road alignment and requested for modifications so that their lands, planted with vegetables and sugarcanes, are not affected.

The complaint was examined by engineers of the Road Development Authority (RDA) and they considered that the change in alignment was not plausible for technical reasons. The present alignment is considered the best available option.

The House would agree that any alignment for any new road is bound to affect some planters. Development is always at the cost of some sacrifice. However, due compensation for land acquisition as prescribed in law will be effected.

CWA - WATER LOSSES

(No. 1B/203) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water losses in our water network, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the percentage thereof, on a yearly basis since 2005.

Reply: I shall reply to PQ Nos. 1B/203 and 1B/204 together.

I am advised by the CWA that the average daily production is around 580,000 m³ and the average volume of sales is around 303,000 m³. During the last five years, six service reservoirs have been commissioned. I am tabling a copy of the list.

From 2000 to 2009, the average level of Non-Revenue Water has been around 45%. On a yearly basis, the level of Non-Revenue Water from 2000 to 2009 was as follows -

<u>Year</u>	<u>% NRW (Non-Revenue Water)</u>
2005	44.7
2006	45.2
2007	44.4
2008	47.6
2009	49.6

Non-Revenue Water consists of two components, namely -

- **Physical losses** which are leakages in the transmission systems and distribution mains.
- **Commercial losses** consisting of illegal connections, free water use by fire services from hydrants, flushing of pipelines and cleaning of reservoirs.

The level of Non Revenue Water is mainly due to the state of the water supply network which in some regions dates back to more than 100 years. It should be noted that the level of physical losses also depends on the available water resources injected in the network. Some 1,800 km of the network is made up of asbestos cement, cast iron and steel pipes which have since long outlived their economic/technical lifespan. The cost of replacement of these inefficient pipelines is estimated at around Rs10 billion.

As a first phase of our action plan, a provision of Rs640 m. has been made in this year's budget for replacement of pipelines where the level of Non Revenue Water has become critical. Furthermore, under the ongoing Plaines Wilhems Sewerage project the opportunity is being taken to replace some 185 km of CWA pipes.

CWA – POTABLE WATER - CONSUMPTION

(No. 1B/204) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to potable water, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to –

- (a) the volume thereof produced and consumed on a daily basis, and
- (b) the number of reservoirs commissioned during the last five years.

(Vide reply to PQ No. 1B/203)

QUATRE BORNES – MARKET – CONSTRUCTION

(No. 1B/205) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the construction of a new market in Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, information as to -

- (a) where matters stand;
- (b) if land has been earmarked, and
- (c) the budget allocated for its realisation.

(Withdrawn)

MTPA/EURO CRM – CALL CENTRE SERVICES – CONTRACT

(No. 1B/206) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the contract between the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority and Euro CRM for call centre services, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to –

- (a) the details of the contract agreement, and

(b) the fees paid to the said Euro CRM for its services for each of the last five years.

Reply: In recent years, international competition in the travel and tourism industry has become increasingly intense. Competing destinations are consequently making use of modern technology, especially e-marketing in addition to traditional marketing methods to sharpen their competitive advantage. Mauritius, therefore, has to find ways and means to stay ahead of competition as well.

The MTPA, in line with its objective to promote the destination, normally receives various proposals regarding promotional projects from various quarters. These proposals are considered and approved on a merit basis. It is in this perspective that MTPA decided to avail of the services of the call centre with the firm EURO CRM.

I am, in fact, informed that in September 2005, MTPA received a proposal from the firm Euro CRM regarding the provision of call centre services in France. This specialized firm is among the top ten players on the distance customer relationship management market in France. It is based in France and has a deep knowledge of the French Market. It works with leading partner companies such as GDF Suez, Orange, MMA, SFR, 118.218 Le Numéro, Canal+, Network Solutions, Sears, Workopolis and others. The group presently has six call centres around the world.

The MTPA Board examined the proposal on 16 September 2005 and found it interesting with great potential to drive further growth in France which is our main market. More specifically, the proposal would generate the following benefits -

- (i) to complement the ongoing promotional activities of MTPA;
- (ii) to centralise and capture all enquiring calls with a view to help convert them into concrete business, and
- (iii) to generate statistical information for strategic decision making.

Consequently, the MTPA Board approved the proposal. A first Memorandum of Agreement between MTPA and the firm Euro CRM was signed 14 October 2005 on a pilot basis for a period of six months commencing on 15 November 2005 and terminating on 15 May 2006.

I am further informed the firm Euro CRM has been providing a reliable service and possesses up to date technological facilities in Mauritius with back up services in France, coupled with trained staff.

Consequently, the Board decided to renew subsequently the contract of Euro CRM on a six-month basis till November 2009 and on the same terms and conditions on account of the following developments occurring in the French market –

- (i) the entry of Corsair flight in Mauritius brought in an increase of seat capacity and accrued demand from provinces in France. This required greater capacity to handle request for information from French nationals;
- (ii) outbreak of Chikungunya in 2006 and increasing need to continuously reassure French travellers coming to Mauritius, and
- (iii) closure of Paris Office and the need to ensure smooth continuation of information dissemination and customer services without disruption of services.

However, following the coming in force of the Public Procurement Act, the MTPA launched on 09 December 2010 a restricted tender to 17 firms for provision of call centre services for France for the year 2010. By the closing date, i.e., 28 December 2009, two bids were from two firms namely: Euro CRM and Bluephone.

According to the report of the Evaluation Committee, only the firm Euro CRM was technically qualified to perform the services. The contract was awarded to the latter to the tune of Euros 2,484 per month for a period of one year.

With regard to the part (b) of the question, I am informed that the fees paid to EURO CRM for each of the last five years is as follows –

Financial Year	Amount Paid (Rs)
2005/2006	1,783,607.85
2006/2007	1,356,411.18

2007/2008	909,859.37
2008/2009	1,526,537.54
Jul-Dec 2009	783,369.82
Jan 2010 to date	182,470.36
Total paid to Euro CRM	6,542,256.12

CENTRAL MARKET – STALLS – ALLOCATION

(No. 1B/207) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to stalls at the Port Louis Central Market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to -

- (a) the number of stall-holders who, during the month of June 2010 to date -
 - (i) have been dispossessed, and
 - (ii) have been given back possession of their stalls, and
- (b) whether any of the stalls have been allocated to persons other than the existing stall holders and, if so, give their names and addresses.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Port Louis that no stall holder of the Central Market has been dispossessed and no stall has been allocated to any person other than the stall holders during the month of June 2010.

CAMP ITHIER – WATER SUPPLY

(No. 1B/208) Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether he will state if he is aware of the irregular water supply at Camp Ithier and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the remedial actions that will be taken, indicating when the situation will return to normal.

Reply: I am informed by the CWA that Camp Ithier is supplied from two sources, namely Caroline Borehole of capacity 8,000 m³/day, operated on a 24-hr basis and Camp Ithier borehole.

The water for Caroline borehole is shared among the villages of Ecoignard, Camp Ithier and Bramsthan through daily valve operations as follows -

Upper part of Ecoignard: 9.00 hours to 11.00 hours and 18.00 hours to 23.00 hours, and Ecoignard, Camp Ithier and Bramsthan: 11.00 a.m to 6.00 p.m and 11.00 p.m. to 9.00 a.m. the following day.

To improve water supply to these regions, the CWA is implementing a project to pump water from Caroline borehole to the new Belle Rose Clemencia reservoir. Two separate pipelines will be laid from Belle Rose Clemencia reservoir to supply Upper Ecoignard, Camp Ithier, Ecoignard and Bramsthan respectively.

The contract has already been awarded to Messrs. Sotravic Ltee for the value of Rs69 m., and works are expected to be completed in May 2011.

LALLMATIE & BRISEE VERDIERE – WATER SUPPLY

(No. 1B/209) Mr D. Khamajeet (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply in the regions of Belvédère, Lallmatie, Mare d’Australia and Brisée Verdière, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to whether the causes for the irregularity and insufficiency thereof have been identified and, if so, the remedial actions that will be taken, indicating the timeframe.

Reply: I am informed by the CWA that water supply in the regions of Belvédère, Lallmatie, Mare d’Australia and Brisée Verdière is irregular due to the state of the existing network.

In the lower parts of these regions, water supply is generally adequate whereas in the upper parts especially at Lallmatie and Belvédère, the water pressure is lower.

In order to improve the water supply in these regions, CWA is implementing projects to -

- (i) transfer approximately 2500 m³/day of water from Petit Paquet Borehole to l’Unité. Works will be completed by December 2010;

- (ii) transfer of water from Camp Thorel borehole to Salazie reservoir. The contract will be awarded in early 2011. The works are expected to cost Rs25 m. and will improve water supply in the region of Belvedere, and
- (iii) replacement of the old pipeline from Mont Ida to l'Unité Service Reservoir at the cost of Rs96 m. Works are scheduled to be completed by end 2011.

MR C. E. – SHOT BY POLICE – COMPENSATION

(No. 1B/210) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Attorney General whether Government will consider compensating financially one Mr C. E. who was shot by the police in 1982 in Black River as a result of mistaken identity and which led him to being physically handicapped and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the hon. Prime Minister to a similar question which was put to him at a previous sitting of the National Assembly in March 2010 (PQ No. B/24).

The hon. Prime Minister had informed the House that Mr C. E. and three other persons entered a case in the Supreme Court against the Government of Mauritius, claiming damages worth Rs2.5 m. for gunshot injury during a police raid on 05 March 1982. The case was heard and dismissed with costs on 30 June 1986.

I will, therefore, reiterate what the hon. Prime Minister has already said: that the payment of compensation does not arise in the light of the Supreme Court judgment.

TRUST FUND FOR THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS – IRON SHEETS & POLES

(No. 1B/211) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Trust, information as to the eligibility criteria for the grant of corrugated iron sheets and poles to poor families.

Reply: I am informed by the National Empowerment Foundation that the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups provides immediate assistance to vulnerable families

in terms of, *inter alia*, provision of corrugated iron sheets and associated materials for the setting up of housing units of two rooms of 11 feet x 22 feet.

The criteria for the eligibility of corrugated iron sheets and poles to vulnerable families in Mauritius is as follows -

- (i) the household income (excluding social benefits) should not exceed Rs5,000 monthly, and
- (ii) the beneficiary should either be the owner of the land or have obtained a written authorisation or lease from the land owner. This includes State land.

Moreover, I understand that any potential applicant who is already the owner of a house, but which is in deplorable condition may also benefit from this facility.

The House may wish to note that since July 2005, a total of 3,255 households in Mauritius have benefited from this project at a cost of Rs195 m.

SCHOOLS – SEX EDUCATION

(No. 1B/212) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to sex education in schools, he will state if Government proposes to introduce same in the school curriculum.

Reply: Sex education is already covered both in primary and secondary curriculum frameworks.

In fact, we espouse the UNESCO-driven concept of sex education as a life skill. In that capacity, it is meant to facilitate the emergence of a balanced individual with healthy attitudes and values for sound and responsible citizenship.

At the primary level, it has already been incorporated in the curricular materials that are currently used in Standard V and will find themselves in the new textbooks of Standard VI in 2011.

At the primary level, the learning competencies for sex education are thus taught under the subject “Health Education”.

These competencies have been so developed as to not only make the growing child understand his physical and physiological changes but also make him act in a responsible manner by making the right choices.

At the secondary level, sex education is also integrated but this time across the curriculum, more particularly in subjects like Health & Physical Education, Integrated Science and Biology.

The new National Curriculum Framework for the secondary sub sector that will serve as basis for the production of new curricular materials, incorporates a substantial element of sex education as from Form 1, including issues related to communicable diseases like sexually transmitted infections.

Components of Sex Education have been integrated in the Teacher Training Programme conducted by the Mauritius Institute of Education. In June of this year, training was conducted for primary and secondary educators on health issues, which included Sexual Reproductive Health, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life and other partners.

Furthermore, my Ministry is putting in place a more structured approach with respect to the conduct of sex education in school. In this regard, other stakeholders, including *Action Familiale* and the Mauritius Family Planning Association will be called upon to work in partnership with the National Educational Counselling Service of my Ministry for the training of our educational psychologists. This approach will enhance the exposure of our students to sex education.

We have moved from the time when sex education was seen as a taboo, and children were not meant to be exposed to it until they reached a level of maturity in line with their life. Today, we have gone beyond that, realising all same that the issue, being sensitive, has to be dealt with in a deft and equally sensitive manner.

LA GAULETTE SSS – *LYCÉE POLYTECHNIQUE* - CONVERSION

(No. 1B/213) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if his Ministry has taken any decision to convert the La Gaulette State Secondary School into a *Lycée Polytechnique* and, if so, whether any prior consultation has been held with the inhabitants of the region.

Reply: The reply is in the negative.

US 10TH ANNUAL TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

(1B/214) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether she has taken cognizance of the tenth Trafficking in Persons Report of the 2010 Edition of the United States Department in relation to sexual exploitation of adolescents and, if so, state –

- (a) when she has received the Report;
- (b) whether the Report makes mentions of flaws in our legislations and the lack of coordination between the different Ministries, and
- (c) the remedial measures Government proposes to take to address the issue.

Reply (The Prime Minister): I am informed that the US 10th Annual Trafficking in Persons Report was released by the US Department of State on 14 June 2010. The report assesses the efforts made by countries around the world during period April 2009 to March 2010 to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons. It also classifies countries into different categories on the basis of their efforts to punish traffickers, protect victims and prevent trafficking.

At the very outset, I wish to point out that this Report now classifies Mauritius in Tier 1. In fact, prior to 2006, the US Department of State had categorized Mauritius on the Tier 2 WATCHLIST which includes countries which do not fully comply with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act minimum standards, but are making some efforts to comply with same.

From 2006 to 2008, Mauritius was placed in Tier 2 which refers to countries which do not fully comply with the US Trafficking Victims Protection Acts' minimum standards.

In 2009, with the coming into force of the Combatting of Trafficking of Persons Act 2009 and the other measures taken by Government to tackle the issue of trafficking in person, Mauritius has been upgraded to Tier 1 which includes countries which fully comply with the US Trafficking Victims Acts' minimum standards. It is to be pointed out that Mauritius and Nigeria are the only two African countries which have been ranked in Tier 1.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the report was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade by our Mission in Washington on 15 June 2010. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade has subsequently sent copies thereof to my Office and the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare on 18 June 2010.

As for part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the report makes no mention of any flaw in our legislation. Actually, it has been highlighted that Mauritius fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, and has demonstrated increased trafficking law-enforcement efforts, vigorously investigating and prosecuting cases of human trafficking throughout the year. Reference has been made to the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act 2009 and the Child Protection (Amendment) Act 2005, and the sanctions that have been provided to curb the problem of trafficking.

Nevertheless, the report has pointed out that there should be better coordination amongst all stakeholders and has recommended the designation of an official coordinating mechanism to facilitate improved anti-trafficking, communication and coordination among relevant Ministries, law enforcement entities as well as NGO's.

In regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that coordinated action is already being taken by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and the Police Department, through the Police Family Protection Unit and the Brigade pour la Protection de Mineurs. A Joint Monitoring Committee under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare meets on a quarterly basis to look into child

and family protection issues, including intervention and support services provided to victims of sexual exploitation.

In addition, preliminary discussions on the issue of commercial and sexual Exploitation of Children are currently ongoing and it is now proposed to set up a working committee to coordinate activities and services to tackle the problem. The Committee would involve all stakeholders, including NGO's working in the field.

Other measures already put into place by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare in collaboration with other stakeholders, to address the issue of sexual exploitation of children are as follows -

- the implementation of a Protocol of Assistance with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Police Department to provide immediate support to victims of sexual abuse;
- capacity building for stakeholders working with children victims of Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children;
- provision of day care facilities to ensure the recovery and rehabilitation of victims of Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children at the Drop-in-Centre Bell Village;
- the implementation of a national Parental Empowerment Programme;
- the setting up of School Child Protection Clubs;
- crackdown operations with the Brigade Pour La Protection des Mineurs;
- launching of Information, Education and Communication campaigns, and
- the setting up of Community Child Protection Programme.

RICHE TERRE LAND SETTLEMENT – VEGETABLE GROWERS

(No. 1B/215) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the 23 vegetable growers of the Riche Terre land settlement who refused the compensation offered to them, he will now consider tabling the copy of the Report of the committee appointed as independent arbitrators comprising of Mr A. N. and Mr J. R.

Reply: The Noël/Ramkissoon Committee was set up by Government to consider the case of the 23 ex-vegetable growers of Riche Terre Settlement who refused the compensation offered to them.

On receipt of the Noël/Ramkissoon report, a Joint Committee, comprising officers of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and my Ministry, looked into the implications of the recommendations made. In the light thereof, Government decided that the 13 planters who had been occupying their land be paid a cash compensation of Rs120,000 per *arpent* together with accrued interests for period 23/24 May 2007/end June 2010, and that they be relocated at either Bois Marchand or Arsenal.

In addition to the compensation of Rs120,000 per *arpent* and relocation, the planters are also entitled to support under the Food Security Fund for land preparation, fertilizers and seeds, upgrading of irrigation network, fencing and other upgrading works that may be necessary and which have been estimated to cost around Rs120,000 per *arpent*. Such assistance has the advantage of providing the planters with the opportunity and better possibilities of continuing in their past activities in a conducive environment and not only continue earning their livelihood, but also contribute to improve food security in Mauritius.

As for the remaining nine who had abandoned their land, they would be granted the cash compensation with accrued interest only. If these nine ex-planters eventually decide to revert back to crop production, the grant to them of land and other facilities currently available under existing schemes at my Ministry will be considered. The compensation granted is in consonance with proposals made in the Noël/Ramkissoon report.

The report having been commissioned to enable Government to take a fair and just decision on this issue, I consider that it would neither be judicious nor appropriate to table or

release the report. This would add to more confusion on the issue of fair and just compensation to all ex-lease holders.

SCHOOLS – NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS – FORM III LEVEL

(No. 1B/216) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to national examinations at Form III level, he will state –

- (a) the purpose thereof;
- (b) when they will be introduced, and
- (c) the options that will be offered to students who fail thereat.

(Withdrawn)

ROSE-HILL – MARKET TRADERS ASSOCIATION – PROTEST

(No. 1B/217) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether he will state if he is aware of the protest of the Market Traders Association in Rose Hill on 22 June 2010 in connection with the presence of street hawkers and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House obtain from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, information as to the actions that will be taken in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose-Hill that about four market traders out of 156 came on the road on 22 June 2010 from 10.30 hrs to 14.00 hrs to expose their vegetables, to protest against the presence of some illegal hawkers selling a few vegetable items in the vicinity of the market.

I am also informed that control of hawkers is an ongoing exercise at the municipal council level with the assistance of the police. On various occasions, many articles have been confiscated, and contraventions have been applied. For instance, from November 2009 to date, 101 cases have been established and 56 contraveners have been fined.

I am further informed that the Council has put a standby inspectorate service at some strategic places on Saturdays and during certain specific festivals such as Valentine Day, Rakhee, etc., to check the presence of hawkers.

The control of hawkers throughout the township is being closely monitored. In view of solving this problem, the council has resolved to look for the possibility of finding a permanent and suitable site to house the hawkers. I am informed that this exercise has already started.

FESTIVAL KREOL – SUM DISBURSED

(No. 1B/218) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the last two editions of *Festival Kreol*, he will state the sum disbursed and paid to Check-in Travel and any other company in respect of arrangements made for the accommodation of artists and other guests, giving details thereof.

Reply: I am informed that no payment was made to Check-in Travel in respect of arrangements made for accommodation for artists and guests for the last two editions of Festival Kreol.

However, an amount of Rs103,500 was paid to Formatech Ltd. in respect of arrangements made for the accommodation of around 170 visitors, comprising of 99 artists, two conference speakers and 68 international journalists for Festival International Kréol 2008.

I am further informed that no such payment was made for the 2009 edition of the Festival Kreol.