



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION

TUESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2012

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Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues
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 Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Dr. the Hon. Abu Twalib Kasenally, GOSK, FRCS	Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo, GOSK	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions
Dr. the Hon. Vasant Kumar Bunwaree	Minister of Education and Human Resources
Hon. Satya Veyash Faugoo	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Devanand Virahsawmy, GOSK	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development
Dr. the Hon. Rajeshwar Jeetah	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology
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Hon. Louis Joseph Von-Mally, GOSK	Minister of Fisheries
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Hon. Louis Hervé Aimée	Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands

Hon. Mookhesswur Choonee	Minister of Arts and Culture
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Hon. Yatindra Nath Varma	Attorney General
Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Tourism and Leisure
Hon. Lormus Bundhoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Sayyad Abd-Al-Cader Sayed-Hossen	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Surendra Dayal	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
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Hon. Mrs Maria Francesca Mireille Martin	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sutyadeo Moutia	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

<i>Mr Speaker</i>	Peeroo, Hon. Abdool Razack M.A., SC, GOSK
<i>Deputy Speaker</i>	Peetumber, Hon. Maneswar
<i>Deputy Chairperson of Committees</i>	Deerpalsing, Hon. Ms Kumaree Rajeshree
<i>Clerk of the National Assembly</i>	Dowlutta, Mr R. Ranjit
<i>Deputy Clerk</i>	Lotun, Mrs B. Safeena
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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 31 of 2012

Sitting of 11 December 2012

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office –

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills –

- (a) The Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XXVIII of 2012);
- (b) The Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XXIX of 2012) ;
- (c) The Additional Remuneration (2013) Bill (No. XXX of 2012);
- (d) The Employment Relations (Amendment) Bill (No. XXXI of 2012); and
- (e) The Employment Rights (Amendment) Bill (No. XXXII of 2012).

B. Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security –

The Annual Report of the Agricultural Marketing Board for the years 2009 and 2010.

C. Ministry of Information and Communication Technology –

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority for the year ended 31 December 2011.

D. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands –

The Municipal City Council and Municipal Town Council Elections (Polling Stations) Order, 2012 (Government Notice No. 208 of 2012).

E. Ministry of Arts and Culture –

The Annual Report of the Mauritius Council of Registered Librarians (MCRL) for the period January to December 2011.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence and order!

(Interruptions)

I have said silence and order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Now, I am on my feet and I want some silence, we have to start working!

(Interruptions)

I repeat order, silence! I want silence from all sides.

(Interruptions)

Let's start with the work. Clerk, please!

(Interruptions)

Well, Questions. We are going to do the Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

I say order!

(Interruptions)

I want order in this House from all sides, I am not going to repeat, if not, I will suspend this sitting!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister Boolell!

(Interruptions)

I am speaking to hon. Minister Boolell!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Boolell I am speaking to you. I don't want any disturbance and I say no disturbance from all sides. Let's have some respect for this Assembly. I say from all sides

(Interruptions)

Let us start with the work.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

I say order! Hon. Jhugroo.

(Interruptions)

Please silence! Hon. Henry!

(Interruptions)

Well, I think some Members want to go home a bit early today!

(Interruptions)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PRIME MINISTER - OVERSEAS MISSIONS 2012

(No. B/657) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the overseas missions he has undertaken, since January 2012 to date, he will state the number thereof, indicating in each case, the -

- (a) composition of the delegation;
- (b) countries visited, and
- (c) purpose therefor.

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in case...

(Interruptions)

In case the hon. Member...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say silence!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in case the hon. Member is not aware, a Prime Minister, in the discharge of the duties of his function, is often called upon to undertake missions overseas. The decision to undertake any such missions is dictated by the national interest. I don't accept all the invitations I receive, and sometimes, because of my schedule, I have myself replaced. To enlighten the hon. Member, out of 60 invitations I received, I have turned down 53 of them, 53! I only accepted...

(Interruptions)

Pas Marseille...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Order please, order!

The Prime Minister: I have only accepted seven invitations out of 60. I wish to bring out the fact that, according to established practice, an official communiqué is issued by my Office informing the nation at large of any overseas mission by the Head of Government stating the objective of the mission and also its composition. Furthermore, information regarding the mission is given wide publicity, following consideration by the Cabinet of the mission's report. I would invite the hon. Member to visit the website of the Cabinet Office where such information is always available.

Payment of *per diem* is effected at the usual rates approved by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

I should additionally like to repeat, once again, Mr Speaker, Sir, that such missions are essential to fulfil the function of promoting Mauritius and advocating its interests and views in Europe and in the wider world. It is an essential component of growing a modern and outward looking economy. The Prime Minister has to travel overseas to add value to the work we have been undertaking at international level and to promote our relations and interests in different sectors by developing new international links, nurturing existing ones and fostering policy exchanges.

Mr Jhugroo: Will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House of those trips made during this year, how many he made a stopover in London and the reason why?

The Prime Minister: Well you will be surprised; I think it is only two. Let me just check, I will tell you, you will be surprised. In fact, the hon. Member is – I don't know who advise him to ask this question. If you go and ask me for the question I would give you details, but I will tell you: there was one invitation, it was a Conference on Somalia in London which myself and my Foreign Minister attended. One was the 'Diamond Jubilee' of Her Majesty the Queen...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: And one...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, order!

The Prime Minister: And one was on the Chagos issue just before we brought the case in Court. We finalised the issue.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I asked the hon. Prime Minister how many stopovers he made in London during these trips?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry, ask the question again.

Mr Speaker: Could you repeat your question?

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many stopover he made during these trips in London.

The Prime Minister: I just mentioned three trips and one because you have either to go to Paris or to London. That's all.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why he had not been to Maputo?

The Prime Minister: I informed the hon. Leader of the Opposition, but I am telling you now. I was going to go to Maputo, but I had to have a minor surgery and I went to London instead and I have paid my own expenses.

Mr Seeruttun: Will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House about those stopovers he made in London? What was the duration of those stopovers?

The Prime Minister: Not really stopovers, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will go through the list again if the hon. Member wants me. Let me go through the list so he will know how many stopovers. The first one was the State visit to India, so there was no need to stop over in London.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: The second visit was the Somalia. It was the pirate issue on Somalia and it was in London itself. The third visit was for the 'Diamond Jubilee' of her Majesty the Queen; that was in London, and the fourth visit was to Seychelles; so there was no need to go to London or Paris. The fifth visit was to London for the Chagos issue which we had before we put the case.

(Interruptions)

En pas bizin alle defan Chagos nette blaguer...

(Interruptions)

To pan fou narien moi quine faire!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order!

The Prime Minister: *To pan fou narien!*

Mr Speaker: I say order!

The Prime Minister: The sixth visit was to South Africa for the International and Social – then as I have said, I went for a private visit to London to have a minor surgery, not heart surgery, minor surgery and lastly, I went to the ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: ... to the *Francophonie* and that was in Congo and that's it and you might like to ask what the previous Prime Ministers did? How many times they travelled? Why don't you ask?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

(Interruptions)

Order, order please.

PORT LOUIS MARITIME & PORT LOUIS EAST –ARREST

(No. B/658) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of arrests effected in Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, in connection therewith, since May 2010 to-date, indicating in each case the -

- (a) type thereof seized;
- (b) quantity thereof, and
- (c) value thereof.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, statistics relating to drugs...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Hossen! Hon. Hossen! I want you not to disturb this House, ok. Yes hon. Prime Minister you may proceed.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, statistics relating to drugs are not computed on a constituency-wise basis. They are computed on a region basis. However, I am providing information relating to the following Police Stations, namely Plaine Verte, Roche Bois, Trou Fanfaron, Vallée Pitot, Pope Hennessy and the Port Police, in addition to other areas, which also cover Constituency No. 3 Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East.

In regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member and it will obviously show the vigilance of the Police in our fight against drugs.

Mr Uteem: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether his attention has been drawn to the fact that members of ADSU dealing with Port Louis region are very understaffed at the moment?

The Prime Minister: No, I am not told that, but I must say without going into details that sometimes they do covert operation and they do not want to know what they are doing. Probably that could be the reason, but I have not been told that.

POLICE FORCE – PROMOTION EXERCISE

(No. B/659) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to -

- (a) where matters stand as to the promotion exercise carried out in the grade of;
 - (i) Inspector of Police to that of Chief Inspector of Police, and
 - (ii) Chief Inspector of Police to that of Assistant Superintendent of Police and;
- (b) the number of -
 - (i) Assistant Commissioner of Police, and
 - (ii) Superintendent of Police who retired from the Police Force since December 2011 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the reply I have made to PQ No. B/424...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order! I want some order...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members I am on my feet and I am not going to repeat myself. I said I am not going to tolerate disturbance from any quarters in this House!

(Interruptions)

Now let us proceed! Hon. Nagalingum!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: PQ No. B/659!

(Interruptions)

I want some silence, please! Hon. Dr. A. Boolell! Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody! Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

You have uttered the word 'bachara'! Withdraw the word.

(Interruptions)

You have not? Hon. Lesjongard, have you uttered the word 'bachara'?

(Interruptions)

Who has uttered this word?

(Interruptions)

I am putting a question!

(Interruptions)

I am asking who has uttered the word 'bachara'.

(Interruptions)

I am not going to allow the use of this word in the House! Now, hon. Prime Minister, you may answer the question!

(Interruptions)

I have put a question, hon. Leader of the Opposition! I want to know who has uttered the word!

(Interruptions)

Dr. A. Boolell: He is a liar!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Hon. Dr. A. Boolell, please I am talking to you. You have to withdraw the word 'liar'.

Dr. A. Boolell: The hon. Leader of the Opposition has not stated the truth! Pointing a finger at me!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have said withdraw!

Dr. A. Boolell: All right, I withdraw.

Mr Speaker: Okay! Now, the hon. Prime Minister may answer the question!

(Interruptions)

Silence! The hon. Prime Minister may answer the question!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the replies I made to PQ B/424 and PQ B/754 at our sittings of 31 May and 18 October 2011 respectively, I mentioned at this very House that promotion in the Police Force falls under the purview of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission.

I also wish to point out that Police have embarked on a major promotion exercise following which 759 Police Officers of different grades have been promoted.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the process for the filling of vacancies in the grade of Chief Inspector of Police and in the grade of Assistant Superintendent of Police has already been completed.

As for part (b) of the question, I am also informed that, since December 2011 to date, four Assistant Commissioners of Police and four Superintendents of Police have retired upon reaching their retirement age limit, and two Superintendents of Police have retired on ground of age and completion of 25 years' service respectively.

During the same period, 13 Assistant Commissioners of Police and 38 Superintendents of Police were promoted.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether at present there are female Police Officers in the grade of Assistant Superintendent of Police, and whether at the same time that male Police Officers are being promoted, women Police Officers are being considered.

The Prime Minister: The first answer is yes, and we also try to promote women. Before, they were never sent abroad for training. It is not anybody's fault because it was not pointed out perhaps. I started this. When I became Prime Minister, I ensured that women in the VIPSU go

for training abroad. It is very hard training; not any training. So, that is the policy of the Government.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can tell us the number of vacancies that exists in the Port Louis region, both Port Louis North and South, with regard to ASP and above?

The Prime Minister: I don't have the specific vacancies area by area, but I will be glad to give it to the hon. Member.

Mr Ganoo: I am sure the hon. Prime Minister is aware that the last time this exercise as regards the promotion of Chief Inspectors and Assistant Superintendents of Police was carried out a year ago. In view of the fact that the hon. Prime Minister has just told us that the exercise is already completed, does he have an idea when will the promotion actually take place, especially with regard to the post of CI and ASP?

The Prime Minister: I don't interfere in this, as you know. It is the Disciplined Forces Service Commission. But my understanding is that it was already there. I understand that, given there were the elections, they preferred not to do any promotion at that time. That's my understanding.

HON. GEOFFREY COX, Q.C. - FEES & VISITS TO MAURITIUS

(No. B/660) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to Mr G. C., he will state the assignments for which Government has retained his services, since July 2005 to date, indicating in each case, the -

- (a) amount of fees paid, and
- (b) number of visits he has effected to Mauritius in connection therewith, indicating the -
 - (i) durations thereof
 - (ii) purposes therefor and
 - (iii) expenditure incurred in terms of air tickets, hotels accommodation and other allowances.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it has always been the practice of government whenever recourse to foreign lawyers is envisaged, to avail itself of services that it considers to

be in the best interest of Mauritius in any case before the final court of appeal of Mauritius, that is, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. This being a very specific forum.

Hon. Geoffrey Cox Q.C. is a distinguished British jurist having wide and profound experience in specialised legal matters.

He is also a member of the House of Commons in the UK.

Hon. Geoffrey Cox Q.C. has a long and close acquaintance with Mauritius and the legal and constitutional system of Mauritius. He is from time to time retained to advise the Government of Mauritius on questions of law and to appear before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on its behalf in substantial and complicated matters. Hon. Cox is also instructed by the Director of Public Prosecutions to appear on his behalf in criminal cases before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Government is not responsible for such instructions, which are made at the discretion of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, between 2005 to date, hon. Cox was retained by the Attorney General's Office and the DPP to appear in 17 cases before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, the judgments of which are, except in special leave cases, already published in our Law Reports and, therefore, in the public domain. The total fees paid for these cases, which were of varying complexity, amounted to £223,750.

Hon. Cox visited Mauritius in September 2008 to appear on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in an appeal, *Gokool v/s Ministry of Health and others*, before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council which sat in Mauritius.

In addition, since May 2011, hon. Cox has been retained to carry out a full review of matters relating to claims of more than Rs1.8 billion made against the Government by local and foreign parties relating to land at Le Morne, to advise the Government thereon and to conduct round-table discussions in Mauritius and in the UK with British Queen's Counsel, namely Mr James Guthrie, Q.C, instructed on their behalf. In respect of these continuing services, hon. Cox has been paid a total of £42,000 to date.

I should add that hon. Cox discounts his fees by around 1/3 for Mauritius in spite of being a leading silk who normally charges £600 per hour. Previous QCs did not show the same generosity to Mauritius.

Finally, hon. Cox is, from time to time, requested by the Government to give opinions on a range of complex legal and constitutional matters such as -

- the implementation of the Mackay report;
- prospective changes to the law, for example, the recent Regulations made under the Local Government Act and Representation of the People Act for the Municipal and Village Council Elections.

These opinions are generally prepared in collaboration with, and following working sessions with the Solicitor-General and other law officers of the Attorney-General's Office. For these services, which have often required much of his time and energy, I should say, hon. Geoffrey Cox Q.C. has neither charged nor received a fee. It is all done benevolently because he considers himself as a friend of Mauritius. He also has many friends on this side and on the other side of the House. Furthermore, in spite of his heavy workload - he is both a leading QC and a Member of Parliament - yet he is always accessible and available for advice by phone, for which again he does not charge a penny. In other words, whenever he acts in an advisory capacity, unlike other lawyers previously, he never charges any fee.

In connection with the above matters, hon. Cox has visited Mauritius seven times since September 2008. The total cost of the air fares in business class and his accommodation costs are no more that it is for others. But, no other allowances or remuneration have been paid.

I should perhaps, add, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the benefit of the House that it does not appear in all our cases. For example in tax cases, it is Mr Philip Baker Q.C. who appears for the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the State of Mauritius. For public international law issues –for example, Chagos we had retained the services of Professor Ian Brownlie, QC who was also retained after there was a change in Government in 2000 but, unfortunately, he passed away tragically in an accident. Since then we have retained the services of Mr Phillippe Sands QC with a team of lawyers both in the UK and USA. For the media law, for example, we have retained the services of Mr Geoffrey Robertson, QC.

So, in other words, in case people think that he is doing all the cases, it depends – because it is a specialised law and, as I said, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is a very specialised forum.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister the cost of the air ticket and accommodations in Mauritius during these trips?

The Prime Minister: I just explained, it is the same issue. You are going to retain a lawyer but you don't want him to come; but, it is the same as for anybody else.

Mr Jhugroo: Can we know the amount from the hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I can give it to the hon. Member, but it is same as everybody else who travels by business class. There is no difference. The air fare for business class is Rs503,927 and his accommodation cost is Rs476,922.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

Ms Anquetil: PQ B/661, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: *To candidat ek Bangaleea!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! No more interruptions!

(Interruptions)

Silence, please! Yes, proceed!

(Interruptions)

AIR ACCESS POLICY

(No. B/661) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the air access policy, he will state if Government proposes the review thereof to enable additional foreign air carriers to operate to and from Mauritius, in the wake of the coming into operation of the new airport terminal.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, since August 2005, Mauritius has been pursuing an air transport liberalisation policy within the established bilateral framework through the adoption of a pragmatic approach to enhance seat capacity and competition on all routes with high growth potential.

Mauritius has up to now signed Bilateral Air Services Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding with 36 countries. These Agreements provide, *inter alia*, for designation of airlines, the route schedule, frequencies of flights to be operated on the agreed routes, capacity entitlements, as well as traffic rights.

Mr Speaker, Sir, out of the 36 Bilateral Air Services Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding, 24 provide for either multiple or dual designation of airlines. These include France, United Kingdom, Germany, China, Russia, Switzerland, Spain, Austria, India, Italy, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Australia, South Africa, Botswana, Egypt, Madagascar, Kenya and Mozambique.

Fifth, freedom traffic rights have been granted to 18 countries on specific intermediate and beyond points and these countries include Australia, China, France, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Singapore, United Kingdom and Russia.

Mauritius has also subscribed to the “European Clause” which provides that an airline established in the territory of the European Union and having a valid operating licence in accordance with the European Community Law can operate to Mauritius from any destination in Europe which has traffic rights to Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at present, Air Mauritius serves 18 destinations in the Europe, East Asia, India, Australia, Africa and Indian Ocean regions. Apart from Air Mauritius, 13 foreign airlines operate to and from Mauritius.

In the case of Emirates, while the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2001 provides for only 3 weekly frequencies, 11 additional weekly frequencies have been granted to Emirates on an extra-bilateral basis.

Mauritius is in presence of requests from the following countries for air services talks: United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Ethiopia. These are under consideration. On the other hand, Mauritius has requested air services talks with the Scandinavian countries (Finland, Sweden and Norway), the Czech Republic and Turkey.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have opened up air access policy substantially since 2005. It is the carriers who are not fully exploiting the opportunities available in the Bilateral Air Services Agreements, and a lot of the capacity/frequency entitlements remain largely unutilised. I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that a substantial part of the traffic rights have remained unused simply because airlines operations are guided by business and economic factors.

Ms Anquetil: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether the Government will envisage using Mauritius as a major aviation hub between China and Africa?

The Prime Minister: It is in our plan. Whether we can become a major overnight - I think there are two flights per week already and there will be some more in January from what I

believe. I am speaking from what I remember and we are going to increase the flights to China, but it is not as easy as some people think it is. There are lots of regulations in China. I can even tell the hon. Member that private companies, here, wanted to have the right to go and make a deal with China to have private airlines, which I have agreed to, but it did not come to fruition because of difficulties in China, but I don't want to go into the details.

Mr Uteem: Two years ago, the hon. Minister of Finance announced the intention of Government to make Mauritius the hub for Africa. However, listening to the hon. Prime Minister I see that there has not been any request made to any African countries to have the bilateral exchanges. There is only one request from Ethiopia and this also has not been resolved yet. So, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether Government intends to contact any African countries in the near future?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I was trying to be as short as possible with the question. For example, Kenya Airways is going to start operation very soon. The negotiations have been over and they are going to start very soon.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question of air access policy is tied to the necessity to protect the interest of Air Mauritius. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether there has been any study or report that has been carried out on this issue, and whether he is ready to table it for the information of the House?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, we have to protect the interest of Air Mauritius, but we also have to encourage competition and Air Mauritius has to compete and that is good. In all business, a competition is always good. Air Mauritius will have to raise its standards which are high.

(Interruptions)

No, no!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: Because they have certain problems. We have started liberalising. As I said, from 2005, even after me, there has been a ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: ... great liberalisation taking place.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Prime Minister say whether there has been any request from the Company called Livingston Airline of Milan based in Italy, to service any of the routes from or to Mauritius? What has been the outcome of that request?

The Prime Minister: The short answer is, yes. When we have companies that are not the official airline of their country, we have to do a little bit of more ground work, but the short answer is ‘yes’.

MR A. D. - WARRANT OF ARREST

(No. B/662) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the case of a person against whom a warrant of arrest was issued, on or about 22 September 2012, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the Officers of the Police Station of Rivière des Anguilles received –

- (a) instructions to execute the warrant and, if so, indicate if the said person was arrested, and if not, why not, and
- (b) a phone call from a Minister in connection therewith.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the Question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Tuesday 18 September 2012, a warrant for non-payment of fine and costs against Mr A. D., residing at Royal Road, Tyack, Rivière des Anguilles was issued by the Curepipe Court. On Wednesday 19 September 2012, the warrant was forwarded to Rose Belle Divisional Headquarters for the Rivière des Anguilles Police Station to execute the warrant. On Saturday 22 September 2012, the Rivière des Anguilles Police Station received the warrant and on the same day at 1245 hours, one Police Sergeant and three Police Officers who were on patrol stopped private van 5232 OC 10 driven by Mr A. D.

The latter was arrested and brought at Rivière des Anguilles Police Station for detention pending his appearance before Court on Monday 24 September 2012.

On the same day, at 1315 hours, Mr A. D. complained of dizziness and he was taken to Souillac hospital by Police. In the meantime, following a request from the wife of Mr A. D., in view of the latter’s state of health who is a cardiac patient, the Police communicated with the

Presiding Magistrate to consider the possibility of releasing the warrantee on humanitarian grounds and that the responsibility to bring him to Court would be undertaken by Assistant Superintendent of Police, Mr R., who is a relative of the warrantee. The Presiding Magistrate, Curepipe Court, looked into the matter and instructed that Mr A. D. be released, and that one Assistant Superintendent of Police, Mr R., would have to take the responsibility to bring Mr A. D. to Curepipe Court on Monday 24 September 2012.

The same was communicated to Rivière des Anguilles Police Station at 13:55 hrs, and the warrantee was allowed to go as he was no longer then under arrest after the Magistrate examined the case.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that at 14:05 hrs, a phone call was received to the DCP south who is based at Curepipe district headquarters from a Minister to enquire about the state of health of the warrantee Mr A. D. But at that material time, Mr A. D. had already been released.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether Transparency Mauritius had made a request to ICAC to conduct an enquiry about the affair and, if so, where matters stand?

The Prime Minister: If Amnesty International is to ask ICAC to carry an enquiry, it would not come to me. It would go direct to them.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Seeruttun: After the episode of the Quatre Bornes affair last year, known as the *Briani Saga*, and now this affair this year in this case, will the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether he has taken measures to ensure that from now on none of his MPs will interfere in Police affairs?

The Prime Minister: I would urge the hon. Member to be careful not to believe everything he hears. Even on the other side! He might not realise, but sometimes I tell people that it is probably not true. But what happens very often - and he is a Member of Parliament, he knows - people in your constituency come and see you about all sorts of things; sometimes you can and sometimes you can't. But that is the general policy of Government.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions to Ministers!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ms Anquetil!

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - DATABASE

(No. B/672) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to disabilities, she will state if her Ministry has compiled a statistics database therefor for mainland Mauritius and for Rodrigues and, if so, give details thereof, and if not, why not.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is 'yes'.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Yes.

Mrs Bappoo: The answer is 'yes', Mr Speaker, Sir. A comprehensive database on disability was launched by my Ministry in January last year.

The main objective of the database is to enable the Ministry to develop an integrated approach to the issue of disability. It serves as an important tool for policy-making and planning and helps in improving the delivery of services to persons with disabilities.

Assistance for the setting up of the database project was sought from the UNDP which made available the services of an Indian IT Consultant.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, please!

(Interruptions)

Wait a minute! I am on my feet.

(Interruptions)

Yes. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Sergeant-at-Arms!

(Interruptions)

Please! I am on my feet.

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet.

(Interruptions)

Well, I am on my feet.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is only one person who raises fingers on others in this House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, Sergeant-at-Arms! We have received a complaint from the hon. Leader of the Opposition to the effect that someone in the public gallery has done something which is, I would term, unethical.

(Interruptions)

And I should not allow anybody from the public gallery to utter a word or even a gesture that offends any Member of this House and this is my ruling. And if anyone dares to do that, I will take sanction against him. Now, the hon. Minister may answer the question.

Dr. S. Boolell: *Ki kalité bachara to été!*

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Boolell! No, no, no! Please, sit down!

(Interruptions)

No! Hon. Boolell, withdraw the word 'bachara'! I invite you to withdraw the word.

Dr. Boolell: No, Sir...

Mr Speaker: I have heard the word, please, don't argue!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: I heard the word '*bachara*'. If you want me to withdraw it, I withdraw it. I heard the Leader of Opposition mentioning *bachara*. But I withdraw it.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, if you have used the word '*bachara*', please withdraw it!

(Interruptions)

I say, wait a minute, please! I am speaking to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, Members have to listen!

(Interruptions)

Wait a minute! I said 'if'!

Mr Bérenger: *(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker: Yes. Have you used the word '*bachara*' against any MP?

Mr Bérenger: No!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No! Hon. Minister, proceed!

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll just continue with the reply.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Bappoo: Assistance for the setting up of the database project was sought from the UNDP and the UNDP made available the services of an Indian IT Consultant. In collaboration with the Central Informatics Bureau, the Central Information Systems Division and the National Computer Board, the data was developed by my Ministry.

To date, the system contains around 8,100 entries of persons with disabilities. Relevant details that can be retrieved from the database relate, *inter alia*, to the name, age, sex, type of disability, geographical distribution, training courses followed, employment history, qualifications and special aptitudes of persons with disabilities. Thus, the data is being updated regularly.

Regarding Rodrigues, I would like to inform the House that the database already contains 269 entries of persons with disabilities. Concerning children, arrangements are being made with NGO's for the necessary collection and submission of data to be input in the National Database on Disability. In the near future, it is proposed to connect Rodrigues directly to the Disability Server to enable the direct uploading of data in the National Database on Disability.

A website on disability was also launched in January 2012.

Ms Anquetil: Can the hon. Minister inform the House the methodology used to identify persons with disabilities across the island?

Mrs Bappoo: These different techniques, Mr Speaker, Sir, have been developed by the UNDP Consultant. All the staff involved in it has been trained and they are using the relevant techniques for the entry of information on people with disabilities.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/673) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to persons with disabilities, she will state the measures taken by her Ministry to ensure the recruitment thereof, following the amendment brought to the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Act.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Act 1976 was amended in July 2012 and proclaimed in December 2012 with the view to promoting better access to employment of persons with disabilities.

Following the proclamation, the TEDPB Board has been reconstituted on 21 September 2012. The Board has held sittings in October and November and has worked towards the setting up of its Hearing Committee and an Assessment Panel.

The Hearing Committee has been also constituted on 28 September under the Chairpersonship of Mrs Joanne Moutou Leckning, Acting Senior Assistant DPP.

Whereas the Assessment Panel has been set up under the Chairmanship of Dr. Pravin Kumar Ramdin, former Head of Occupational Health Unit, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, to assess the skills, potential and abilities of persons with disabilities so that appropriate profiles can be established for submission to eventual employers.

I am also personally chairing a Steering Committee for the smooth implementation of the Act.

According to Statistics Mauritius (2011), some 8,400 persons with disabilities are in employment in different sectors.

From January to October 2012, some 40 persons with disabilities have been put in employment and over the last three weeks, another 6 persons with disabilities have been placed.

At the same time, the MEF is also promoting training and placement of persons with disabilities and has provided training to 50 persons with disabilities in the IT and BPO sectors and out of which, some 25 persons with disabilities have already been placed.

I also wish to inform the House that a new momentum has been created with the promulgation of the law. New avenues have been opened for employment of persons with disabilities by bringing parastatal bodies and Government companies under the ambit of this legislation. In this context, a working session was held with all CEOs and Chairpersons of these organisations on 07 November regarding the new mandatory duty to employ persons with disabilities. I am very much satisfied to say that organisations like the MRA, the MIE, the Mutual Aid Association Ltd, the Mauritius Post Ltd, the Mauritius Telecom have already recruited persons with disabilities and others like ICTA and the Waste Water Management Authority have shown an interest to do same.

This indicates, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are on the right track and the agenda of persons with disabilities is moving forward satisfactorily.

Moreover, Government has shown its unflinching commitment towards employment of disabled persons by coming forward with an innovative measure in the Budget 2013 by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the reservation for the first time, of 30 seats for graduates with disabilities in the Service to Mauritius Programme. This represents an opportunity for our graduates with disabilities who, despite special efforts made by them to achieve academic success, still face enormous difficulties in accessing employment.

Ms Anquetil: Can the hon. Minister inform the House about the terms of reference of the Steering Committee?

Mrs Bappoo: The Steering Committee is just to see about the implementation of the new Act according to the various provisions stated in the new Act and to reassure that private companies and parastatal bodies are respecting what the law says.

Mrs Labelle: The hon. Minister has mentioned there is a committee which has been set up to assess the capabilities of these persons for submission to employers. May I ask the hon. Minister whether this information is being used to review the training provided by the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board?

Mrs Bappoo: Yes, of course. Mr Speaker, Sir, employers from different sectors often make requests to the Ministry for Social Security to forward to them the list of people with disabilities which appears on the register. There need to be an Assessment Panel to assess the disabilities of these people. We have set up the Assessment Panel under the chairmanship of Dr. Ramdin. They assess the different abilities of the persons, and set up the profile of each disabled person. From there the names are being submitted to employers for recruitment upon request.

Mrs Labelle: My question was whether this information is being used to review the training programmes which are being provided by the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board and, if so, what changes have been brought to these programmes that are presently being provided?

Mrs Bappoo: I have just mentioned about the recent set up of the Assessment Panel, Mr Speaker, Sir. Now from the results of the assessment and specific disabilities profile of the persons with disabilities, of course, *cela coule de source* that the Board will also try to work out different training programmes to be set up for people with disabilities.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The hon. Minister has just mentioned that she is satisfied with the collaboration she is getting from the private sector; may I ask the hon. Minister how many of the private companies have registered themselves with the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board as at date?

Mrs Bappoo: The exercise is still on. The MEF has mostly all of its members on the register. Now with the coming up of the parastatal bodies and the Government companies, of course, I will be able to table this updated list in a near future.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether her Ministry would be available to put on a website or somewhere the list of private companies which are not following the law in terms of the employment of disabled persons? Can that list be updated regularly so that people can see, including Government agencies?

Mrs Bappoo: Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Ms Anquetil: Est-ce que la ministre pourrait indiquer à la Chambre si un *monitoring system* a été mis en place afin d'assurer l'implémentation du projet, c'est-à-dire, l'emploi des personnes handicapées ?

Mrs Bappoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the actual Steering Committee chaired by myself which is responsible for follow up of what is to be done all along as far as the recruitment of people with disabilities is concerned.

ELDERLY HOMES

(No. B/674) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the homes for the elderly, she will state the number –

- (a) thereof which are registered as at to date, indicating the conditions attached for the registration thereof;
- (b) thereof which have closed down, over the past five years, indicating in each case, the reasons therefor, and
- (c) of officers available to carry out the inspection thereof.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that as at to date there are 51 Residential Care Homes which are licensed by the Residential Care Homes Board, out of which 26 are Charitable institutions and 25 are private homes.

Sir, I am tabling a copy of the Residential Care Homes Regulations 2005 which stipulate the conditions attached to the registration of homes.

As for part (b) of the question, 7 licensed residential care homes have been closed down, over the past 5 years. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also tabling the list of these licensed homes which have been closed down, together with the reasons thereof.

Regarding part (c) of the question, there are 19 Social Security Officers available to carry out inspections in homes. Moreover, as per section 5(a) and (b) of the Residential Care Homes Act, Members of the Residential Care Homes Board are also allowed to effect visits in the homes, and they do effect an average of three visits monthly.

These visits are being effected to ensure that the Homes comply with the Regulations and that the level of care, hygiene and welfare provided to senior citizens are to a satisfactory standard.

I must inform the House that since the enactment of the Act much has been achieved to upgrade the standard of life and welfare of residents in Homes. However, there is still room for

improvement and the Residential Care Homes Board is very strict as regards the care, needs, hygiene and welfare provided to residents. Further, Managers of Homes are given advice and guidance on the necessary upgrading works to enable them to meet the norms stipulated in the legislation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the main objective of the Residential Care Homes Board is to ensure that Homes are compliant with the Regulations of 2005, and closing down of Homes is a measure of last resort.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has informed us that there are 51 registered Homes for the elderly. Will she care to tell us whether there are not, in fact, Homes operating without registration and some that have been operating for months, if not years, pending their request for registration being approved or rejected? Therefore, will she let us know if this is the case, and if this is so, will she guarantee that this will stop, that either they will be registered and supervised, but that no home for elderly will operate without registration?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I do agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. But, at the same time, the law 2003/2005 is a new law and Homes have existed for elders since years back and, at that time, there were no norms and regulations. So, the buildings at date are buildings without any respect to what the law says. So, we are continuously requesting these Homes to upgrade their infrastructure and to give sufficient care to the life of the inmates in these old Homes. This is being done, but if in spite of a moratorium they don't pay due respect to the norms from the regulation, of course, then the last resort will be closing. But one big problem, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that there is no other sufficient Home to shelter these inmates. So, what do we do? Do we just allow them to be there *dans la plaine et il n'y a pas de place comme abri pour ces personnes*? So, at the same time, we have to carry another exercise with other Homes, other charitable institutions and today with the coming up of an ageing population, we are having more requests and more demands for elder people to be sheltered in Homes and there are no sufficient Homes.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is acknowledging that there are Homes for elderly operating without registration, therefore without any supervision. Can we have the number thereof and the number of old people they are catering for?

Mrs Bappoo: I will seek for the information and place it in the Library of the Assembly.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister say whether trained personnel is a *sine qua non* condition for recruitment by those Homes and whether she is satisfied that all those Homes have trained personnel?

Mrs Bappoo: In fact, there are the trained staff of the Ministry itself that carry out part of the training for those responsible of these Homes and many of the private Homes have put up their own training programme for their staff.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, considering that there are many allegations of Homes closing down in the evening and leaving the inmates to themselves, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there are night visits to these Homes, especially as regards night treatment, night medication and feeding of these inmates by night?

Mrs Bappoo: I will have to check up whether night visits are carried out, but I do agree with the hon. Member that this is one way forward to assure for the safety of inmates in the Homes.

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Minister just confirmed that there are many Homes that are operating without licences, but quite a lot of them are also claiming VAT from the services they are providing. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there is any control on that VAT because some people who are paying to stay in a Home, are paying the fees including VAT. And if so, whether we can exempt the Homes from VAT?

Mrs Bappoo: This will be a policy matter, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I need to raise with the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the policy of getting about 50 persons trained every year at the Ministry of Social Security is still on or not and that was previously done in collaboration with the Institute of Health of Mauritius?

Mrs Bappoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have already embarked on the third batch and we will soon be having the other new batch coming. It is still on.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, in the case of possible closure of those Homes, *quel est le délai que ces maisons de retraite ont pour mettre la clé sous le paillason ?*

Mrs Bappoo: The moratorium period given is six months, but those who are really improving during the six months, we try to give them some more opportunities to improve in a better way.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, within this moratorium period of six months, is there a monitoring to ensure that, at least, the minimum conditions are being respected before the closing down?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just said in my main answer that there is the Monitoring Committee from the Board under the Chairmanship of the Permanent Secretary himself who is the Chairperson and together with the members of the Board and together with the 19 Social Security Officers, the monitoring is being ensured.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, following a question put in this very House last year, we were informed that there were, at least, 10 Homes – we have the figures – which were functioning illegally. More so, the period of six months was given to them following a survey carried out in 2009. May I know from the hon. Minister, regarding these 10 Homes which were identified, what actions have been taken and how many of these Homes have been able to comply with and what additional period is being given to them?

Mrs Bappoo: I suppose that they have been giving satisfactory results to the Board and to the Monitoring Committee for them to be allowed to continue. Otherwise, we would have sought closure. But, as I said, closure becomes very difficult because as far as I am concerned, I am aware of only one home that has been asked to close down due to non respect of the norms.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is an age limit for the licensees as well as for the employees of those Homes for the elderly?

Mrs Bappoo: I don't believe there is any age limit in it, Mr Speaker, Sir, but yet I need to check.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask from the hon. Minister if she is aware of the case of a lady who was in a home and who has been admitted in a hospital and after which the home refused to take back the lady from the hospital. And if this be the case what are the measures taken by the Ministry ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: In any event, this issue does not arise, but if the hon. Minister wants to answer she may answer.

Mrs Bappoo: I just want to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are aware of the case and the Ministry is trying to help to see whether there is another charitable institution that can take care of that elderly person.

BIRTH CONTROL PROGRAMME – SHOPPING VOUCHER

(No. B/675) **Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether he will state the number of women who have benefited from a shopping voucher of Rs1,500 for having joined a birth control programme, indicating in each case, the -

- (a) age thereof
- (b) region to which they belong, and
- (c) birth control method adopted.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the reply I made in the House to PQ B/178, I stated that the whole issue of birth control programme targeting the vulnerable families in Mauritius was being referred to an Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development to look into all its aspects.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee has already mandated the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, which has the primary responsibility with regard to birth control programme, to examine all the implications relating to the most appropriate method and to make appropriate recommendation with regard to its implementation. A decision will consequently be taken in the light of the report to be submitted by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life to the Inter-Ministerial Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reiterate that the subject of birth control programme is very sensitive and complex, and has to be dealt with cautiously.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, awaiting the report of that Inter-Ministerial Committee, if that policy of giving a voucher to those women to encourage them to follow a contraception programme has already been set up.

Mr Dayal: No, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Ribot: I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he or the Inter-Ministerial Committee deems it right to offer a shopping voucher to encourage women to follow a contraception programme instead of taking that money to set up a wide sensitisation campaign. Should that money not be invested in education rather than giving shopping vouchers?

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me inform the House that, concurrently, a decision was taken by the Board of NEF to organise sensitisation campaigns on family planning through the

Life Skills Training Programme at the NEF. Consequently, the life skills trainers were provided with training in area health centres and hospitals. I can say that life skill trainers then undertook to include this theme in their module 'Role and Responsibility of Family', and participants were sensitised on different contraceptive methods at la Valette, Dubreuil, Ste Croix, Baie du Tombeau and Sottise.

LE PAVILLON SWIMMING POOL - REPAIRS

(No. B/676) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to Le Pavillon Swimming Pool, in Quatre Bornes, he will state –

- (a) when it ceased to be in operation, and
- (b) the amount earmarked for the repairs thereof, indicating the amount spent as at to date.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, Le Pavillon Swimming Pool was provisionally closed on 15 November 2010 due to persistent drop in water level. It was suspected that there was a leakage in the piping system. Actions were taken to determine the exact cause of the problem. Pending the outcome of the investigation and remedial action, the swimming pool had to be closed due to severe drought prevailing at that period. The pool was exceptionally reopened from 08 February to June 2011 only for athletes, in view for their preparation for the Indian Ocean Island Games. The swimming pool is not operational since then.

Regarding part (b) of the question, several tests, namely plugging test and pressure test, have been carried out, and these tests have confirmed that the fall in water level is due to leakage.

An amount of Rs57,742 has been paid for these preliminary tests. Upon advice of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, my Ministry has, on 06 November 2012, proceeded with the appointment of a consultant to carry out more advanced tests, propose appropriate remedial solutions and to supervise all related works.

The solution proposed by the consultant consists of capping and cancelling the existing piping system and making provision of a new supply pipe along the surface of the swimming pool internal wall. The consultant has already submitted the draft tender documents for these

works to my Ministry. It is expected that same will be finalised and launched by next week. A total amount of Rs8.4 m. has been earmarked for these repair works, including consultancy fees.

A breakdown is as follows –

Rs1.8 m. will be paid as consultancy fees;

Rs6 m. has been earmarked for the civil and mechanical works, and

Rs600,000 will be paid as retention money.

Mr Ramano: *M. le président, est-ce que je pourrais savoir le nom du consultant qui a été nommé pour ce projet?*

Mr Ritoo: It's Prodesign.

(Interruptions)

MOTORWAYS - STREET LIGHTING

(No. B/677) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the street lighting of motorways falling under the responsibility of the District and Municipal Councils, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from each Council, information as to the monthly electricity bills therefor, since January 2011 to date, indicating the financial capacity of the Councils to cope therewith, and
- (b) state –
 - (i) if consideration will be given for the shifting of the responsibility thereof to the Road Development Authority, and
 - (ii) the reasons why the street lighting on the motorway to the South is intermittently out of order, indicating if urgent remedial measures will be taken to avert risk of accidents.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information requested by the hon. Member at part (a) of his question is being placed in the Library.

With regard to part (b) (i) of the question, a request was made to the Road Development Authority for it to pay the street lighting charges in respect of motorways, as the local authorities were facing difficult financial situations. The request is being looked into.

As regards part (b) (ii) of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made on 03 July 2012 to Parliamentary Question A/208, wherein I informed that several sections of the

street lighting network along the motorway, from Nouvelle France Roundabout to Plaisance Roundabout, are out of order due to substantial loss of street lighting armoured cables.

In terms of section 50(2) (a) (i) of the Local Government Act, a local authority is responsible for the lighting of all motorways and main roads, and this includes the replacement of defective parts and cables as well as stolen cables. The total length of underground cables that have been stolen on the motorway in the south is 8,340 metres. These cables are armoured ones with 4 cores varying from 16 to 25 square millimetres. The cost of their purchase and replacement is estimated at Rs6,315,000.00, and the Council does not have the funds to replace them now.

However, the Council has taken some urgent measures ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Silence, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Aimée: ...to continue providing...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Proceed hon. Minister!

Mr Aimée: *Qui sanne la to pe gueter? To pas pe guette mwa twa?*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, proceed with your answer!

(Interruptions)

Silence!

Mr Aimée: *To guette mwa, mo guette twa! Okay?*

(Interruptions)

However, the Council has taken some urgent measures to continue providing lighting on various parts of the motorway in order to reduce the risks of accident. These measures are –

- (i) ensuring that the street lanterns at all the roundabouts along the motorway are in operation;
- (ii) the Balisson Roundabout and La Rosa Roundabout have been provided with overhead cables as a temporary measure;
- (iii) the underground cables at Grand Bel Air have been replaced by the Council, and
- (iv) the underground cables at all accelerating and decelerating lanes are being replaced by overhead cables over a stretch of 6,400 metres at a cost of Rs392,038.56 to the

Grand Port Savanne District Council. Works are expected to be completed within a month.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that a request has already been made to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for the provision of required funds to the order to Rs13.5 m. to enable the local authorities to arrange for the replacement of the lost cables.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of cases where local authorities have not been able to settle their electricity bills with regard to lighting of motorways and the network has been disconnected?

Mr Aimée: No, Sir.

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Minister seems to say that there are cases where cables have been stolen on motorways. Can I ask him whether the cables which were stolen were live cables with electricity in them?

Mr Aimée: Yes, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

(Interruptions)

Silence!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Put your question hon. Dr. Sorefan! Silence! Allow the hon. Member to put his question!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a blackout nearly for two months on the South Motorway and we know that motorists contribute to the tune of Rs1.80 per litre to the RDA. Will the hon. Minister - and the Government - strongly advise the RDA to take over this situation, to finance the electricity bill and take over the lighting also?

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question should be addressed to the RDA and to the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Mr Ameer Meea: The hon. Minister has just stated that some 8,000 metres of cables have been stolen. Is it true that the cables that were stolen - some 8,000 metres - are worth Rs25 m.?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply I mentioned that the sum of Rs6,315,000 is for the cost of the cables that were stolen.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Minister say in which places those ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Jugnauth: ...live cables have been stolen?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I want some silence! Hon. Jugnauth has a question. Proceed, hon. Jugnauth!

(Interruptions)

Silence!

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Minister say in which places these live cables have been stolen?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Hon. Mohamed, withdraw that word!

Mr Mohamed: I withdraw the word 'capon'.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jugnauth, put your question! Put it again, please. There has been some disturbance.

(Interruptions)

Silence!

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Minister say in which places these live cables have been stolen?

Mr Aimée: There are two places. In fact, I have mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, that they are at the roundabout of Balisson and La Rosa.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, put your question!

(Interruptions)

Silence! Hon. Baloomoody, please!

CHILD DEVELOPMENT UNIT - RESTRUCTURATION

(No. B/678) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Child Development Unit, she will state if any restructuration thereof has been carried out, since August 2011 to date, to respond to the emerging social issues affecting the children.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, since I assumed office in August 2011, one of my first priorities was to take stock of the functioning of the various Units of my Ministry, including the Child Development Unit (CDU).

In light of assessment made with respect to the mandate of the CDU, its human resource as well as the different projects to respond to the wide spectrum of emerging social issues affecting children, it was obvious that the scope of the interventions of the CDU has significantly broadened since its setting up in 1995.

As Minister responsible for Child Development, I found it necessary to conduct an audit of the CDU so that the best strategy be developed to respond more effectively to the needs of all children with protection concerns. I mentioned in my intervention on the Budget 2012 that my Ministry will have an in-depth audit of the various services offered by all its Units. Furthermore, Miss Maalla Majid, UN Special *Rapporteur* on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography recommended the rationalisation and streamlining of the CDU.

Concurrently, interim measures have been taken to cope with the day-to-day reported cases of child abuse. These include, *inter alia*, revamping of the six Family Support Bureaux in terms of reviewing the workload of officers, ensuring that each Family Support Bureau has one vehicle at its disposal for facilitating all operations, strengthening the capacity of officers, reallocating of some tasks devolving on the CDU to the National Children's Council and the contractual employment and posting of 20 Assistant Child Programme Officers to the CDU.

Furthermore, a new building at Vacoas has been identified to accommodate a Child Protection Service, in order, to have a more conducive environment to offer a better service.

In addition, needful is being done to put in place a computerised Child Protection Register to improve record keeping and collection of basic data regarding all cases of children in distress reported to the Ministry. This measure will also facilitate the tracking and management of cases.

The restructuring of the CDU will be pursued in light of the outcome after examining all financial and human resources implications. In regard to the audit, the hon. Members of the House may wish to note that a tender exercise for consultancy services has already been launched.

In the same vein, Mr Speaker, Sir, other measures already initiated to serve as useful tools for the restructuring include the National Strategic Framework and the preparation of the Children's Bill.

All these put together will enable my Ministry to have a thorough restructuring of the CDU in a holistic manner.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just said that in the Budget Speech of 2011, she mentioned that there will be the services of a Consultant to carry out an in-depth audit of the various services offered by all the Units of her Ministry, including the Child Development Unit. But I just heard the hon. Minister saying that it is now that tenders have been launched for the consultancy services. Can I ask the hon. Minister why she took one year, from November 2011 till now, to launch and ask for the services of a Consultant?

Mrs Martin: I can easily explain, Mr Speaker, Sir. I mentioned in my Budget speech of November 2011 that I will do that. There was a meeting which was chaired in 2012 by the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry to take the decision for an audit of the Child Development Unit to be done. The draft terms of reference to the audit was prepared, then the approval for launching of bid after consultation and finalisation of the terms of reference was also done. The request for proposal was done afterwards. There are a lot of procedures that go into this, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member was a Minister herself and she knows how long this takes.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not agree with the hon. Minister when she states...

Mr Speaker: Please, put your question!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: ...that the procedure takes one year. It is such an urgent matter which concerns children, and as the hon. Minister herself had said, the focus of criticisms of various quarters ...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Member. Please, put your question. Do not make a statement.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister say whether she considers it urgent or she has given time just for procedures?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member may agree or not agree; that is her opinion.

(Interruptions)

What I want to stress on, Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Martin: What I must stress on, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that in my answer I also mentioned that meanwhile interim measures have been taken, pending the audit that is to be conducted.

Mr Jugnauth: Can the hon. Minister say what measures have been taken by the Child Development Unit, with regard to the recent case of sexual abuse of a trainer at the MITD?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a commission of enquiry and all the answers would be obtained in the light of it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just mentioned a 'Child Protection Service'. May I ask her what is the difference between this service and the CDU and the number of officers involved in that Child Protection Service?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the difference is that this Child Protection Service will focus mainly on child protection. The Child Development Unit also takes into account the sensitisation and the development aspects of a child as well.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, last year, the hon. Minister welcomed an additional number of 20 employees to the Child Development Unit, which makes a total of 40. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether those 40 employees are attached to the CDU or are they shared among other services of her Ministry.

Mrs Martin: It is not 40, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have 20 ACPOs with limited range of action because they are not public officers, but they are helping out in the CDU itself.

Mr Jugnauth: I come back to my question again. May I know from the hon. Minister what measures have been taken before the setting up of this Fact-Finding Committee?

Mrs Martin: Yes, there is a Fact-Finding Committee and everything is going to be revealed in that Fact-Finding Committee. The CDU, Mr Speaker, Sir, operates with regard to the privacy and protection of the child as well. There are some parameters that we abide by and which do not allow us to reveal everything in this House but then we will do it within the parameters of the Fact-Finding Committee.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether she will say whether there is a Planning and Research Section in her Ministry *qui est le coeur et le poumon de son ministère* and how many research works have been carried out with regard to children by this research unit?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have this information with me, but I can make it available to the hon. Member because this question does not relate to the research undertaken by the PRU.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't think I have heard the hon. Minister answering what was the involvement of the CDU before this case was referred to the Fact-Finding Committee. I think the Members of this House are interested to know what the involvement of the CDU was before this case was referred to.

Mrs Martin: I can reassure the hon. Member that the CDU has done its work and this will be revealed within the Fact-Finding Committee. I am telling the hon. Member that...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Martin: We have all the information that is going to be submitted in this Committee.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that certain things cannot be revealed in the House. May I ask her whether in that particular case, the Ministry received a letter from the wife of the perpetrator and what action was taken then, when they became aware of the case?

Mrs Martin: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

We have initiated enquiry, Mr Speaker, Sir and the answer is going to be revealed within the Fact-Finding Committee. Whatever we have done, we will reveal. We will be working in transparency.

(Interruptions)

And whatever we have done will be revealed then.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to come back to the question of my colleague on the other side.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I want some silence, hon. Soodhun!

Mrs Ribot: The question was very simple.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say silence!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, I say no interruption because the hon. Member has a question and I wait that she puts the question peacefully. Yes, proceed hon. Member!

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to come back to the same question. By the time the CDU received the letter and by the time the case was revealed here in this House, some time had elapsed, almost one year and we would like to know what the CDU did - before the Commission of Enquiry or whatever - during that period of time.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, this question relates to the restructuring of the Child Development Unit. If the hon. Member wants an answer, she can come with a substantive question.

(Interruptions)

But at the same time, what I have said and I will maintain, Mr Speaker, Sir, everything that we have done has been according to procedure and it shall be revealed within the Fact-Finding Committee.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN CAMPAIGN

(No. B/679) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in

regard to the women, she will state the measures taken by her Ministry in the wake of the campaign initiated by the United Nations and the African continent to end violence against them.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry launched the campaign in November 2011 in the context of the commemoration of the International Day Against Violence Against Women 2011 and the “16 Days Activism” Campaign.

Prior to the launching of the campaign in November 2011, my Ministry had already initiated actions for the proclamation of the Protection from Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act 2007. Same was proclaimed in September 2011.

As the campaign is used to reinforce the ongoing work on preventing violence against women, my Ministry has set up a National Platform to End Gender-Based Violence in October 2011 ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mrs Martin: ... to ensure national coordination to end gender-based violence in Mauritius.

Following the setting up of the National Platform, a two-day consultative workshop was held in October 2011 for the elaboration of a ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence on my left, please!

Mrs Martin: ... Costed National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. My Ministry launched the Action Plan on 25 November 2011 in the context of the International Day Against Violence Against Women. The objective of the Action Plan is to integrate and mainstream actions against gender-based violence in existing programmes of stakeholders for sustainability. It also ensures a coordinated multi-sectoral approach in its implementation.

A clip was also launched entitled “*Zero Violans Kont Fam*” on 25 November. It was geared towards generating awareness at national and regional level to sensitise the whole population on issues of violence against women.

We also had to mark the 16 Days Activism against gender-based violence -several programmes - and this clip was broadcasted on television and radio.

This year to commemorate the International Day Against Violence Against Women, my Ministry launched a Media Campaign to sensitise the whole population on how gender-based

violence, particularly domestic violence affects not only couples but also has a negative impact on children.

A clip is being broadcast on the MBC/TV and aired on radios, including on private radio, from 5-18 December 2012.

This clip will also be used as a medium to sustain our awareness raising campaigns throughout the year 2013 so as to bring a transformation in mindset and promote peace and harmony in the family.

I wish to inform the House that following the broadcasting of the clip, my Ministry is receiving an increasing number of calls on the hotline 139 and all calls are being investigated into.

In parallel, to harmonise data collection regarding cases of domestic violence, my Ministry is working on the setting up of a Domestic Violence Information System (DOVIS).

My Ministry does not only assist victims of domestic violence but also provides assistance to victims of sexual assault. In order to further assist victims of sexual assault and help them overcome trauma, the Ministry conducted a Capacity Building Programme with 112 Health Personnel in October 2012.

In view of ensuring safe places for women victims of violence, financial assistance has been provided to Chrysalide Centre and Shelter for Women and Children in Distress. As regards SOS Femme, provisions for a grant to the tune of Rs1 m. have been made in the PBB 2013.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the importance of the UN campaign, can I ask the Minister whether she has submitted viable projects to the United Nations so that she can mobilise funds for that campaign?

Mrs Martin: Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have given, I mean the '*Zero Violans Kont Fam*' campaign in November 2011 has benefitted from funds from the UN and as well the National Costed Action Plan to end gender-based violence has also obtained funds from the UN.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there are special measures taken to protect women against domestic violence in cases where highly influential personalities are involved?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the law is there for everyone. So, the women are also protected through the Domestic Violence Protection Act.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/680 has been withdrawn. Thank you. I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours for lunch.

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ACT

(No. B/680) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the fines imposed on the accused parties, he will state if consideration will be given for amendments to be brought to the Criminal Procedure Act to extend the delay for the payment thereof.

(Withdrawn)

At 1.05 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.40 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

IBRAHIM ABDULLAH MARKET FAIR - STALLS - FEES

(No. B/681) 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 the Ibrahim Abdullah market fair, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to where matters stand in relation to the proposed reduction of the rental fees of the stall from Rs800 to Rs400.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made on 22 May 2012 to Parliamentary Question No. B/122 on this issue and wherein it was indicated that the City Council of Port Louis had decided not to reduce the monthly rental fees from Rs800 to Rs400 in respect of the Ibrahim Abdullah Market fair in view of serious shortfall which would likely result in its revenue.

I am informed that this decision is maintained by the Council as there will be a major shortfall estimated at Rs3 m. in its annual revenue in the event of the reduction of the monthly rental fees from Rs800 to Rs400.

INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND GAMES 2019 – MAURITIUS CANDIDATURE

(No. B/682) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the 10th Indian Ocean Island Games

scheduled for 2019, he will state the reasons why his Ministry did not submit the candidature of Mauritius for the organisation thereof.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the IOI Games are organised every four years on a rotational basis as far as possible. It was the turn of Comoros to host the Games in 2019 and subsequently Maldives in 2023. Both countries have never organised any edition of the Games so far.

Government, therefore, decided in July 2011 that Mauritius would present its candidature to host the 10th Edition of the Indian Ocean Islands Games in 2019 only if Comoros or the Maldives did not submit their candidature.

At the meeting of the *Conseil International des Jeux des Iles* (CIJ) held in August 2011 in Seychelles, both Comoros and Maldives had signified their interest to organise the Games in 2019. Consequently, the representative of Mauritius at the meeting was guided by Government's decision taken in July 2011.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the last meeting of CIJ held in Reunion Island in October 2012, Comoros presented its official candidature for organisation of the Games in 2019, while Maldives has been granted up to mid-December 2012 to submit its official documents.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, le ministre dispose-t-il d'informations pour indiquer à la Chambre si les Comores - qui sont, je suppose, le mieux placé pour organiser ces jeux - seront en mesure de respecter le cahier des charges pour l'organisation, justement, de ces dixièmes jeux.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I stated in my answer, it's the turn of the Comoros. Normally, it is on a rotational basis. Comoros has submitted its candidature to organise the games and the Maldives have also decided to organise them, and because they were not able to get the documents in English - it was in French - they have asked up to mid-December to submit their candidature. If these two countries are not able to satisfy the demand of the CIJ, then, obviously, Mauritius has already presented its candidature in case the two countries are not being retained.

Mr Quirin: Donc, M. le président, si je comprends le ministre, c'est au cas où les Comores et les Maldives ne seront pas en mesure d'organiser les jeux, c'est dans ce cas uniquement, que Maurice fera acte de candidature. Mais, d'après mes informations, la date butoir pour la soumission des candidatures est le 15 décembre prochain, c'est-à-dire dans quelques jours. Donc, le ministre peut-il nous éclairer sur ce point, M. le président?

Mr Ritoo: Donc, comme je dis, M. le président, et je répète encore une fois, Maurice avait l'intention de présenter sa candidature pour organiser les jeux des îles 2019, d'où la position adoptée par la délégation mauricienne aux dernières réunions de la CIJ en août 2011 aux Seychelles. Toutefois, je tiens à préciser que cette candidature éventuelle est sujette à une condition, c'est-à-dire, que ni les Maldives ni les Comores ne présente la leur. Donc, j'ai dit dans ma réponse initiale, les Comores et les Maldives sont venus de l'avant avec leur candidature. Donc, respectant notre parole et fidèles à notre philosophie de donner la chance à tous, Maurice a retiré sa candidature laissant la chance à ces deux îles de faire acte de candidature. Maintenant, s'ils ne sont pas retenus, bien sûr Maurice doit présenter sa candidature.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister said that the Republic of Maldives have another four days to confirm their interest or not. I am sure the hon. Minister is aware of the very difficult, even dangerous, political situation in the Maldives which means that we can expect that the Maldives are not going to stand for organising those games - I think so. In the case of the Comoros, we wish our brothers and sisters there are in a position to organise. But have they come in with requests to the Organising Committee for infrastructure facilities so as to be able to host those games? Are they coming with specific requests for infrastructure facilities?

Mr Ritoo: This year, in fact, Comoros organised like a mini *Jeux des Iles* called the CJSOI games; they felt that it was a success for them and they are now putting the candidature to organise the Indian Ocean Island Games. Obviously, we are given the *accord de principe* by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to submit our candidature in case they are not able to organise it.

Mr Bérenger: I am not worried about infrastructure problems here. I am worried about infrastructure problems in the Comoros. They are in a very difficult situation. Have they put in any request for assistance from the Organising Committee, from France, from Mauritius, for infrastructure works there?

Mr Ritoo: Well, I think this *Conseil International des Jeux*, the CIJ committee is going to analyse. I, personally, when I was in Comoros, I didn't find that they would be able to organise such a game because *l'envergure de ces jeux est tellement demandant que je ne crois pas mais c'est le CIJ qui doit analyser*.

ATHLETES (HIGH LEVEL) - TRAINING SESSIONS - TRANSPORT FACILITIES

(No. B/683) **Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the decision of his Ministry not to grant transport facilities to the high level athletes for training sessions, he will state reasons therefor.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been the practice over the years to provide transport facilities to Sports Federations for the conveyance of high level athletes for their training sessions and during competitions and other major sporting events. To this effect, besides using the fleet of vehicles available at my Ministry, private buses had to be rented as and when required. This gave rise to the payment of significant amount of overtime to drivers apart from the bill paid to the bus contractors which have been repeatedly and adversely reported upon by the Director of Audit.

Furthermore, my Ministry could exercise little control over the private buses which were operating very often in the evening. Several times it was reported that the hired buses were running empty as the athletes decided not to attend the training sessions at the last moment.

The hon. Member may wish to note that a total amount of Rs4m. and Rs7m. were disbursed to private contractors for the years 2010 and 2011 respectively.

In the light of the observations made by the Director of Audit and with a view to curtailing the payment of overtime, my Ministry has reviewed its policy for conveyance of athletes at the beginning of this year. After careful consideration of all relevant implications, it was decided to stop the provision of Government vehicles and contract buses to Federations for training purposes. Instead, a specific budget for transport has been allocated to the respective Federations over and above their normal yearly allocation. This amount is paid in two instalments and the Federations are required to submit relevant invoices to justify their expenses.

For the current year, a total of Rs 4m. has been disbursed so far to the different sports Federations which have submitted their relevant returns.

As a matter of policy, my Ministry provides transport to Federations only in exceptional cases, particularly for international events. For normal training sessions, the Federations have to make their own transport arrangements for which they have been provided a specific budget. As such, my Ministry has not stopped providing transport facilities to athletes, only there has been a change in the mode of the assistance.

I also wish to point out that a recent survey carried out by my Ministry has shown that almost all the Federations are satisfied with the new transport arrangements.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, le ministre peut-il nous dire s'il y a eu des fédérations qui ont soumis des doléances par rapport à la somme allouée qui, paraît-il, n'est pas suffisante?

Mr Ritoo: So far, we have not received any complaints from any federation that the amount is not sufficient.

Mr Quirin: L'honorable ministre vient de dire qu'il y a une somme de R 4 millions qui a été allouée aux fédérations, mais peut-il nous soumettre ou nous dire dès maintenant où déposer un breakdown des sommes qui ont été allouées fédération par fédération?

Mr Ritoo: I can submit a breakdown.

FOREIGN CURRENCY - PURCHASE

(No. B/684) 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 foreign currency, he will state the amount thereof purchased lately by the Accountant General or any other Government Department, indicating, in each case –

- (a) from which institution;
- (b) the purpose therefor, and
- (c) if prior consultations were held with the Bank of Mauritius and, if not, why not.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, Government Departments do not purchase foreign currencies in the market. If they need foreign currency, this is purchased by the Accountant General.

On 18 October 2012, the Accountant General purchased USD 8.5 m. of foreign currency from the market on behalf of the National Resilience Fund.

Over the period 02 October through 14 November 2012, smaller amounts totalling equivalent of USD 1.3m. of foreign currencies have also been purchased, directly from commercial banks on behalf of Ministries and Departments. This concerns our Embassies, the Ministry of Public Utilities in relation to the Mauritius Water Sector Reform project, the Treasury for payment of pensions, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure for its projects and the Ministry of Education for scholarships.

I am tabling the amounts purchased from each institution for each of the dates from 02 October through 14 November 2012 and the related purposes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the purchase of foreign exchange on behalf of the NRF is part of a policy to earn a return on NRF deposits at the Bank of Mauritius that is unremunerated.

On 05 October, the Accountant General sought an indication from commercial banks on the amount of deposits in rupees that they will be willing to accept. The local banks were willing to take up only Rs425 m. as deposits. Thereafter, a decision had to be taken whether to leave the NRF deposits unremunerated in rupees or invest abroad for a positive return. The answer is obvious and that is why the Accountant General announced his intention to purchase USD 10 million.

The Accountant General planned the purchase through a process established in 2004. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Accountant General has been forex directly from commercial banks since 2004. Prior to 2004, the Accountant General was purchasing all his foreign exchange from the Bank of Mauritius. Since 2004, the Accountant General has purchased a total of Rs5.5 billion for various purposes, excluding the purchases made on 18 October this year.

Thus Mr Speaker, Sir, the direct purchase of foreign exchange from commercial banks by the Accountant General is nothing new.

Moreover, the purchases on the 18th were made through an auction, focused on obtaining the lowest price whilst accepting that we may not purchase the full targeted amount of USD 10 m. In this case, on 18 October, the Accountant General purchased only USD 8.5 m. from Afrasia, Barclays, HSBC, MCB and MPCB.

Regarding part (c) of the question, efforts were made throughout the process to coordinate with the Bank of Mauritius.

The Governor was informed by the Financial Secretary of the planned operation. Furthermore, this issue was taken up at two coordination committees comprising officers of the Bank of Mauritius and the Ministry. On 03 October 2012 and 17 October 2012, the matter was discussed by the Sub-Committee on Borrowing Requirements of Government which includes the representatives of the Bank of Mauritius. Same was also discussed on 11 October 2012 in the Cash and Debt Management Committee again including members of the Bank of Mauritius.

In addition, the Bank of Mauritius was informed by the Accountant General when he planned going to the market. Indeed, the Bank of Mauritius had expressed a desire to be part of

the tender. However, although in the past the Accountant General did ask the Bank of Mauritius to tender, we believe, Mr Speaker, Sir that it would be against good governance and outside good international practice for a regulator to be asked to compete with those it regulates.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would request also that you please allow me to take up a serious matter whereby on Wednesday 14 November, the hon. Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière made several incorrect statements in relation to the subject matter of this question. He stated and I quote from his speech that “only some selected banks were invited by the finance Ministry to offer their bids”.

(Interruptions)

Mr Roopun: I wish to be enlightened whether this is in order?

Mr Speaker: Are you raising a point of order?

Mr Roopun: Yes!

Mr Speaker: Yes, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister should refrain from speaking on this aspect.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will deal with the response! Mr Speaker, Sir, I will just change the reply. I have no issue.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry; it is not a question of changing the reply. I am more concerned with the substance than the reply. Not the form, the substance! So, you refrain from it.

Mr Duval: I will provide the information, Mr Speaker, Sir, without referring to the hon. Member. I will provide the factual information that has been asked without referring to the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker: I will hear you. Proceed!

Mr Duval: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is clear that the Accountant General...

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Duval: ...approached all licensed commercial banks except for those dealing with global business only, as is his normal practice since 2004. There were no, Mr Speaker, Sir, sales of foreign currency by the Bank of Mauritius on 18 October 2012. Moreover, for the whole week ending 19 October 2012, the Bank of Mauritius did not make any sales of foreign currency. Third, as it is clear from my response and from the Minutes of the meetings of the three committees there was significant coordination with the Bank of Mauritius.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Can the hon. Minister inform the House the rate at which the \$8.5 m. were purchased by the Accountant General and, at that particular time, what was the rate at which the Bank of Mauritius was intervening in the Domestic Foreign Exchange Market?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, from memory, I think it was Rs31.20. I don't have the rate at which the Bank of Mauritius was intervening. But, first, I will tell the House that it was through an auction and, therefore, it was an open tender.

Second, the rate today is significantly higher than the rate at which we purchased. So, a profit has been made.

Third, Mr Speaker, Sir, although the Bank of Mauritius has been included in tenders ever since 2004, I have the impression that, since 2005, it has never responded to any tender from the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bank of Mauritius was intervening every now and then in the Domestic Foreign Exchange Market. I have three reports published on the Internet by the Central Bank, which states that the Central Bank intervened in the Domestic Market at the rate of Rs30.44 to purchase dollars on 18 October, while the Minister bought the dollars at Rs31.20. Why did the Minister buy the dollars at Rs31.20 when the Bank of Mauritius intervened in the Foreign Exchange Market at Rs30.44 on the 18th? On the 19th, they intervened on the market at Rs30.56 and, on 22 October, again the Central Bank intervened at Rs30.56 to the US dollar. Why buy at Rs31.20 from the local private banks when the hon. Minister could have obtained that same foreign currency from the Central Bank?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I replied very clearly that, since 2005, the Bank of Mauritius has not responded to any tender at all from the Accountant General. As I mentioned, whatever the rate may have been, it was an open tender and all the 14 banks - it is incorrect to say that it was not the case - were asked to quote and today, as we know, the rates are higher. So, in fact, it was a right decision.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been allegation that one bank made a high volume of forex transactions days before the decision to buy foreign currency by the Accountant General. Is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware of that, and has the Bank of Mauritius made an enquiry to confirm that allegation?

Mr Duval: I'm not aware of that, Mr Speaker, Sir, but it is up to the Bank of Mauritius. If the hon. Member will furnish information, I will be happy to pass it on.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Central Bank is the banker of government, not just a regulator. Under the law, the Government should procure its foreign currency from the Central Bank or at least seeks advice on the rate at which they can purchase foreign currency. Why is it that the Minister is speculating and buying foreign currency at higher price, at higher rate just because he is insisting that the rupee is misaligned, and that the supposed over valuation of the rupee has caused his growth rate to be lower? Therefore is this not a deliberate action to weaken the rupee and devalue the currency?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know in which language I should reply. Firstly, as I mentioned, - he may be saying that it is the banker of Government - since 2005, seven years, the Bank of Mauritius has not responded to any tender, although I must say that sometimes, in one year, we may buy up to one billion rupees in foreign change. Never does the Bank of Mauritius respond to tenders. So, it is inaccurate to say that we buy from the Bank of Mauritius.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a good point to say that, previous to 2004, it was the Bank of Mauritius that was supplying foreign currency to the Accountant General. Therefore, the question that begs an answer is: why was it changed in 2004 and who was in Government in 2004? That is the question that should be asked. As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, the bank never responds to tenders. So, it never has sold foreign exchange to us. To come and repeat the same thing all the time, thinking that some fools will believe it, is not right, Mr Speaker, Sir!

There has been no speculation from the Ministry of Finance. We have done everything extremely openly. Secondly, the reason, as I mentioned in my answer - perhaps the hon. Member was not listening – was that the first desire was to place the money in rupees but, in fact, there was interest only for Rs425 m. So, what to do with the balance? And that is the reason, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we decided over time, to invest in foreign currency because - perhaps unlike the hon. Member - the interest of the taxpayer is paramount to this Government.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Minister has just said that he has coordinated with the Central Bank. Is he aware that the Governor of the Central Bank has publicly stated that he was not in agreement with the conduct of this exercise by the Ministry of Finance and that initially when he heard about this exercise, he even thought that it was a joke?

Mr Duval: The fact that he thought I had made a joke was relating to something else, not to that. There are minutes of meetings, which I have seen personally, to show clearly that there was coordination and complete awareness on the part of the Bank of Mauritius.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Can I know from the hon. Minister what was the rate of return that was offered by the banks on these US dollar deposits, and how much has been received so far from those deposits?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has got it wrong again. We have not placed deposits yet. In fact, we are waiting to accumulate a certain number - which we have now - so that they will be placed through the adviser of the Treasury Management Committee, which is Morgan Stanley. We have though placed Rs450 m. in Mauritian currency, and that brings in about 4% to 5% of interests annually.

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister say that he has seen Minutes of Proceedings in which the Bank of Mauritius expressed satisfaction with coordination.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. I did not say that. I said that the Bank of Mauritius was advised. I never said that it expressed any satisfaction.

Mr Bérenger: He said that there was complete coordination. These are the words - if we have to suspend and listen to the exact words which the Minister has used. He has given the impression; he has said that the Bank of Mauritius is clearly satisfied, and that there has been complete coordination. That was the gist of what he said. I would request the Chair to listen to what the Minister said exactly if required.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me...

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, not the Minister. Otherwise, I will put the question. If we do not listen to what he said, then I will put the question.

Mr Speaker: If there is disagreement with your statement, then we will have to consult the recording. Otherwise, if the hon. Minister agrees that he has said those words, then we proceed.

Mr Bérenger: Being given that the gist of what he was saying is that there has been good coordination between the Ministry and the Bank of Mauritius, and that he has seen the Minutes of Proceedings which contain such truth or untruth, can I make the request that a copy of those Minutes of Proceedings be placed in the Library?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what I said, and I redefine it with your permission. The issue was taken up at two coordination committees. This is what I said. It is completely different to 'there was good coordination or expressed...'

(Interruptions)

The hon. Leader of the Opposition wants me to read it again?

Mr Bérenger: Yes!

Mr Duval: The Governor was informed by the Financial Secretary of the plan operation - you see how I am a nice guy. Furthermore, this issue was taken up at two coordination committees comprising officers of the Bank of Mauritius and the Ministry. Should I continue? On 03 October 2012...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Sit down! I am on a point of order!

(Interruptions)

I am taking a point of order.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Order! Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

I say, order! Hon.Henry! Wait a minute! What do you have to say?

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister say that he has seen Minutes of Proceedings. Then, he reads something different. It is on record. He has said that he has seen Minutes of Proceedings and so on. I am putting the request that these Minutes of Proceedings be placed in the Library.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition...

Mr Speaker: There is a request. So, the request is acceded to. Proceed!

Mr Duval: No, I have not acceded to the request, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Just give me a minute!

Mr Speaker: There is a request from the Leader of the Opposition that Minutes be placed before this Assembly. So, the request is acceded to. The Minister may proceed.

Mr Duval: The request, Ok. Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I am sorry about this. The first point of the Leader of the Opposition was whether, in fact, at the Bank of Mauritius, there has been good coordination and there was satisfaction. This is not the case and I read about this.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, he was putting words into my mouth, which I, obviously, did not accept.

(Interruptions)

I can read it again if you want; I have no problem with that. Now, as far as the Minutes of the three committees relating to this, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will arrange - and it is my decision - for extracts to be provided to this House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Li Kwong Wing: May I ask the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Silence, I say!

(Interruptions)

Silence! Proceed, hon. Li Kwong Wing!

(Interruptions)

I say, order! Proceed, hon. Member!

Mr Li Kwong Wing: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the idea of buying foreign currency was not just informally canvassed in a small sub-committee of public borrowings among junior officers of the Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Mauritius, which put the Governor of Mauritius completely off his composure, because the Bank of Mauritius later were to sell US\$ at Rs30.90 when the Ministry of Finance was happily going about buying foreign currency US\$ at Rs31.20? So, is it not deliberately running down and weakening the rupee by overpaying for the US\$?

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, I think you have already put this question and it has been answered. So, we move to PQ No. B/685. Hon. Li Kwong Wing!

Mr Duval: May I answer?

Mr Speaker: Yes, if you wish to.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned again, there were no sales. We are talking about sales - the intervention may be purchases and sales - because this is what the hon. Member incorrectly informed the House when he spoke, amongst many other things, on the Budget Speech. Now, he incorrectly informed the House that the Bank of Mauritius has sold, it did not sell any in that week and in the following week, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Bank of Mauritius - I don't have the exact words - sold for about half a million dollars, at whatever rate it was, it obviously had no effect on the market.

Mr Speaker: Next question, PQ No. B/685! Hon. Li Kwong Wing!

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: I said, next question!

Mr Li Kwong Wing: The hon. Minister said that I did not give the right information to the House.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have said, next question!

(Interruptions)

Please! I have heard a phone ringing. Whose phone is it? No phone is allowed in the Assembly. So, we proceed to the next question.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, PQ No. B/685.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition wishes to return to Quatre Bornes; I will wait for him there.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, answer the question! That's all!

(Interruptions)

I say, order!

(Interruptions)

I say, order!

Mr Bérenger: Can we have the hon. Minister repeat, because I did not catch what he said? Can we have the hon. Minister repeat? It chickens out what he has just said!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet! I say, order!

(Interruptions)

I say, order! Please! Hon. Roopun and hon. Ms Deerpalsing! I have had enough! We move to the next question. The hon. Minister has to answer the question straightaway without making any comments.

Mr Bérenger: I take it that you heard the comments and that they are parliamentary?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have said that I do not want to hear any comments. The hon. Minister has to answer the question straightaway.

Mr Duval: Which question?

Mr Speaker: PQ No. B/685!

Mr Duval: Sorry!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

Allow the hon. Minister to answer, please!

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think there is a limit to what you will allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition to disturb me.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! I am not going to repeat again. I want the hon. Minister to answer the question straightaway without making any comments. I have said I am not going to repeat it.

PRB REPORT 2013 - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/685) Mr K. C. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Pay Research Bureau Report 2013, he will state the –

- (a) total estimated amount for each broad income category of workers;
- (b) impact of the implementation thereof on the
 - (i) budget
 - (ii) inflation rate, and
 - (iii) Government revenues, and
- (c) implications thereof with regard to income inequality.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

This morning I have said that some Members want to go home early. Let us hear the hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

Proceed, hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

I say, order!

(Interruptions)

I say, order! I want some order in this House, but I have to repeat myself, and this is the last time I am going to repeat myself! I said: I don't want to hear any comments. A question has been put, the hon. Minister is duty bound to answer the question straightaway! No comments, please!

Mr Duval: I will. I am very happy to respond, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, answer your question!

(Interruptions)

Allow the hon. Minister to answer his question, at least. Proceed, hon. Minister!

Mr Duval: I will not answer, if there is a riot in the House, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have said enough is enough!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Henry and hon. Ameer Meea! I have said enough is enough!

(Interruptions)

I said enough is enough! The hon. Minister may proceed.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the distribution of salary increase, as estimated by the Pay Research Bureau, for the three categories of employees referred to in its Report, are Rs1.2 billion for the Lower Level, Rs 2.7 billion for Middle Level and Rs 0.7 billion for the Upper Level.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have said enough is enough!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Henry and Hon. Ameer Meea, I have said enough is enough!

(Interruptions)

I said enough is enough! The hon. Minister may proceed.

Mr Duval: Concerning part b(i) of the question, as indicated at paragraph 21.2 of the Report, gross additional financial implication of the PRB 2013 would be Rs4.6 billion annually. Of this amount, it is estimated that Rs4.3 billion will have to be met from Central Government Budget in 2013 and Rs4.5 billion in 2014. Appropriate provision has been made in the Appropriation Bill and in the PBB Estimates 2013-2015.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Duval: These amounts are based on the assumption that all public officers will opt for the revised terms and conditions of service as recommended by the PRB 2013.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

I do not want any interruptions.

Mr Duval: As regards the impact on inflation rate, I am informed that the implementation of the PRB 2013 may lead to an increase in the rate of inflation up to a maximum of 1.4 percent points.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, please! The hon. Minister may answer the question!

Mr Duval: The impact of the PRB on Government revenue will mainly be in terms of revenue from taxes, such as income tax and consumption taxes as well as compulsory pension contributions. In this connection, it is estimated that around Rs770 m. will be collected in 2013.

As regards part (c) of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made by the hon. Prime Minister on Monday 19 November 2012.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Allow the hon. Member to put her question! Hon. Mrs Radegonde!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Radegonde: PQ No. B/686, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, you have to listen! Some silence now, please! There has been enough noise in this House.

(Interruptions)

Now, let us, at least, hear what the substantive Minister has to say and then you can proceed. Please, silence!

SAVANNE & BLACK RIVER - DAY CARE CENTRES

(No. B/686) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Day Care Centres, he will give a list thereof located in Constituency No.14, Savanne and Black River, indicating the number of vulnerable families of the said constituency who have availed themselves of the facilities granted thereby.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to information obtained from the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, there are 17 Day Care Centres in the District of Savanne/Black River, that is, 14 in the District of Black River and 3 in the District of Savanne. Out of the 14 Day Care Centres, 5 are unregistered as they do not meet the standards set by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare.

Following Government decision to provide crèches facilities to beneficiaries registered with the Social Register of Mauritius, as at November 2012, 165 children aged 3 months to 3 years require crèches facilities. Out of the 165 children, 28 are from Constituency No. 14.

According to the NEF, the families of the 28 children from Constituency No. 14 have not benefited from crèches facilities.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the support as provided in Article 298 of Budget 2012, can the House be informed about the established procedure from needy beneficiaries to agreed support, meaning Rs1,500 for crèche facilities? Can we also know so far how many families there are from this to poverty alleviation and the total amount disbursed by Government to date?

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, it was in the Budget of 2012 that Rs1,500 will be provided to families whose household income are less than Rs6,200. Then, we had recourse to the social register of Mauritius and as at November, 165 children aged three months to three years were qualified for the crèche facilities. And out of the 165 children, 28 are from Constituency No. 14. And, as I said, some of the crèches are not registered and some of them are not up to the standard and as at date, 28 are qualified and this will be taken care of.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know the name of the five crèches that are not registered, please?

Mr Dayal: We have the Bambino of Allée Jacques, Bambous; Les Petits Dauphins of Remy Ollier Road, La Gaulette; Les Joyeux Canaries, Les Multipliants Résidence, Petite Rivière; Ile Aux Enfants of Avenue des Colibris, Morcellement Bismic, Flic en Flac; Les Petites mains Limitées of Railway Road, Chemin Grenier.

Mrs Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two Day Care Centres, namely, Crèche Coquille Bonheur, Bel Ombre Foundation for Empowerment and Crèche Riche Lieu Centre D'Eveil Fondation, Médine which have approached the Ministry to know the established procedure from the beneficiaries to agreed support and, up to now, have not received any support from the Government. May I know the reason thereof?

Mr Dayal: As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have had recourse to the Ministry of Gender Equality. And I mentioned some of the crèches are not registered. We have recourse to the Social Register of Mauritius and it was sensitised island wide that those beneficiaries get registered to qualify for assistance and in November we got the list and we are going to take care of.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Radegonde, I understand that the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development will answer PQ B/687.

SAVANNE & BLACK RIVER – CSR FUNDS

(No. B/687) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Corporate Social Responsibility, he will state the number of registered companies located in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River which have contributed thereto -

- (a) indicating the total amount of funds received therefrom, over the past five years, and
- (b) give a list of the interventions/programmes that have qualified thereunder, indicating the total cost thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, which you have just granted, I will reply to PQ B/687.

I am informed that the CSR Committee does not as such register companies nor does it receive money from such companies.

However, in accordance with the CSR guidelines, corporate entities (including Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs)) with a CSR fund of Rs500,000 and above are required to seek the approval of their corporate programme from the CSR Committee. Accordingly, these companies use their CSR funds to finance their programmes and information is therefore kept by the funds on a programme basis and not on a constituency basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that as announced in the Budget Speech 2013, as from next year, the National CSR Committee will publish, on an annual basis, on its website a statement of sector-wise distribution of the CSR fund. This approach will -

- highlight the focus of the different companies, with a CSR fund of Rs500,000 and above, in the alleviation of poverty, and
- at the same time enhance transparency with regard to the allocation of the CSR fund through the various channels as well as to the different areas of intervention.

Mr Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand the guideline to follow for CSR Fund. But still, I would like to know if registered companies in this Constituency, I know it is not constituency-wise, but even though I want to know in Black River, they have not participated in the CSR Fund because they have declared a net loss.

Mr Duval: That may be that they have declared a loss, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is obviously beyond our control, obviously, unless they have fraudulently declared a loss. As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, we do not have the information on a constituency wise basis although I am sure if the hon. Member wishes to consult the CSR Committee, I will be very happy to allow her to have the information directly.

Mr Radegonde: Mr Speaker, Sir, from my information, I learned that some companies have diverted their money to the MRA. May I know if that information is correct and how this money has been spent?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, annually, I think, we receive about Rs150 m. from companies that do not spend directly and, obviously, the law provides that if you don't spend directly, you submit the amount to the MRA. Why they do that, whether they don't have any project or whether they have not any contact or whether they just don't want to do so. It is their choice. But

they have to pay through the CSR Fund on projects according to the guidelines or pay to the MRA. That money goes to the Consolidated Fund.

MATERNAL & NEONATAL DEATHS

(No. B/688) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to maternal and new born mortality, he will state the number of mothers and newborns who have passed away over the past five years, indicating -

- (a) the respective age thereof, and
- (b) if inquiries have been carried out into the alleged cases of medical negligence, if any, and if so, indicate in each case, the outcome thereof and if same have been communicated to the families.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a copy of the information asked for in respect of maternal and neonatal deaths.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that in line with established practice, all maternal deaths are subject to an enquiry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to details on the outcome of the enquiries carried out, information is being compiled and will be tabled in due course. In accordance with established practice, the outcomes are communicated to the families.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether in the two recent cases that have been reported the information has been communicated to the families?

Mr Bundhoo: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard, not to the two, but to the three recent cases, we have established a Fact-Finding Committee under the Chairmanship of a Senior Magistrate and two assessors. It has already started its work and it is still on and I have every reason to believe that they will depone and the outcome – if I can use the word - of the enquiry will, of course, be communicated to them.

Dr. S. Boolell: Considering that the request for this information is over five years, Mr Speaker, Sir, could I ask the hon. Minister whether there has been any proved case of medical negligence concerning maternal and perinatal death and whether there had been any action taken over the past five years as per the question?

Mr Bundhoo: As informed earlier, the information is being compiled and once it is laid on the National Assembly Table, I am sure the hon. Member will go through it and will be able to determine in each case what has been the outcome.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a last reply on this issue, the hon. Minister mentioned that at the time he was replying, he had a copy of the preliminary enquiry. I am just asking the hon. Minister whether at least this piece of information has been communicated because he said in this very House that he had information on the cases. So, at least, that these families be informed of what he has already seen!

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, this is factually correct. I think, if I am not mistaken, it was hon. Mrs Labelle who raised the issue at Adjournment time and hon. Ms Anquetil raised the issue...

(Interruptions)

If I may, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, pick from there: hon. Ms Anquetil did raise the issue at Adjournment time; so did hon. Mrs Bappoo and, to be fair to hon. Mrs Labelle, she also has raised the issue with me. As I said earlier, I was at that time in possession of a preliminary enquiry. As I said earlier in my reply, it is a normal practice, but I am not so sure if it is a good idea at this moment in time to release the information of the preliminary internal enquiry as much as the whole issue has now been referred to a Fact Finding Committee and everything is being given to the Senior Magistrate of the Fact-Finding Committee to conduct the enquiry.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, beyond Fact Finding Committees, as we live in a State of law supposedly, has any case been sent for a Judicial enquiry? Has there been any Police case reported on cases of child and maternal death?

Mr Bundhoo: I have just replied to this question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the Nursing Association, one of the problems is lack of personnel at the maternity section. May I ask the hon. Minister, while waiting for the results of the Fact-Finding Committee, whether any particular measure has been taken in the meantime to alleviate the problem at the maternity unit?

Mr Bundhoo: I thank the hon. Member for that. Can I remind the House that we have very recently set up an NICU at the Victoria Hospital. We have only in September this year set up another NICU at the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital. We have six months earlier opened the new

NICU at the Flacq Hospital. This is to show that Government is making all necessary efforts to do that.

Secondly, in this very Budget, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has announced the recruitment of 75 Specialists, out of whom 25 will be in the related field of gynaecology and others in order to ensure that Specialists with regard to neonatal work on a 24-hour basis and are always available at the hospital.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF VACOAS/PHOENIX - MS L. A. - COMPLAINT

(No. B/689) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the complaint of encroachment and noise pollution, reference 2668 and dated 01/06/2011, filed by one Ms L. A, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix, information as to the actions taken in relation thereto, if any.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix that in year 2007 a complaint was received from Ms L. A. to the effect that her neighbour, Mr Ibrahim Jheengoor had put up a store on the boundary line of her property.

Bread Top Ltd represented by Mr Ibrahim Jheengoor and Mrs Bibi Maheen Nazima Jheengoor was issued with a Building and Land Use Permit on 04 January 2007 to operate as a Bakery and Pastry shop/Manufacturer at Thompson Road, Vacoas. The company has since then been paying the relevant trade fee which is valid up to December 2012.

Following the complaint lodged by Ms L. A., the Municipal Inspectorate had effected a site visit and legal action was initiated against Mr I. Jheengoor before the Curepipe District Court. Mr Jheengoor was sentenced by the Court to pay a fine of Rs15,000 plus Rs100 as cost.

I am informed that if there has been any encroachment by Mr I. Jheengoor on the property of Ms L. A. this is a matter of civil nature and in which case, action need to be initiated by the complainant herself.

With regard to her complaint received on 02 June 2011 pertaining to the noise pollution, I am informed that same has been referred by the Council on 06 October 2011 to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life which is the concerned authority for appropriate action.

I am further informed that following representation made by Ms L. A. to the *Police de l'Environnement*, the Council was informed on 02 November 2012 of the matter. Site visits

effected on 12 and 15 November 2012 by the Municipal Inspectorate have revealed that the store was being used exclusively for storing of flour bags and that a bread chopper found in the bakery may be the source of the noise pollution and which needs to be relocated. Accordingly, Mr Jheengoor has been asked to relocate the bread chopper machine and the matter is being referred to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life for a noise survey to be carried out. Appropriate action will be initiated, if warranted by the Council, against Mr I. Jheengoor in the light of the outcome of the noise survey.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has been referring to a case - if I have heard him well - since 2007. But, after that, this person has kept on building on the property of this poor lady who is eighty. Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister why, despite the complaint of Ms L.A., the owner of this building has kept on building and using the land? I am tabling, Mr Speaker, Sir, a photo of the encroachment, because the workers of this person use the property of this poor old lady. What action the Municipality has taken regarding the latest complaint and regarding the additional building that this owner has kept on putting up on the land of Ms L.A.?

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply, I have said that it is a civil matter and until the conclusion of the civil matter, the Municipal Council will not be allowed to jump into that matter. We are in a position where we are awaiting for the civil case to give the result.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether it is not at least the duty of the Municipal Council when a poor lady goes to them - they have recorded the complaint, saying they would look into that, and now they are just referring this lady to - for now five years!

Mr Speaker: Before the hon. Minister answers, is he aware that this matter is before a court of law?

Mr Aimée: Yes.

Mr Speaker: If it is before a court of law, the matter is *sub judice* and you do not have to answer. Proceed to next question, please. The hon. Member has further questions.

Mr Baloomoody: On a point of order, the previous Speaker did inform Members of this House - be it Member of Parliament or Minister - whenever they want to raise the point of *sub judice*, they should produce to the House a copy of the proceedings before the Court. So, if this is the case and the hon. Minister has not done so, then it is for the Speaker to decide whether it is

sub judice or whether the issue before the Court is the same one which is being raised in the House.

Mr Speaker: I have got your point hon. Baloomoody. That is why I have put the question to the hon. Minister. The hon. Minister takes the responsibility of his answer.

(Interruptions)

Wait a minute. The question was whether the hon. Minister is aware that there is a case actually at present before a Court of law. If the hon. Minister answers: yes, he takes full responsibility of his answer.

Mr Baloomoody: If the Speaker says that if the answer is: yes, he should lay on the Table of Assembly a copy of the proceedings.

Mr Speaker: Well, I am not bound by the ruling of the previous Speaker. Any question, hon. Mrs Labelle?

Mrs Labelle: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I have ruled.

Mrs Labelle: The Speaker has given me the floor ...

Mr Speaker: Please, give way. I have said, if the matter is before a court of law, you did not have to answer.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, nobody has allowed me to answer.

Mr Speaker: You want to reconfirm.

Mr Aimée: Yes.

Mr Speaker: You want to reconfirm that the matter is before a court of law.

Mr Aimée: I said in my reply that in the year 2007, there was a case in Court where a gentleman has been fined Rs15,100. But, then I have also mentioned that whenever somebody crossed the border of his neighbour, this is a case of civil nature and that the Council cannot interfere.

Mr Speaker: No, I am sorry. In such a case, there are two aspects. There is the quasi-criminal and the civil aspect. The hon. Minister has answered about the quasi-criminal aspect, that the offender was fined before the District Court of Curepipe. Since the hon. Minister has mentioned a civil matter; my question was whether the hon. Minister is aware and can confirm to the House that there is actually a civil matter before a court of law.

Mr Aimée: No, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: If the hon. Minister cannot confirm then the question is allowed.

Mrs Labelle: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I wanted to confirm whether this poor lady aged 80 years has not put anything before the Court. My question, Mr Speaker, Sir, was regarding the complaint filed by this lady on the 01 June 2011. This is my question. I put a question regarding what action the Municipal Council has taken regarding a complaint filed by this lady in 2011.

Mr Speaker: This year?

Mrs Labelle: Last year, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Aimée: M. le président, je vais peut-être m'exprimer en français afin que tout le monde sache.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Proceed, hon. Minister.

Mr Aimée: M. le président, l'inspectat de la Municipalité de Vacoas-Phoenix a été sur les lieux. C'est une question de délimitation. Ils font un *survey* et s'il y a quelque chose à faire, cela doit être en civil. La municipalité ne peut pas intervenir, M. le président.

Mr Lesjongard: Since the hon. Minister is confirming that inspectors from the Municipality visited the house or the land; can he confirm – because he has stated that the Land Use and Building Permit was issued in 2007 – after the site visit whether the structure on the site was as per the Land Use and Building Permit, which was issued to that gentleman.

Mr Aimée: M. le président, le *Building and Land Use Permit* a été délivré en 2007. A cette époque là, tout était en règle. Il y a eu un rajout de la part de la personne *who has encroached on the land, but there, it is a question of delimitation. There is a need for a survey.*

(Interruptions)

You can say what you want.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, address the Chair.

Mr Aimée: Il y a eu un *survey* concernant la délimitation. La Municipalité ne peut pas déterminer où sont les *boundaries*. That's all.

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Minister confirmed that there was a criminal case and that gentleman was fined. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the Municipality did ask for a pulling down order under the Building Act, which the Authority has?

Mr Aimée: I am not aware that the Municipality has asked for a pulling down permit, but what I know is that this gentleman had encroached on his neighbour's land.

(Interruptions)

Let me answer, please.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, address the Chair!

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not prepared to answer in this situation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait a minute. It seems that certain questions have sidetracked the main issue. What I have understood from hon. Mrs Labelle is to the effect that on 20 November last year, there was a complaint. This is what the hon. Member said?

Mrs Labelle: On June of last year.

Mr Speaker: Yes. On June of last year, there was a complaint. The hon. Minister has replied that inspectors from the Municipality of Vacoas-Phoenix have been on the spot to find out. This is what the hon. Minister has said. Now, the question that the hon. Member wants to know is whether any action has been taken as a result of that visit. This is so simple to answer.

Mr Aimée: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not prepared to answer in this situation.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Silence!

(Interruptions)

I can only say...

(Interruptions)

Silence, please! Silence! Hon. Minister and hon. Mrs Labelle, please!

(Interruptions)

Silence! An important issue has been raised about the civil rights of an inhabitant of the said Municipality. According to Erskine May, I cannot compel the hon. Minister to answer the question. However, the legitimate expectation of a hon. Member is to have an answer to her question.

(Interruptions)

Next question, hon. Boolell!

MSPCA - STRAY DOGS

(No. B/690) **Dr S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the stray dogs, he will state –

- (a) if the methods used by the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for the disposal thereof are in line with the international disposal standards therefor, and
- (b) obtain from the Veterinary Council of Mauritius, information as to if it has queried the disposal method used therefor, and asked for a report thereon, and if so, the outcome thereof.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am prepared to answer this question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Faugoo: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that stray dogs are caught and euthanised by the MSPCA in conformity with International Humane Disposal Standards as per Article 7.7.6 of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Regulation of this year, 2012.

Incineration of euthanised dogs is carried out at Bassin Requin and again according to international standards set by the World Animal Health Organisation as being the safest way of disposal of carcasses.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, representations have been made by the Veterinary Council on whether the captured dogs are humanely handled by the MSPCA and whether the MSPCA has a clearly defined policy or protocol for the euthanization procedures.

These queries have been verified by the Veterinary Services of my Ministry, and I am informed that the MSPCA does have in place a protocol and carries dog catching and handling in a humane manner, in compliance with our legislation and international norms. I am also informed that the enquiry initiated by the Veterinary Council is ongoing.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that untrained staff inject lethal substances into dogs, which are Epsom salts? If not, the dogs are almost starved to death through mass feeding, where only the fittest survives for two or three days before they are put to death. Is the Minister aware of that? What does he intend to do about that?

Mr Faugoo: The information of the hon. Member is wrong.

Mr Speaker: One last question. Time is over.

Dr. S. Boolell: May I ask the Minister whether he would kindly look into it, and whether there is no collusion between the officers of his Ministry to cover up for the MSPCA?

Mr Faugoo: I am doing so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Time is over. The Table has been advised that PQs No. B/692, No. B/700, No. B/708 and No. B/710 have been withdrawn.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10 (2)

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

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

- (a) The Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XXVIII of 2012)*
- (b) The Economic and Financial Measures (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. XXIX of 2012)*
- (c) The Additional Remuneration (2013) Bill (No. XXX of 2012)*
- (d) The Employment Relations (Amendment) Bill (No. XXXI of 2012)*
- (e) The Employment Rights (Amendment) Bill (No. XXXII of 2012)*

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Appropriation (2013) Bill (No. XXVII of 2012) was read the third time and passed.

(3.43 p.m.)

*Second Reading***THE ADDITIONAL REMUNERATION (2013) BILL****(NO. XXX of 2012)***Order for Second reading read.*

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Mr S. Mohamed): Mr Speaker, Sir, the object of the Bill is to provide for the payment of additional remuneration as from 01 January 2013 to employees of the private sector as a measure of compensation for the increase in the cost of living for the financial year 2012.

The quantum of salary compensation for year 2013 has been decided following discussions with both workers' and employers' organisations at the level of a Tripartite Committee chaired by my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development. My other colleagues, namely the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, the Minister of Tourism and Leisure, the Minister of Industry and Commerce and Consumer Protection, the Minister of Business Enterprise and Cooperatives as well as the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms and myself formed part of the said Tripartite Committee, which also included, Mr Speaker, Sir, representatives from each of the seven confederations of trade unions and equal number of representatives of the Mauritius Employers Federation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that discussions at the level of the Tripartite Committee were held in a spirit of tripartism among the social partners, and it has been decided that, for 2013 –

- (a) a salary...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Carry on!

Mr Mohamed: Maybe, my friends from the Opposition would be interested to know what the compensation would be.

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair!

Mr Mohamed:

- (a) a salary compensation of Rs300 to be paid to employees drawing basic salary of up to Rs7,000;
- (b) a salary compensation of 4.3% to be paid to employees drawing above Rs7,000 up to Rs8,000 a month, and

- (c) a salary compensation of Rs345 to be paid to employees drawing above Rs8,000 per month.

The additional remuneration is also payable to part-time employees. The Bill provides for part-time employees, whose basic wage or salary is Rs8,000 or less per month, to be paid a salary compensation of 4.3% rounded up to the next rupee, and other part-time employees to be paid Rs345 as additional remuneration, just as is the case for full time employees drawing Rs8,000 and above. Mr Speaker, Sir, the payment of the salary compensation is expected to cost around Rs1.6 billion, covering all of the 323,000 workers in the private sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has decided that workers, particularly those of the lower rungs of the ladder, should be adequately compensated for loss of purchasing power. In fact, in 2013, all employees would be entitled to a salary compensation, contrary to what was the case in 2012, when payment of compensation was not applicable to employees drawing a monthly salary above Rs30,000. Furthermore, this year, the ceiling for entitlement to the payment of minimum compensation has been raised from Rs5,000 to Rs7,000, thereby enlarging the brackets for the payment of the minimum compensation, and thus enabling a larger number of workers to benefit from compensation higher than the inflation rate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that the global financial and economic crisis is not over and the recovery is uneven and uncertain. Coupled with these, Mr Speaker, Sir, the euro crisis is also adversely impacting on our export-oriented economy. However, in spite of this, as a caring Government, we are compensating workers of this country for the loss of purchasing power instead of imposing austerity measures to cut down expenditure, as is being witnessed in a number of countries. In addition, we have not forgotten our vulnerable citizens. Beneficiaries of social security benefits are being compensated likewise.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence over there! Listen to the Minister!

Mr Mohamed: Government's decision to approve the payment of salary compensation at the rates I have just mentioned, in spite of the difficult situation, strikes the right balance between responding to the current economic imperatives and providing workers with the best possible compensation that could be afforded in these difficult times when the international and financial crisis is still persisting.

Once enacted, the Additional Remuneration (2013) Bill will impose a legal obligation on all employers in the private sector, whatever be the status of their finances or whether they are in the formal or informal sector, to pay the prescribed minimum compensation to their employees. I am, in the same breath, Mr Speaker, Sir, making a special appeal to all enterprises which can afford to pay a higher compensation, to do so in a gesture of solidarity as there are some enterprises which are performing extremely well and may, therefore, have the capacity to pay even more.

With these words, Sir, I wish to commend this Bill to the House.

Mr Choonee rose and seconded.

At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

(3.56 p.m.)

Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this year again, we are here to debate as in each of the previous years, the Additional Remuneration (2013) Bill. As we have just heard, the quantum of the additional remuneration for the year 2013 is a mere Rs300 per month, especially for those earning up to Rs7,000 per month, and for those earning between Rs7,000 to Rs8,000 it will be 4.3%, which is the estimated rate of inflation for the year 2012. So, the determination of the wage compensation is based only on the increase in the CPI.

As we know, this quantum has been unanimously condemned by all the trade unions and the public at large as being insufficient, inadequate in these difficult times and some even qualifying it as *'une insulte à la classe des travailleurs'*. They were expecting anything between Rs750 to Rs900 per month, minimum wage compensation. This increase of 4.3% which is based on the increase in CPI, is based, therefore, on a mere average figure which is itself an imperfect measure of the rise in the cost of living, that is, in the loss of the purchasing power. It does not measure the disproportionate negative impact that price increases have on the lowest income groups, because with inflation it is the poor that are hit harder. In fact, inflation is a tax on the poor.

There is a need now to try to compute separate CPIs for different income groups, say, in three categories: a CPI for the lowest 25%, a CPI for the middle class which is dwindling, which

can be estimated to be two third of the population, and one for the remaining higher income group which would constitute 10% of the population. So, a differentiated CPI would better reflect the way in which wage compensation should be determined.

As an illustration of how this 4.3% compensation is largely inadequate, we just need to look at the increase in the prices of very basic commodities, which shows that the reality of the increase in prices is not captured by the CPI. Just take a couple of items, say, basic items. A litre of edible oil which costs Rs49 in January this year, 2012, now cost Rs59, that is, a 20% increase. A packet of 1 kg milk powder would cost at least 13% to 14% more, ranging from Rs160 in January to Rs180/Rs182 in December this year. If we look at frozen chicken, a half kilo of frozen chicken which cost Rs50 in January would now cost Rs65. That is, an increase of 30% which is, therefore, much larger and higher than the 4.3% increase in wage compensation.

Let us take the case of frozen fish, *poisson La Perle*, as we commonly call it. A half kilo which used to cost Rs60 in January now cost Rs85, a 40% increase. Let us not talk of the pulses like '*dholl ti pois*', 500 grams which was Rs10 now cost Rs16, a 60% increase. For '*gros pois*', 500 grams would now cost Rs30 in December when it used to cost only Rs18, that is, a 66% increase, and '*tuna en boite*' which used to cost Rs34 in January now cost Rs48, a 41% increase. I can go on and on to show that all these basic essential consumption commodities now have breached the 30% 40% level of increase in prices.

Now, if we look at what is called a '*tente bazar*', a '*panier ration*' which is used by a family of four, the poorest family of two adults and two children, taking into account only basic consumption commodities which they would need in order to avoid malnutrition, it has been estimated that in the 10 months, from January to October 2012, there has been an increase in price of that '*panier ration*' of Rs880, that is, a general increase of 13% for 10 months compared to a compensation of 4.3%. This is without taking into account doctor's fees, medicine, legal fees, tuition and a lot of expenses on religion, leisure, and utilities. In fact, if we take all these into account, the price increase would be far above 15% for this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is for only the year 2012 and what is in store next year is not even known. The price increases have already been withheld and contained in the case of the price of flour and the price of petrol and diesel surely because of the recent local elections. But, it is quite certain that these prices which are administered prices will be raised very soon which will be an additional burden to the working poor, and I am not talking of the price of water,

electricity, the coming toll road, and the food inflation and energy inflation that will come with the global food crisis and the oil crisis due to the Middle East problems. On top of that - I see the Minister of Finance and Economic Development coming - we have the rupee depreciation which has been estimated at 3.5% in his Budget and which may even be more for next year, which will fuel again inflation for next year. These are just external factors, but there are also internal factors that will cause the price increases to soar further.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, already in November this year, the increase in tax on alcohol and cigarettes - only these two items - has added 0.6% to the inflation rate, more than 0.5%. If you go at this rate per month, we will be going far above the 6% that is forecast for 2013 in the Budget; because, imagine what this budget will cause to prices, this is a more tax budget. This is a more devaluation budget.

The tax increase on this Budget 2013 has been Rs6.4 billion to finance an increase in recurrent expenditure of Rs7.9 billion. So, 80% of the increase in recurrent budgetary expenditure is financed by an increase in tax. This increase in tax is going to cause further inflation. This inflation is going to be budget induced and we are not talking, here, of the increase in PRB and other internal factors like Government inefficiencies, Government waste and mismanagement, denounced year in and year out by the Director of Audit, and which goes to raise the cost of public utilities and public services.

On the other hand, the Government is making no effort to control the excess charges of banks, the price manipulations by big cartels in the distribution network, the market distortions which are continuing through collusion and price fixing to cause the prices to go up and up. So, inflation is internally generated and the projection of 6% for next year is a pure guess estimate, and we have not taken into account all the speculations that are taking place on land, on investment, in stock market, on FDI, which can only cause further suffering to the poor.

In fact, this 4.3% compensation is going to benefit the workers in the private sector earning less than Rs8,000 per month and they constitute 40% of the total number of private employees as at this date.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is why we, on this side of the House, deem this compensation to be totally inadequate and this is why I called, last time in my intervention on the Budget, for compensation much higher than the 4.3%, especially for the handicapped, the old age pensioners and for all those benefiting from social benefits; not only the lowest paid workers. In

fact, I remember that when I asked why the wage compensation is not indexed on the future estimated inflation when we know that next year's inflation is going to be much higher than the 4.3%, I was taxed and criticised by the hon. Member of Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes as indulging in intellectual dishonesty because she claims that never since independence the Government has ever given an increase in wage compensation which is based on the following year's rate of inflation. She even claims that not only this Government, but also any Government in the World has not ever given any increase in compensation that is based on the following year's inflation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to prove her wrong and to say that all her dispute on what I have said is based on inaccurate information.

I have a copy of the Hansard which reports on the debate on the Additional Remuneration Bill of 1988. In fact, in 1998 the rate of inflation was low and it was estimated that the rate of inflation is going to soar in the next year and it is going to reach 15%, while the current year's inflation was only 1.5%. In fact, what the Government did under the then Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, they passed a law, the Additional Remuneration Bill which states very clearly that although the rate of inflation for the year was 1.5%, it was agreed that during the next financial year, the inflation rate was going to be 15%. The Government has decided to sanction the payment of salary compensation to employees in the private sector to the rate of 15% for the lowest income group. So, this decision to compensate workers for loss in purchasing power has been based on the future year's inflation. So, this is in the debate on the Additional Remuneration Bill of 1988 and this is what the then Minister of Finance, Mr Vishnu Luchmeenaraidoo had to say about it. He said –

“A salary compensation is normally paid as from July in a year to compensate for the rise in CPI of the previous year, but this time the Government has decided to sanction the payment of a salary compensation in advance in order to provide adequate protection to the workers in the face of the inordinate rise in the cost of living.”

So, this proves the hon. Member wrong and inaccurate and this also shows that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, Mr Deputy, Speaker, Sir, because in Mauritius - I am not talking of the world - there has been compensation based on the following year's inflation. This is straight from the Hansard and I will table a copy for your information.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this year's compensation is even more deserving for the private employees because this year, there will be the PRB, a salary revision, that has granted an average

of 22% increase to the public sector with, in some cases, more than Rs40,000 increase per month for some beneficiaries and this will cause a greater and widening gap between the lower grade workers of the private sector and of the public sector, especially when we take into account that meagre increase of Rs300 per month compared to the scale of the PRB increases. So, what will this Rs300 do to close that widening gap between the lower paid in the private sector and in the public sector? No wonder, the private employees' unions are calling this rate of increase of 4.3% *insultante et indécente*. And what do they get in return from the Budget? In return, the hon. Minister of Finance is offering them duty free on *baignoire*, flat screen wide TV, luxury cars and motorcycles.

This is more than an insult to the poor workers of this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This kind of wage compensation is better qualified as a wage repression and there is not just wage repression these days because it is accompanied by other forms of repression like fiscal repression, financial repression and labour law repression. The low wage which is hardly being compensated is not sufficient to pay for food these days and basic necessities. So, workers have to resort to debt and go to loan sharks to be able to get the sufficient money to buy food. In fact, this low wage is causing increasing indebtedness to a lot of working families. The average household indebtedness, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is now Rs180,000 and 60% of this debt is in hire purchase. If we look at the personal loans at banks, it is now at the staggering amount of Rs22.5 billion. No wonder, therefore, that we find the statistics, the data for National Savings Rate to decline from 28% in 2001 to to-date 14.4% in 2012. So, that is the statistics which reverse the usual accusations that in 2000 things were worst. The savings rate has plummeted to half the rate of 2001.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the low wage which is causing a fall in savings and a rise in indebtedness is causing a devaluation of human capital, but this Government is not happy only with devaluating and degrading human capital through a low wage policy. It is now bent on speculating on foreign currency in order to devalue the currency itself; battering and weakening the rupee, not only the labour, but also the money. So, with a weaker rupee and a devalued currency, you would not expect workers to be better off.

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. I just wanted to make sure that you will allow me to reply on the rupee fully. If you have allowed the hon. Member to talk widely on the Exchange Rate policy, I do hope that you will allow me to reply fully on this issue.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: It is devalued rupees; that's what the hon. Vice-Prime Minister has to take responsibility for, but this is not only a double devaluation. We have, on top of that, taxation, tax on consumption, more taxes not only on cigarettes and alcohol, but on all things. What the hon. Vice-Prime Minister could have done is to remove all taxes and VAT on all food items and inputs which has not been done because what is preferable for him is to dance to the tune of big capital and reduce tax for people going to make golf courses and going to buy luxury and vintage cars. This is the type of Government that we have.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the wage repression which shows that there is a deliberate policy of restraining wages to constrain and stress the workers, shows that the Government is more bent on benefitting only the 'Haves' and not the 'Have-Nots'.

The result is very telling, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If you look at the compensation of employees, which is the sum of wages, salaries, bonuses, pensions and all other benefits, the growth rate at which compensation employees has risen in the last years has slowed down.

Compensation to employees rose by 3.1% in 2010, but it has risen only by 1.5% in 2011, and in 2012 it has increased only by 1.3%. It shows that compensation to employees has continuously slackened in its rate of growth. Not only that, if we look at compensation to employees as a percentage of GDP, that is, the share of workers' benefits to national income, it was 34% in 2011 and now it has fallen to 33.6% in 2012. What does it mean, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It means that the share of compensation of workers, the fruits of labour in the national pie has reduced, meaning that the share of profits, the share of capital, has increased. This is a Labour Government. This is supposed to be the vision of the Prime Minister. This is what has been the result of this policy of wage restraint, this policy of low wages.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no wonder then that the Minister of Finance has roped in the Labour Party and the Prime Minister when he spoke about his Budget and saying for sure that this is a Labour inspired and a Prime Minister inspired Budget, because he does not want to take the blame for himself alone. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this inadequate wage compensation is unacceptable. It is in line with the Labour mindset of this Government to depress wages, to keep low wages, low cost, low income. It is a low value economic model, which this Government is trying to maintain at all costs, allowing cheap foreign labour to come into the country to compete with workers here, weakening the trade unions and repressing the trade unions through all kinds of iniquitous labour laws.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not only are they just focusing on keeping wages low, but they are also having all kinds of stimulus packages for lame ducks, for enterprises that are mismanaging resources – *p'tits copains*. The focus is on saving sick enterprises, on subsidising the wasteful public enterprises and subsidising cronies. This is what this Government is doing. But for the poor workers, for the lower income groups, they try their best to squeeze it, knowing very well that by doing it they will not reduce inequality and by doing that they will increase the gap between the rich and the poor. When will this Government ever think of a stimulus package for the working poor of this country? When will this Budget, whether it is Labour inspired or not, be ever a pro-poor Budget?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how far can this Government deviate from its Labour origin? No wonder we have such a resounding defeat to their party during these local elections! For this reason, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I plead that the workers, the old age pensioners, those who benefit from social benefits be granted at least the estimated inflation rate of 6% based on next year's estimate of inflation which was given in 1988 by the then Government which was the really caring Government.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

At 4.21 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.57 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I listened with some interest to the speech of the previous orator, hon. Li Kwong Wing, and I find that it is a shame when we are talking about such an important issue as salary compensation to stoop to this low level of demagogy. Either the hon. Member does not know what he is talking about or he is deliberately being demagogic hoping that there are sufficient fools around.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun! I want silence, please!

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should not insult *canards*, please. We should not insult the ducks, please.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Allow the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to intervene without being interrupted.

Mr Duval: And no insults to the ducks, please!

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Li Kwong Wing!

Mr Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, stooping so low in the hope that Mauritians are foolish enough.

(Interruptions)

I am not going to speak if there is not some order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun, please!

Mr Duval: In the hope that some people will be foolish enough to, maybe, not understand fully what the jargon that he is using will not understand and taking the generalities that he has, in fact, stated. Shame though also that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has not bothered to say anything, leaving it to a backbencher to open the debate, obviously, is of no interest, seems to be that the backbencher has been flabbergasted by the compensation, but this is of no interest to the hon. Leader of the Opposition who has not ever uttered a word about it, leaving it to others to say something in the hope that he may catch the eye of the press.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this debate is important. We believe in this debate. I have myself chaired the committee on compensation, the Tripartite Committee, unlike what was the practice between 2000/2005 when the then Minister of Finance decided that it was below his level to chair the Tripartite Committee.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Li Kwong Wing has been going on and on about inflation all the time, forgetting that in 1988 – I am talking about Calendar Year – when he was adviser himself at the Ministry of Finance and afterwards he lost his job - Sir Anerood Jugnauth, I think, got rid of him. But, at that time, in 1988 – he may remember that – he was probably fatly paid as an adviser then, and inflation was 9.2% in that Calendar Year. He was sitting there, pretty not saying anything about it and now inflation is 3.9% this year and he pretends to be really shocked. When he was adviser, I do not know what advice he was giving to my friend Vishnu, but, in fact, inflation was 9.2%.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not think he was stupid enough to take your advice. I do not think he was that foolish!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Li Kwong Wing, when you were intervening, there was no interruption on the part of any Member.

Mr Duval: Do not make fools of Mauritians easily, not when I am around, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Do not take Mauritians for fools.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, his party and the MSM increased VAT. He seems to have forgotten that indirect taxation has a direct effect on prices. This is the most direct effect on prices that you can have when he increased VAT. Every other Government, because they have a feeling for the poor, every other Government, because they want people to have a good standard of living, to earn a good purchasing power, has avoided touching VAT. But, his friends, at that time, increased VAT from a rate of 10% to a flabbergasting 15%, *un coup de massue pour tous les consommateurs de ce pays* and they did it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whilst, at the same time, they found enough money to give Rs9 billion to the bigwigs of this country in the Illovo deal, that is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *le socialisme* à la MSM/MMM and they have no lesson to teach us. Similarly, as they have no lesson to cheat this side of the House on economic management having left this country with a 9.6% unemployment rate as opposed to now 8.5%, despite economic crisis, 9.6% unemployment, growth at a dismal level of 2.7% last year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, themselves having admitted that they had brought the country to sneeze *en état d'urgence économique*, 30,000 jobs lost in the EPZ sector and the then Minister of Industry having the cheek to say that we are losing jobs *à une vitesse vertigineuse*. This is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in a nutshell the result of the economic policies of his friends, which he wants us today to swallow and we will not swallow this pill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Now what is of this situation today? Again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a lot of untruths, pretending not to understand, that the increase in tax revenues of R6 billion that we are forecasting for next year, is not at all in respect of the increase in tax rates, 90% of that is in respect of buoyancy, because the economy is expected to do well, people are expected to spend, people are expected to earn revenue and from that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and quite rightly the State will take its 15% where it has to take 15% and that will bring the large increase in tax revenues, not tax rates. There will be some taxes increase, as you are aware, on alcohol and cigarettes, but these have a double barrel reason. One is, of course, to raise some revenue, but the important reason is to protect the health of the nation and to protect or to discourage alcoholism

which can be a scourge in some families. This is the truth. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is absolutely false to say that we are somehow threatening the population with huge increase in taxation, they are absolutely false in taxation, the increase in tax revenue next year will be almost entirely due to increase buoyancy and that it is false to say anything else on that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have a responsibility in this government to protect the population. We have done our very best to protect them from increase in prices this year. I am pleased to inform the House that inflation this year, which has originally been forecast at 4.3%, will, in fact, be as low as 3.9% for the whole calendar year. Compensation, at the time we had the Tripartite Committee, has been given at 4.3% because that was the then estimated inflation rate. It is now finally estimated at being 3.9%, which is very low compared to 6.5% when I took over in 2011 - the inflation rate for 2011 was 6.5%. So, we have, in fact, got a substantial fall.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on this question of increase in prices, I would just like to say that my predecessor, hon. Jugnauth, had tried a very clever trick, I think, by trying to make a lot of food items produced locally exempt rather than what they were before, zero-rated. You may remember that. Lots of food items would have gone up to 7%, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And hon. Li Kwong Wing does not find anything to say about that! That was, in fact, the truth, and his colleagues at the time saw that was horrific and it was stopped dead in its tracks. Thank God for that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

Another point I would like to raise is this whole issue of whether the compensation should be going back - compensation is for current inflation - or whether it should somehow deal with forecast inflation. Hon. Li Kwong Wing has taken, I think, 1988. *C'est l'exception probablement qui prouve la règle*. That is, every time, every single year, except for that year, it has been historic, and every single Minister of Finance, including 2000 to 2005 - we have the two previous Ministers here. That was how compensation was calculated; always on the basis of current inflation for the simple reason that nobody has a crystal ball. Nobody can tell what inflation will be next year. I have a figure from CSO forecasting 4% next year. In the Budget, we have put 6% because we have taken a conservative figure. But even 6% is not the end of the world. As I have just mentioned, in 1988 it was 9.2% and the country was o.k.; in 2011, it was 6.5%. Obviously, we hope it will be as low as possible.

What is important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is above all, to avoid what these gentlemen were not able to avoid, that is, massive unemployment in Mauritius. If there is some inflation,

there will be compensation. But if you lose jobs, usually it is gone forever. And this is the whole issue also concerning monetary policy. This is the whole issue concerning a misalignment of the rupee. Misalignment there is, but misalignment there would not always be because if you do not correct it, it will correct itself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If we lose industries, as they are no longer competitive because of factors which do not represent the real state of the economy, exogenous factors as to the state of the economy, if we lose our competitiveness, industries will go away, industries will close down and go elsewhere, and that export will be lost forever. And when that export is lost forever, the balance of payments will keep going out again into negative figures till some time the exchange rate will correct itself and collapse. So, it is just a question of buying some time because otherwise the inevitable will happen.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the exchange rate has been corrected this year. We have an article published this morning in "*Le Matinal*" which, in fact, stated quite clearly that the MERI, which is the Mauritius Exchange Rate Index, has fallen to 4.8% since the beginning of the year. For the information of hon. Members, $\frac{2}{3}$, if not $\frac{3}{4}$ of that increase was before the famous intervention purchase of dollars by the Ministry of Finance. Two-thirds of that, three-quarters even, was before that day because, in fact, as we know, the Bank of Mauritius itself started an operational reserves readjustment. In fact, they were building reserves and that has had also an effect on the exchange rate, which is a good thing because we are worried for the long term. A misaligned exchange rate will, over time, bring in unemployment, and will threaten the prosperity of this very nation that we all love, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Not to mention, of course, that we have this international crisis. We have very little room to spare. We have done extremely well to date despite whatever the Opposition had tried to throw our way. We hope, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to do even better next year, whilst always maintaining unemployment at a low rate. That is a scourge; jobs are important. Imagine waking up in the morning, having nowhere to go. Imagine youths getting up in the morning, all day running around in the street. This is maybe what the Opposition wants us to do. There is not only inflation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There are also, therefore, other factors. As I have mentioned, inflation is at a very low level this year, 3.9%, and we will do our very best to keep it at a very low level next year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not only have we given compensation to the workers. It is good to say because sometimes old people do not understand that we have also given full compensation across the board to all pensioners or every single person who receives social aid, Mr Deputy

Speaker, Sir. We are one of the few countries in the world that can still afford to maintain this sort of welfare state because we have managed the economy very well. We have not had in this year - hopefully next year either - any austerity budget which would force us to cut down either on Government jobs or on Government benefits or on Government social welfare expenditure.

We have worked out the compensation for this year by bearing in mind a paramount need to protect the poor. We have done this by not only - I am sure my colleague mentioned it - giving a full compensation up to Rs7,000, but by giving a minimum compensation. This is important and this is the second year in a row that we are giving minimum compensation. We are giving minimum compensation of Rs300 this year. Last year, we gave minimum compensation of Rs350. What does this mean in practice is that if someone was earning Rs3000 at the end of 2011, he would now be earning Rs3,630. That would translate into an increase of 21%. For anyone working fulltime and earning Rs3,000, how much did my predecessor give Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? He gave Rs96, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So nobody can point a finger at us in terms of thinking of the poor, in terms of wanting to help the lower paid. We have done the maximum. In fact, employers have complained, but we have insisted that they should be generous to the lowest paid in this country and therefore, what stands out in the last two salary compensations that we have given is that we have given the lowest paid, anyone earning Rs3,000 would have a compensation of 21% which is nearly twice the amount of inflation. It is nearly twice the amount of inflation for the lowest paid and that is wonderful. Obviously, the higher paid have not had as much as they would have expected but, nevertheless, we have done a maximum in a very difficult situation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member - I think just before me - spoke of the weight of salary compensation in the GDP. What I would say though is that in a report just published, which I can table - I think that it was by the OECD. It shows clearly what our situation concerning wages and productivity has been, whereas productivity has remained fairly low in Mauritius, nevertheless, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, successively we have given adequate compensation. Of course, it remains a problem and that should be discussed. Productivity remains an issue in this country and we must get the population to understand that huge increases in wages can only come with huge increases in productivity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to mention that in this Budget we have given special attention to the poor, including hot meals for 9,200 of our poorest children in this country

and also making provision for 20,000 of our poorest children to receive each an allowance of Rs750 up to three children per family. This I hope, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will help them during these difficult times. Also, it is a major shift in social aid policy whereas, previously, it was in the family circumstances, if you are an abandoned woman as a single parent, you would get some money, etc. Now it will be based on family income rather than on the circumstances merely of the parents, which I think is a much fairer way of making social transfers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think I have dealt with most of the issues that have been raised by the previous orator. I would like to say therefore that it is always a difficult situation - the salary compensation. It is even more difficult when you are not sure of what next year holds for the country or for our main markets such as Europe. Nevertheless, I do believe, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that in a difficult situation, this Government has shown great compassion to the poorest members of our society and that this Government has done a very maximum and we will continue with our policy of pursuing growth and prosperity next year because our aim, above all, is not to protect the bigwigs like the previous Government but to work in the interest of the labourers of this country, of the poor of this country and of all the deserving persons in this country.

Thank you very much.

(5.15 p.m.)

Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Additional Remuneration Bill in fact provides us, on this side of the House, with an opportunity to make an appeal to Government to reconsider and to improve the salary compensation that is being proposed to workers in the private sector as from January 2013, taking of course into account the fact that the inflation rate of 4.3% on which the quantum has been decided is widely contested, not only by trade unionists but also by major economic analysts. In fact, not only, I would say, locally but also foreign economic analysts. And, rightly so, as the Bank of Mauritius is in fact maintaining its position that the inflation rate for 2012 will be around 5%.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Governor of the Central Bank has drawn the attention on the inflationary pressures and his point of view is in fact shared by the members of the Monetary Policy Committee who have decided to keep the repo rate unchanged. The Economist

Intelligence Unit has also highlighted that Mauritius is confronted with inflationary pressures and it shares the Bank of Mauritius forecast of an inflation rate of around 5% for 2012 and 6% for 2013. These are not the figures that I have picked; they are the figures that have been in fact, publicly given by such institutions. I find it odd, to say the least, that the hon. Vice-Prime Minister in his Budget Speech has omitted to give the forecast for inflation for next year!

Let us look at the latest forecast. Statistics Mauritius highlights a headline inflation of 4.4% for the twelve months ending September 2012. Nowhere can we find a rate of inflation of 4.1% for 2012 that has been announced in the Budget - in fact, I have the document here. The document mentions higher food prices and I will not go into the details with regard to all the products that have been mentioned. Added to these, we have had increases in the prices of alcoholic drinks and cigarettes which have been announced in the Budget and which still have to be accounted for in the last quarter of 2012! Notwithstanding further increases in food commodity prices! In fact, all the forecasts go in the same direction and all of them tell the same story. These forecasts in fact reflect the situation in the country as regards rising prices of commodities and the continued erosion of the purchasing power of our fellow citizens. The population is being scourged - and it is only those who do not want to see - the majority of people are angry. In fact the message has been sent to Government through the Village Council and the Municipal Elections.

Il y a eu un désaveu cinglant pour le gouvernement....

(Interruptions)

Whether ...

(Interruptions)

Whether they accept it or not on the other side...

(Interruptions)

The electorate....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, do not interrupt the hon. Member!

Mr Jugnauth: The electorate has sanctioned this Government. People still remember how Government in fact voluntarily depreciated the rupee by a massive 20% in 2006 and 2007. This depreciation not only has had a negative impact on prices and consumers generally, but it has

helped at the same time to fill the coffers of the fat cats and the private sector and, consequently, again the population was fleeced.

The same scenario is unfolding in the fourth quarter of 2012, with the hon. Minister of Finance acting on behalf of Government to buy dollars directly on the financial market, an unprecedented move again to please the fat cats. Once again, there is voluntary depreciation of the Rupee and this will definitely impact on prices and inflation. I must say that, at least, the hon. Minister of Finance has been honest today to say, and I quote what he said –

“Misalignment there is of the rupee.”

So, he agrees that there is misalignment of the rupee and that he does not agree with the rate of exchange of our rupee right now and this is the purpose of ...

(Interruptions)

Yes, you always say that.

It is good that the hon. Minister confirms that for him – from what he is saying - the value of the rupee is too high. It should be depreciated. We have heard the opinion of the Governor of the Central Bank. He has made a number of public statements. I will not go into all of them. But this morning, answering to a PQ, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister has said that he is ready and willing to lay on the Table of the National Assembly, the Minutes of the meeting that was held – he called that the coordination meeting – between his Ministry and the Central Bank. Well, my appeal to him is only that we don't get an edited version. If we want transparency and let the people know - because when we look at the Monetary Policy Committee, after they have discussed and come to a conclusion about whether the repo rate should move or should be changed or should stay as it is, they publish their work; they let the people know.

(Interruptions)

If the Central Bank can do that and the hon. Minister has said that he is willing to lay these information in the House, there should be no reason why he would choose which part he is going to lay and which part he is going to edit. I hope that the hon. Minister - who is for transparency and who would wish to communicate all the information, especially to hon. Members of this House and the public - will not, at least, edit those Minutes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is, therefore, ample reason to reconsider the quantum of salary compensation for 2013. I would say that it would be a crime, in fact, towards the workers of this country, if this Government does not give due consideration to the workers. Mr Deputy

Speaker, Sir, despite the complacent attitude on Government side, the fact remains that out there, the workers of this country are unhappy and frustrated by the way the whole issue of salary compensation has been handled since 2006, except, of course, for 2010 when I was Minister of Finance.

In 2006, at a time, when *l'Alliance Sociale* was talking of economic green shoots, after boasting of measures under the document "Setting the Stage for a Robust Growth", workers were given a mere Rs135 as salary compensation. The threshold for full compensation, which I had raised to Rs4,300 in 2005 was dramatically reduced to Rs2,700 only. In 2007, when inflation reached a 16-year high of 10.7% due to the massive depreciation of the rupee, which I just mentioned, the fiscal measures of 2006-2007 Budget have also impacted on *le pouvoir d'achat* and this is also evidenced by the comments that were made by the IMF itself, the Government then masterminded the setting up of the National Pay Council (NPC) as, in fact, the very first step towards labour reforms, which subsequently gave employers the power to hire and fire.

The Tripartite mechanism, which proved itself over the years to be a formidable instrument of social justice, was dismantled. The NPC was presented as an independent body, which was going to work out the quantum of salary compensation. We were told at that time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there were going to be five criteria that would be relied upon for the workings of this committee –

- inflation;
- the average economic growth rate;
- the unemployment rate;
- the capacity to pay, and
- the labour productivity growth.

In fact, the NPC acted in a controversial manner to the discontent of both trade unionists and workers. The NPC, in fact, simply divided the inflation rate by two and added the average national labour productivity rate to recommend to Government a salary compensation of 8.7% for those earning up to Rs3,000, that is, Rs261. At that time, nobody – except for Government, of course – understood the rationality between dividing the inflation rate by two. Why was it so? Even now, no one has been able to explain that. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government hid behind the NPC after the inflation rate rocketed to 10.7% and largely due to their own doing on both the monetary and the fiscal fronts.

At a time when the Government was talking of early harvest, again workers were not given due consideration with regard to salary compensation. In fact, the Government then failed to listen to the distress calls from the population while again the big cats of the private sector cashed billions of rupees on account of depreciation of the rupee. And we should not forget also at that time the accelerated reduction of the corporate tax.

Now, in 2008, the same game and the same trick went on. The *Alliance Sociale* Government was talking then of bumper crop. Yet, salary compensation was a mere 8.1% or Rs283 for workers earning up to Rs3,500 per month when the inflation rate stood at 8.8%. Again, the NPC had worked out the salary compensation by dividing inflation rate by two and adding average national labour productivity rate. Nobody heard about the three other criteria that were mentioned when the NPC was set up. Government was ruthless. NPC's recommendations were approved throughout unchanged. Not a single rupee more could be given to workers, but, of course, for these - that they themselves call the fat cats of the private sector - so many billions of rupees were dished out.

We had, on top of that, the Additional Stimulus Package of Rs10.4 billion in favour of the private sector in December 2008. In 2009, the saga went on. The inflation rate stood at 7%, the NPC recommended a salary compensation of 5.1% for workers earning up to Rs3,800 after, again, dividing once more the inflation rate by 2 and adding labour productivity rate. Workers earning up to Rs12,000 were given a mere Rs200 compensation. Those earning more than Rs12,000 did not get a cent, they were asked, in fact, to make sacrifices in the name of solidarity to save jobs and more than 60% of employees in the public sector and 30% in the private sector were refused salary compensation which was due to them.

Once again, the then Government had approved the NPC's recommendations unchanged. The Labour/PMSD Government explained that the economy was going through unprecedented turmoil, Government could make no effort in favour of workers and yet, at Budget time, the Government managed to allocate more billions of rupees to safeguard the private sector's interests. That is the mindset, in fact, that I have always denounced since 2006 till 2009.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when I was appointed Minister of Finance in 2010, I dismantled the NPC, reinstated the tripartite mechanism for salary compensation and I personally chaired the tripartite meetings and gave to workers a salary compensation of 3.2% well beyond the rate of inflation of 2.9% and this principle had been adopted for many years before 2006. In fact, since 1992/1993

till 2005/2006 salary compensation paid to workers had always exceeded the rate of inflation. That can be checked and as the Minister of Finance in 2004/2005, I chaired two tripartite meetings and Government of the day gave workers salary compensation well above the inflation rate.

In 2004, the inflation rate was 3.9%, we gave 4.5% of salary compensation. In 2005, inflation rate was 5.6%, we gave 6.2% of salary compensation. Moreover, the threshold, as I said, for full compensation was increased to Rs4,300. In 2011, after the MSM left the Government, the Labour/PMSD Government renewed again with its tradition and abstained from giving due consideration again to the workers of this country.

This year again, the same situation has prevailed as I asserted at the beginning of my intervention. The whole basis on which salary compensation for 2013 was determined, I again say, was wrong, as the inflation figure of 4.3% used was simply the result of this Government's manipulating propensity.

I heard the hon. Minister replying to my colleague, hon. Li Kwong Wing, about the increase of VAT. I don't want to go into that, but for the record. Why does not he talk about what happened when the Labour Government, in fact, changed the name of Sales Tax to VAT? The increase was 5% to an increase of 10% - double - and I heard the hon. Minister Bunwaree ...

(Interruptions)

The hon. Minister is saying: '*pas comprend narien*'. He even said at that time it was going to be revenue neutral. It was not revenue neutral, in fact, it brought in billions of rupees to the coffres of Government. The population, in fact, had to pay for that and the hon. Minister, when he was replying again to my colleague, failed – probably, he would not remember the comments of Mr Rama Sithanen on the Labour Government from 1995-2000. What did he say ?

'Le gouvernement est friand de dépenses, de doubler les dépenses.'

Il avait dit que le déficit budgétaire avait doublé, les dépenses du gouvernement avaient doublé, la dette publique avait doublé.

'Le gouvernement, le Parti Travailleiste a cassé le record de l'Argentine.'

Those are the words of Rama Sithanen at that time.

If I have to go deeper, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it will take me even longer to remind them what, in fact - and it is not from me - Rama Sithanen said.

Alors, je dis toujours M. le président que les revenus ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Mr Jugnauth: ... d'une famille sont comme un réservoir d'eau. Si on retire plus d'eau du réservoir que le volume qui est alimenté, le réservoir finira par s'assécher à force de subir des pertes ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I want some order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: *Pran to billet alle voyager!*

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jugnauth, please address the Chair!

Mr Jugnauth: But he should not be passing remarks

(Interruptions)

Pran to billet!

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden please take your seat! I am on my feet now. Hon. Jugnauth, I am on my feet now! Hon. Jugnauth, please resume your seat! I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Assirvaden, I am asking you not to interrupt the hon. Member.

(Interruptions)

I am warning you now not to interrupt the Member! Do me a favour, hon. Jugnauth, to address the Chair !

Mr Jugnauth: Merci, M. le président. A force de subir des pertes, sans qu'il y est de pouvoir d'achat, sans qu'il y a eu des compensations salariales adéquates, les revenus des familles au bas de l'échelle et même de la classe moyenne se sont progressivement effrités. C'est cela qui explique le cauchemar financier que vit la majorité des foyers mauriciens. Prétendre, comme le fait le Premier ministre, que les familles mauriciennes ont plus d'argent et qu'elles vivent mieux équivaut à les insulter et on sait ce qui advient des politiciens qui insultent la population. Les premières raclées ont été données à l'Alliance au pouvoir à l'occasion des élections villageoises et municipales. Qu'ils le veuillent ou non

(Interruptions)

Qu'ils le veuillent ou non, c'est cela la vérité.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jugnauth, confine yourself to the scope of the Bill!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: M. le président, je demande au ministre des finances, au gouvernement en général ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence, please !

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dayal, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jugnauth, confine yourself to the scope of the Bill, please!

Mr Jugnauth: Je demande au ministre des finances, au gouvernement en général ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Jugnauth: ...de reconnaître qu'une bonne frange de la population n'arrive pas à joindre les deux bouts. C'est un fait indéniable qui est statistiquement prouvé et en tant que représentant du peuple dans cette auguste Chambre nous avons le devoir d'agir dignement. Je réitère, donc, mon appel pour que le quantum de la compensation salariale pour 2013 soit révisé à la hausse.

Maintenant, je voudrais faire quelques commentaires parce que le ministre des finances en a parlé. Je voudrais déplorer la misère que ce gouvernement inflige à nos aînés deux années de suite, surtout ceux qui dépendent de la pension de vieillesse pour vivre ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: M. le président, j'ai dit lors de mon intervention sur le budget 2013 qu'il est révoltant de constater que les bénéficiaires

Mr Assirvaden: *'Ti l'esprit!'*

Mr Soodhun: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member, hon. Assirvaden, has said...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: What is the point of order? Silence, please! Please! Let the hon. Member make his point of order!

Mr Soodhun: The hon. Member has said '*Ti l'esprit*'. I want to know whether it is parliamentary....

The Deputy Speaker: I will ask hon. Assirvaden, if he did utter the words to kindly withdraw them!

(Interruptions)

'*Ti l'esprit!*' Did you utilise the words just a moment ago? This is the question I am asking you. If you did utilise the words, kindly withdraw them!

Mr Assirvaden: *(Interruptions)*

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, the hon. Member will have to withdraw the words.

Mr Assirvaden: '*Non. Mo pas pou tirer. Ki faire mo bizin tirer? Li ène ti l'esprit!*'

The Deputy Speaker: I want to prevail upon the hon. Member to withdraw the words.

Mr Assirvaden: *C'est un 'ti l'esprit'. Je ne vais pas retirer le mot.*

The Deputy Speaker: Are you going to withdraw the words, hon. Assirvaden?

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, ce que j'ai dit est la vérité, mais je retire.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member has withdrawn it!

Mr Jugnauth: *M. le président, je proteste. On a point of order, il vient de dire: 'ce que j'ai dit est la vérité, mais je retire'.* The hon. Member should unconditionally withdraw!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you have asked the hon. Member to withdraw; he has withdrawn and you have acquiesced. It's over...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I asked the hon. Member whether he utilised the words, he conceded that he utilised the words and I asked him to withdraw. The hon. Member did withdraw!

Mr Jugnauth: He said, '*j'ai dit la vérité...*'

The Deputy Speaker: I am on my feet! Hon. Assirvaden, did you withdraw the words?

Mr Assirvaden: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Stop! Now, carry on.

(Interruptions)

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is in Hansard that the hon. Member has said that - '*J'ai dit est la vérité,...*'

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has just withdrawn again! Please, go ahead!

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Member has withdrawn - '*j'ai dit la vérité...*'

The Deputy Speaker: That was what he said earlier on.

Mr Jugnauth: No. It is not over. It is in Hansard.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I asked the hon. Member again. He has just withdrawn.

(Interruptions)

I am satisfied that the hon. Member has withdrawn the words that he has just utilised and that's over. Please, go ahead!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mr Jugnauth: En tout cas, M. le président, il est révoltant de constater que les bénéficiaires de la pension de vieillesse vont être privés d'une augmentation adéquate et raisonnable. Et, il y a eu acclamation dans les rangs de la majorité quand le ministre des Finances avait annoncé fièrement que les bénéficiaires de la pension de vieillesse, bénéficieront d'une augmentation de 4.3%; soit selon lui, supérieure au taux d'inflation de 4.1% annoncé dans le budget. Tout au moins, on s'attendait à ce que ces pensionnés obtiennent une augmentation de R 300 conforme à l'augmentation accordée aux travailleurs se trouvant au bas de l'échelle et touchant jusqu'à R 7,000 par mois. Mais en fin de compte, ils n'obtiendront que R 144 d'augmentation, M. le président. Donc, ce gouvernement leur a donné une pension *short of Rs156*. Et l'année dernière, au lieu d'une augmentation de R 330, ils n'ont obtenu que R 204 d'augmentation. *Once more, short of Rs126*. C'est pourquoi je dis que ce gouvernement n'a pas de cœur. Ce projet de loi donne l'opportunité au gouvernement de rectifier le tir.

M. le président, nous avons tous un devoir moral envers les plus faibles de notre société. On ne peut pas balancer des milliards de roupies *overnight* pour venir en aide et à la rescousse des plus fortunés de ce pays et en même temps refuser une véritable bouffée d'oxygène à nos compatriotes qui en ont le plus besoin. Je fais donc, un dernier appel au gouvernement pour revoir à la hausse cette compensation salariale qui sera payée à partir de janvier 2013. Le

gouvernement a les ressources financières, comme l'a admis le Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances lui-même, pour le faire au profit des pensionnés et autres bénéficiaires de prestation sociale. De même, le secteur privé qui a tant bénéficié depuis 2006 en termes de cadeau financier du gouvernement devrait faire preuve de plus de considération et de solidarité envers ses employés. La crise touche la population également et il faut que le gouvernement et le secteur privé comprennent que les travailleurs méritent aussi des mesures de soulagement. Je souhaite vivement que la touche humaine inspirée du socialisme pragmatique que j'ai toujours prôné, prenne le dessus sur la doctrine inspirée d'un capitalisme irréfléchi, toujours plus gourmand et sans cœur envers les travailleurs et les plus faibles de la société.

Je vais conclure, M. le président, en citant Charles de Gaulle.

(Interruptions)

Oui.

'Plus le trouble est grand, plus il faut gouverner. Mais la première condition est que les travailleurs puissent vivre.'

Hélas, M. le président, le gouvernement illégitime, Parti Travailleiste/PMSD, bluff, manipule et cache la vérité en cette période de tumulte économique où le trouble est grand alors que les travailleurs n'arrivent plus à vivre. C'est, malheureusement, la triste réalité de l'île Maurice d'aujourd'hui; une triste réalité attribuable à un gouvernement incompetent, sans leadership et sans cœur.

Merci, M. le président.

(5.46 p.m.)

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, actually before starting my intervention earlier on, I forgot to say something, but I wanted to now come up and I will say it now. I mean, where are my manners? I wanted to congratulate the hon. Members of the Opposition for their ability to invent stories left, right and centre. I wanted to congratulate them wholeheartedly for their ability to talk about things that don't really exist. I wanted to congratulate them for their ability to paint such a dark picture when, in fact, the truth is all otherwise. They are very good at that. They are excellent. Hon. Members of the Opposition are excellent at misleading the population. They do it with such pleasure. They do it with such glee. They do it simply because they want it to serve their interests and if there is anyone in this august Assembly that is going to believe that hon.

Jugnauth, who just intervened, is someone who believes in tripartism, this would be the joke of the century. It would be the joke of the century. Hon. Jugnauth is trying to make us believe that he is someone who cares for the workers. That would be the joke of the millennium. Let us be serious. Is he not then the hon. Minister of Finance and I stand by his Budget that he put up when he was with Government. I am not going to criticise his Budget. Yes, I stood by him and I still stand by what he did when he was in Government.

But, I am appalled by the intellectual hypocrisy that is pervading this august Assembly when the hon. Members of the Opposition stand up and talk! It's incredible; when they happen to be on this side of the House there is one language that goes on and all of a sudden when they go to the other side of the House there is something else that comes out, and honestly, the atmosphere is really polluted when we are in the midst of such intellectual hypocrisy. It is shocking. You can make all sounds you wish, you can try to make all sounds you wish and you can continue to act like a child, but the hypocrisy that I am talking about is true. So, continue being childish, continue being childish, but the hypocrisy is real. You are talking about the tripartism - 'we are lovers of tripartism', that hon. Jugnauth is a lover of tripartism; was not it hon. Jugnauth whom I say again, I stand by the fact that he presented a Budget, I intellectual honesty with hon. Members of this Government and I stand by what I said then. I supported him, but it was him who unilaterally decided that salary compensation for the public sector and the private sector should be delinked. It was him that tried pushed it down the throats of the trade unionists. When the trade unionists stood up and said that they wanted to negotiate a miserly Rs96, I stood by him because I understood why he wanted to give the Rs96. He talked about economic problems around the land. He talked about the challenges that this country had to face and, as a government that is responsible, and with the concept of collective responsibility, I stood by what he was saying, with due respect, because he was our hon. Minister of Finance. But it was him then who talked about the challenges that we were facing, and it was hon. Li Kwong Wing who was criticising hon. Jugnauth.

(Interruptions)

If this is not hypocrisy, what is it? It was him, hon. Li Kwong Wing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and also hon. Bérenger who were calling hon. Jugnauth by so many disrespectful names. Who was there to try to make sure that they did not attack his Budget, that they did not attack him in person, that they did not treat him unfairly? It was us, on this side of the House.

(Interruptions)

Where is the hypocrisy then? We are in 2012. We are talking about additional remuneration. Hon. Li Kwong Wing talked about insufficient quantum. Why is it that hon. Li Kwong Wing, in his whole discourse, talked about how the quantum was not sufficient? But then, again, in 2010, hon. Jugnauth was Minister of Finance! Hon. Jugnauth, today, is clapping and congratulating himself for an excellent job done. Hon. Li Kwong Wing criticised hon. Jugnauth, and hon. Li Kwong Wing does not believe what hon. Jugnauth did in 2010 was good. That is the truth. Those are facts as they are. I, on the other hand, would say that I would stand by what hon. Jugnauth did in 2010. Why? Because I don't agree with hon. Li Kwong Wing. When are we going to really start speaking the truth?

It is easy to say so many things like hon. Li Kwong Wing. It is easy. It is true that hon. Jugnauth did not pick up the figures that he made mention of. He said 'I did not pick those figures.' But he has made sure that he is going to pick the figures that suit him. That is the shocking part. When is the hypocrisy going to stop, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? What do we want to do? To continue to impress the gallery? To continue to impress members of the press? Those members of the press that are here or those strangers who are behind us have to be impressed because in Hansard or tomorrow morning, we are going to have a press cutting that is going to what? Boost our own ego? But, then again, what is Hansard going to hold? A bunch of inconsistencies, a generation of population that has what? Shot at one another while we forget that we are here to help the others? Hon. Li Kwong Wing is guiltier than anyone here because I respect his intelligence, and when one talks with such intelligence and comes out with such truth, that is a lie. In other words, I just said to him what he just is! When the hon. Member comes out with such rubbish, it is even worse. Is he consistent? When his party was in Government, when his Minister of Finance was hon. Bérenger, has his Minister of Finance, his leader, his master ever then give salary compensation for the following year? Did he give it as Minister of Finance? Did he? Answer!

(Interruptions)

How consistent is the hon. Member then? How consistent is he, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! If this is not untruth *par excellence*, what is it? The ability of this hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *pour déblatérer*, nonsense is amazing!

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister accusing me of *déblatérer*?

Mr Mohamed: Yes, I just did! *Déblatérer* is not unparliamentary! I am sorry!

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Can I say that this is nonsense?

Mr Aimée: *Déblatérer ène verbe ça!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Not only we have to teach the hon. Member facts and figures, now hon. Aimée has to teach him verbs!

(Interruptions)

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Joke of the century!

Mr Mohamed: Is it because hon. Li Kwong Wing feels he is superior to hon. Aimée? How dare the hon. Member say such a thing! Do not try to sit on pedestal there and think that you can insult someone's intellect! Be very careful! Be very careful of what you do!

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please confine yourself to your intervention!

Mr Mohamed: I will do. I am trying to confine myself, *mais quand on a des gens qui déblatèrent, je suis obligé de venir leur rendre la pareille !*

(Interruptions)

You know what is really shocking even more? Did hon. Li Kwong Wing, when he was Adviser to all those Ministers he referred to earlier on, when he was so proud referring to those advisory positions that he occupied, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, then calculate the price of fish and chicken? Did he then advise the hon. Minister of Finance of the day or his own leader?

(Interruptions)

That's the only childish thing that can come out of his mouth! Macaroni! But, maybe, it was not even macaroni! Do you know what it was? It was spaghetti actually.

(Interruptions)

So, leave on it and get stuffed on it! I am sorry. That is something so intelligent. He is going to up with some rebuttal. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what about this intelligent rebuttal? Macaroni! How intelligent is he getting?

(Interruptions)

Childish! Childish! How childish can the hon. Member get?

(Interruptions)

Yes, he is a shame to himself!

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister Mohamed, I will kindly ask you to refrain from using provocative terms.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Government is doing nothing?

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: The hon. Member talks about Government is doing nothing with regard to what? Collusion between companies, abusing one's dominant position and price fixing. Which Government came up with a law against monopolies? We did. Which Government came up with a Competition Commission? We did. Did they come up with a Competition Commission? No! But what they did is criticise the law, and what they did also is vote against the law! So, what did they do all this time with regard to what he, himself, is talking about? There again, is there honesty in his criticism? Is there honesty there? What is the hon. Member talking about? Why is wage compensation not indexed on future inflation? Why does the hon. Member not tell us - since he is so proud of his Minister of Finance, hon. Bérenger when he was Vice-Prime Minister in Government between 2000 and 2004 - why in those days, recent in this new millennium, in this new century, did the MMM at any stage come up with what he is saying? That wage compensation should be indexed on future inflation! Did they ever do it? So, why is it that the hon. Member is so good at giving lessons that his own party could not even implement? Is this, in other words, intellectual honesty? In 1988 he said! And he goes on - my friend, the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Duval has answered - talking about the PRB issue. It is amazing that the hon. Member of the Opposition is going to draw a parallel between the NRB and the PRB. In other words, this argument screams of one's inability to realise or one's lack of knowledge that, with regard to the National Remuneration Board and the private sector, there is something that is called collective bargaining. There is one thing that is called a Remuneration Order, which gives you the minimum, and there has to be collective bargaining that increases it. In other words, you cannot compare water with sand. You cannot compare two methods that have nothing to do with one another. That is another way of misleading the population because that is not intellectual honesty.

To be intellectually honest is to say the following: that in this Government we believe in a national minimum wage. How about that one? Has the MMM or the MSM ever come up and said that 'we are going to start discussion on a national minimum wage'? We have said it! And we have already embarked upon discussions at the National Tripartite Forum. We are already expecting an ILO expert to come and give us his views on a national minimum wage. But where is the MMM and MSM with regard to concrete proposals? Nothing! But you will hear them about comparing something that cannot be compared with another. You cannot compare the PRB with the NRB. But have they come up with the suggestion or another concrete proposal, an alternative? The answer is "no". So, once again, is hon. Li Kwong Wing intellectually honest? The answer is "no".

Why is it that then he talks about Rs345 being miserly? He talks about Rs345 being miserly. Let me say that if I had the choice, I could have given everyone Rs10,000. Let's be honest. Had I had the choice, had I had the ability of doing it, I would have done it.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Li Kwong Wing!

Mr Mohamed: As far as I am concerned, this is not an intelligent adult comment.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Deerpalsing, please refrain from making comments.

Mr Mohamed: Because we are a Government that honestly believes that we should become a high income earning economy. The hon. Minister of Finance has said it many times. We want to achieve that. But, at the same time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what we have to do also, is to look at reality and the reality is we want to give more. We want to create the ability of this economy to generate more, to give more, but we are not going to dwell *dans la démagogie en même temps*.

Let us not forget because I could start giving figures between 2001 and 2005, how they gave a miserly Rs200. I could also start talking about 2003, how they gave Rs200 only. I could talk about Rs180 *en 2004*. I could talk about Rs270 *en 2005*. *Je pourrais parler du prix du poulet. Je pourrais parler du prix de l'huile ou de la farine.*

(Interruptions)

Non même pas! Please, let's not really get down to his level. I don't want to do that, because, honestly, we have to work together, as an Opposition and as a Government, to try to find ways to

achieve what we want. Which is what? We both said we want this economy to be a high wage income earning economy. If we are both saying that, we will never achieve it if we are going to continue with the same equation. Why? Because if the Opposition is going to sell out there which is something not true and we are going to try to shoot at them because we are going to try to tell them that they did wrong when they were here, when are we going to finish this game?

If we do not put our heads together in order to try to achieve concretely - criticise us when we deserve to be criticised. Tell us where we are wrong. We have to accept, we have no choice because if we are wrong, we have to say we are wrong. But it does not help us - and I call out to every one of us – if the Opposition is going to say we did this, this and that and the other if it is not true and we are going to try to do the same thing to them. Will that help? That will only help us, our own ego, that will help us short-term. But does it help the nation, does it help the people? The answer is “no”.

Why is it that I am all up in arms today against hon. Li Kwong Wing? I will say, *parce que j'ai beaucoup de respect pour son intelligence* - and I expected more from him. I expected more from him, because I know for a fact that he can give this country more than what he is giving today. That is the sadness of the facts. I expect more, because I am of the view that he can really contribute. He has the ability to, but since he is in this august Assembly, I have not heard any positive contribution apart from *démagogie politique*.

Let me say something else on this side of the House also, *que ça déplaît à certains*. Let me say it on this side of the House also. I have in my hand, their records between 2000 and 2005. I have in my hand their records when they were in Government, when hon. Jugnauth was Prime Minister. I am not going to use it. You know why I am not going to use it? Because, I find this way of doing politics a total waste of time! A total waste of time because it does not contribute to nation building, it does not contribute to the economy being built by a bunch of women and men who have been chosen. We, the chosen few, have to help this country more forward, but we are getting excellent at shooting this country down to bits and pieces and shooting ourselves in the feet.

I commend this Bill to the House.

Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

(6.06 p.m.)

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

The Additional Remuneration (2013) Bill (No. XXX of 2012) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Additional Remuneration (2013) Bill (No. XXX of 2012) was read the third time and passed.

At this stage, Mr Speaker took the Chair.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR WORKERS WELFARE FUND BILL

(NO. XXVI OF 2012)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Mr S. Mohamed): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Bill (No. XXVI of 2012) be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is my pleasure to introduce the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Bill which has as core objective the welfare of workers, as well as due recognition of the work being performed by thousands of workers in the manufacturing sector. Over time, Mauritius has built and consolidated a strong industrial base with high performance industries in sectors such as textiles, jewellery, watch making, light engineering, precision engineering, and manufacturing of electronic components. The manufacturing sector is the biggest contributor to the national wealth with a share of 17.7% of the GDP registered in 2011, and providing for around 20.1% of the country's employment.

Despite the numerous turbulences and challenges this sector has faced and continues to face, it remains one of the pillars of our economy, and this resilience may be largely attributed to the hard work, commitment, and dedication of its workers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government has always had the welfare, the advancement and the prosperity of workers and their families at heart and in this endeavour, I am bringing forward the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Bill which provides for the establishment of the MSWW Fund in replacement of the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund was set up following the promulgation of the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund Act in November 1987. If I am not mistaken, I believe it was hon. Mrs Bappoo who is here, who was then Minister, who came into this august Assembly with this piece of legislation. I must admit that in 1987 with the coming up of this Bill, it was an excellent piece of legislation, the intention was perfect, it was there for protection of workers and it has functioned across various Governments, in a very good way, there have been problems, now and then, but then again, it has as its main objective for the benefit and for the help of workers and it has served its purpose, I must admit. The Fund, which is administered by a tripartite committee, with representatives of employers, workers and the Government, operates under the aegis of my Ministry, and its mission has been to work towards the advancement and promotion of the welfare of workers of the EPZ sector and their families.

Since its inception, the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund has been implementing broad-based and diversified worker-oriented programmes to enhance the general welfare of the EPZ workers and that of their families. A number of schemes, ranging from interest free loans for a multiplicity of purposes, to scholarships for the educational advancement of children, day care facilities for under age children and leisure activities, have been put in place. The EPZ Labour Welfare Fund has been, on the social front, a major support to the industrialisation process in Mauritius and its welfare programmes have reached several thousands of workers and their families. Since 2010, for instance, 1,321 workers' children have benefitted from the Scholarship Schemes, 1,017 received loans under the House Enhancing Scheme, 767 benefitted from the Computer Loan Scheme, 76 from the Marriage Loan Scheme - not a lot of them getting married actually - and 61 from the Medical Loan Scheme, among others.

The institution gets its funds mainly from the Government through a grant of Rs4 m. every year to meet its operating costs; and from contributions by both employers and employees.

Employers make a monthly contribution of Rs9 – it is not much - in respect of each worker, while the worker himself contributes Rs3, bringing the total monthly contribution per worker to Rs12. Presently, an average of Rs563,356 is received per month as contribution in respect of around 47,000 workers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of the fact that the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund is a successful, well-organised and valued institution, it is high time for it to be replaced by a broader framework. As I have said earlier on, since 1987 there have been various Governments in power and there have been problems, little problems, bigger problems, under each and every regime that has been in power. In actual fact, what we have tried to do here is to identify the problems and eliminate them through this piece of legislation. What we have also tried to do is to try to concentrate on the good and that is why when I say that it is a respected institution, it is a successful institution, it is a well organised and valued institution, it's because I always try to see the glass half full, I do not go for the half empty attitude and I prefer looking at it that way because at the end of the day, when you have 47,000 workers benefitting from it, you cannot but say that this is a piece of legislation that has worked very well and has continued to do so ever since 1987. But, we cannot be *bloqué dans le temps*, we have to change things, we have to evolve, we have to modernise and this is precisely what we are doing. In fact, this needs for a broader framework, it emanates from the fact that over time, amendments were brought to a number of legislation. A lot of legislation have been amended ever since then relating to the EPZ, thus causing the Export Processing Zone to no longer exist as an entity, because we have no longer the fiscal advantages that once upon a time existed, because laws have been amended, the EPZ as such, the changes in the laws have caused the EPZ to be evanescent.

In fact, the Export Processing Zone Act which requires enterprises of the EPZ sector to be holders of export service certificate was repealed in 1993. Moreover, in 2006, the Business Registration Act was proclaimed, following which the policy of Government was to have an integrated manufacturing sector without any distinction whatsoever among enterprises. This absence of differentiation has rendered it impossible for the Export Processing Zone Labour Welfare Fund to determine who its constituents are, and if you cannot determine who your constituents are, because of all the amendments that I have just referred to, there lies the difficulty and the difficulty in operation and daily operation. There are presently 339 export-oriented companies in operation. However, only 172 approximately of them, are contributing to

the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund in view of the fact that those which have come into operation after the year 2006 are not required to be holders of the EPZ certificate. Consequently, they are not covered by the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund Act and the employees are not benefiting from the schemes operated by the Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the prime objective of the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Bill is to remove the legal impediment now surrounding the very existence of the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund. When hon. Mrs Bappoo came up with this legislation, I am of the humble view that it was new, people did not think that it would really help workers - I think you were also in Government then - but then again with the small figures, the discipline in money being collected; it has in a big way helped the workers. We can see that even with the small sum of money, a lot can be done for the workers and their children.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the prime objective of the Manufacturing Sector Workers Fund is the remove the legal impediment now surrounding the very existence of the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund. How can we have an EPZ Labour Welfare Fund when the EPZ regime itself is no longer existent? The Fund, as it is actually, has no authority or enforcement power over non-contributing companies. It is, therefore, imperative that this situation be redressed, especially in the interest of those workers who are at present excluded and deprived from the services offered by the Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I feel privileged to bring forward this Bill whose main object is to provide for the establishment of the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund which will replace the Export Processing Zones Labour Welfare Fund. The Bill provides for the social and economic welfare applicable to workers and their families in the former Export Processing Zone to be extended, with better provisions, to workers in manufacturing enterprises in specified fields with ten or more workers, their spouses and children.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Fund in this Bill has been drafted so as to take on board all the functions of the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund, while at the same time making it more responsive to today's requirements. Mr Speaker, Sir, you will concur that the manufacturing sector is very wide and comprises companies of different size, nature and financial status. The Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Bill will, therefore, cater for workers in manufacturing enterprises operating in the fields specified in the First Schedule employing 10 or more workers. The number of workers involved will, consequently, increase from around 47,000 presently to around

70,000, implying that over 20,000 more families will benefit from the various schemes and facilities that would be provided by the new Fund. This increased coverage will be a leap towards the achievement of the Government's philosophy of improving the life and well-being of its people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, among its functions, the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund will give loans or financial assistance to workers, their spouses and children. In so doing, the Fund would be acting as a facilitator to these families who very often find themselves entangled in a quagmire of formalities when applying for loans at banks and other financial institutions. As such, the Fund will be a support mechanism in their times of difficulties and financial hardship.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the administration of the Fund, there will be a Board whose Chairperson will be appointed by the Minister. The tripartite formula is being maintained and there shall be four representatives each from the Government, employers and workers.

With regard to the registration of manufacturing enterprises, the Bill provides for every person registered under the Business Registration Act who or which employ 10 or more persons and operates in the field specified in the First Schedule to, on the commencement of the Act, be deemed to be registered with the Fund as a manufacturing enterprise under the Act. This is in line with the Government's policy of continuously easing business as the concerned enterprises will not have to re-register separately with the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund given that by virtue of their registration with the Registrar of Companies, they would be automatically registered under the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at this stage, it is proposed to maintain the contribution from employers and employees of Rs9 and Rs3 respectively, as specified in the Second Schedule. The Board will have access to the Central Business Registration Database (CBRD) under the Business Registration Act and this link will enable the Fund to have information on manufacturing companies registered with the Registrar of Companies. Such access will enable a close monitoring of contributions received and contributions not settled so that prompt follow-up action may be taken up by the Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with a view to ensuring the timely payment of contributions by employers, a penalty representing 5% of the amount of the contribution due is being introduced. This penalty, which is payable to the Fund, will be applied where manufacturing enterprises fail to remit the amount due within the prescribed period.

As already highlighted, the Fund will replace the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund. As such, I am pleased to say that every person who is employed on the permanent and pensionable establishment of the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund will be entitled to be transferred to the permanent and pensionable establishment of the Fund on terms and conditions which shall be not less favourable than those in his previous employment. Therefore, Mr Speaker Sir, there will be no loss of jobs. Moreover, the period of service of every person employed on permanent and pensionable establishment of the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund who is transferred to the Fund shall be considered to be an unbroken period of service with the Fund. Furthermore, all assets of the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund will be vested in the new Fund and any loan granted under the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund and outstanding at the commencement of the Act shall be deemed to have been granted and remain outstanding under the Act.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you will surely appreciate that we cannot do otherwise than to correct the anomaly prevailing in the very foundation and existence of the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund. It is my endeavour, through the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Bill, to bring the necessary redress, especially in the interest of the workers who are striving to improve their standard of living and thus contributing to the prosperity of the country.

I would like to also place on record, Mr Speaker, Sir, not only the 47,000 workers in the export sector that are really contributing to the economy of our country. I would like also to place on record all those other workers who are helping our economy growth and who are working and toiling away day in day out with one objective, yes, of earning a living, but at the same time, without them this country would not be where it is today. So, I would like to, therefore, place on record my deep appreciation for all workers, not only in this sector, but all the workers of this land and also the migrant workers who have helped this country reach the status of respect that it has not only in the region, but internationally.

I would also like to place on record, Mr Speaker, Sir, the unflinching commitment of my whole staff of the Ministry ranging from my Permanent Secretary, to my Permanent Assistant Secretary, to the Director of Labour, to all and every single officers of my Ministry. I would like to place my appreciation for them to have helped in the preparation of this Bill as well as the staff from the State Law Office who has, in a lot of ways, helped us come up with this Bill.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I now commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Choonee rose and seconded.

(6.26 p.m.)

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Mr Speaker, Sir, of course, on this side of the House, we welcome the Bill, as we did, in 1987, when the Bill was first introduced in the House. In fact, when the Bill was introduced, on this side, we were in the Opposition, but then hon. Ganoo, who was the spokesperson, did welcome the Bill, and we made certain suggestions when the Bill was passed with regard to penalties to be imposed on companies who did not contribute as per the law. But, unfortunately, at that time our proposal was not taken on board. When we came back in Government, with the MSM, we did amend the law to bring back a penalty for those employers who did not contribute or who refused to contribute to the Welfare Fund.

Whenever it comes to law, improving the welfare of workers, we are all for it. When I am speaking here today, I am not only speaking on behalf of the MMM or the Opposition, I have also consulted many trade unions. In fact, up to this morning, I was talking to them, and some were surprised that this law was coming to Parliament today, and some expressed their regrets that there was no consultation with them whatsoever. Although I must say that that Bill was in circulation for Members of Parliament for more or less two weeks now but, unfortunately, it would seem that in preparing this Bill, there have been no consultations with the trade unions. This is a matter of regret, because we need their cooperation. They will be represented on the Board and the more so they represent the workers whose money they are going to *gérer*. We have to remember that each and every worker will have to contribute Rs3. They are contributing now and they will have to contribute Rs3 every month out of their salary.

The law was passed in 1987, we try to improve it, I will say, when my good friend, hon. Soodhun, was Minister of Labour. Now we have an opportunity of creating a new institution altogether. We should have taken on board the shortcomings, the maladministration of the Fund as it is now and see how we can, through the law, bring more transparency, more control and accountability to that Fund. But, unfortunately, this Bill does not do that. If we look at that Bill, and if I look at the EPZ Welfare Fund, it is more or less a photocopy of what the EPZ Welfare Fund is, except that it gives more powers to the Minister, and in certain cases, more powers and liberty which is not accountable to members of the Board. So, the actual Fund itself – the hon. Minister rightly mentioned that we are moving from the welfare of 47,000 workers to 70,000

workers. But, when we listen to the figures mentioned by the hon. Minister himself about how many people have benefited, it is negligible. Negligible! 76% people only benefitted for wedding...

(Interruptions)

This Fund now caters for 47,000 workers from the EPZ, after this Bill we will get 70,000. But, are all the 70,000 people benefiting? What we have heard from the hon. Minister, the number that he has given himself shows clearly less than 10%, not even 7,000 people have benefited from this! The complaint that the workers, the trade unionists have levelled is that there is a lack of transparency, red tape, no consultation and no accountability. The workers want to know where their Rs3 are going. Even for those who are selected to benefit from this Fund, there seems to be a collusion between certain members and human resource persons in certain factories. This does not go directly to the workers. If there is an activity or there is a scheme, communication is only between the level of certain Board Members and certain human resource personnel in the industry. This is one of the main complaints of the Union that there is a total lack of transparency in the administration of the Fund and there are no specific guidelines or specific criteria that one needs to benefit from that Fund. *Cela est fait au petit bonheur* and there is even allegation of favoritism as such Board Member knows the other one and okay, his demand is attended to in a speedy way while for others there is even no reply. This is what I have learnt from the workers, I have never applied for a loan there. But, representatives of the workers have made these remarks.

When we look at another issue as this applies to all the workers even the foreign ones. But, they do not benefit anything from this, there is only one annual event which they call the Migrant Day on which they are given the party with a coca-cola or a *gateau* and that is all for them. But, they contribute like any other worker the sum of Rs3 per month! They are here on contract. If they are here on contract for three years, at least, they should benefit something for their welfare as well. Why is it that foreign workers are not entitled to any assistance when, in fact, they are contributing monetarily to that Fund?

The main complaint about this Fund is that - I thought that the hon. Minister would have spoken about it or, at least, we would have something in the law which says if the qualification, the CVs, let us put it generally, of those who sit on that Board. Actually according to my information, there is a politically appointed Chairman against whom there have been many

allegations, even declaration at Floréal Police station of harassment. There has even been a Fact-Finding Committee on the actual Chairman following certain allegations. This Fact-Finding Committee has made its report, but it has not been made public. So, the workers are contributing to a Fund chaired by a chairman who is politically appointed, upon whom there are so many allegations and he is still *en place*! Nobody knows what is happening to him and what is happening to the allegations against him! There have even been questions put in Parliament by one hon. Member about that *agitation* of that gentleman. Again, when we do certain institutions, in the law we say he must be a person of such and such qualifications or has served in the industry for such and such time, but for a chairman of such an important institution which is supposed to look at the welfare of the Fund, his qualification must be only that he shall be appointed by the Minister, which makes it worse than the situation in which it was under the previous law because under the previous law the chairman 'shall be a person appointed by the Minister from amongst the Members'. At that time there was a representative of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Finance, Industry and four representatives of workers and four representatives of employers. It was amongst them that the chairman was selected. But now we will have an independent from outside, with no limitation on his qualification! Mr Speaker, Sir, to recruit a watchman in one of these industries, a security guard, you must have a qualification because you need, at least, a certificate of morality. Here, you can put anybody! There is no mention of any qualification in the law! I am not directing myself to the Minister, it is the law as it is. Tomorrow we can appoint anybody with whatever certificate, with whatever *casier judiciaire*, with whatever *mauvaise habitude* he can have to be that chairman because he has been appointed! The law does not limit his appointment.

I have no problem for the union at least. Here we have no problem with the representative of these four Ministries. But we should have improved. We are living in a democratic country where we are telling the workers that they are going to contribute to a Fund, but their representative will be appointed by the Minister after consultation with the trade union! What is this? Why not the trade unions themselves elect their four representatives? They say they want Mr A, B, C, D to be on the Board. Why is it that the Minister should appoint after consultation and, my information is that consultation has been very often, not only in this case, but wherever we mention the word 'selective'. Why don't we put it in the law that the workers choose their four representatives to run their own money? The same applies to the representatives of the

employers. Why is it that the Minister, whoever that may be, who chooses to appoint the representatives of the employers? Let them sit themselves and choose who are the four people that they want and, after having had a proper election of the four representatives from the union, four representatives of employers, let them select their chairman. Why is it that the chairman should be somebody from outside? Had it been in the law that it should be somebody who is well versed with the management of Fund, he should be an accountant or a professional, that would be okay. But, at least he must have some qualification. He must be a professional.

There is a request especially when we are talking about the welfare of the workers and their children that there should have been a representative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports on the Board so that they could organise certain leisure activities for these workers especially in specific periods, in specific times.

There is a request from certain trade unions that, at least, there should have been a representative from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, so that they could organise certain activities. Now, there is only one annual event on 01 May, when the workers are taken to the seaside, and the other event is Migrant Day for immigrant workers. If we want to talk about welfare and leisure, there should have probably been a representative from the Ministry of Sports.

The other issue - which I hope the hon. Minister will inform us about - is why in the previous law the appointment was for a period of two years, and eligible for re-appointment for two consecutive terms of two years, whereas in this law there is no limitation with regard to their appointment. It is good to change because a long time in office brings bad practice sometime. It is good to renew every two years, every four years, where you bring in new blood. The unions probably want new representatives and other people too want new representatives. Why have we deleted this? This is no limitation with regard to the terms of office. In practice - if it works - the idea behind is very good. But, unfortunately, with experience, we have seen that the EPZ Welfare Fund has not benefited a great majority of workers. Now, we are increasing it to 70,000 with the same composition of the Board. Are they are going to be able to manage that Fund properly and ensure that the optimum number of workers get, at least, a little piece of cake from that Welfare Fund? This is *la crainte* that there is outside. With 47,000, they are not in a position to manage it properly. Are they are going to be able to manage 70,000, when we know that most of the people on this Board will be appointed by the hon. Minister? Again, if we choose to have

another political appointee to head this Board, it will be a catastrophe for the EPZ Welfare Fund, as we have seen in many cases.

My appeal is that, at least, with regard to the appointment, we make sure that it is not another job for the boys, that we put a real professional and that the representatives of the workers be by direct election. Let the workers choose their representatives on that Board. Let the employers choose their representatives on that Board.

I have done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.44 p.m.)

Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will also join my colleague, hon. Baloomoody, in welcoming this Bill.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with great emotion that I am addressing this august Assembly with regard to the proposed legislation introduced to replace the EPZ Welfare Fund. I do remember that when I was a trade unionist representing the EPZ workers, then hon. Mrs Bappoo was the Minister of Labour. At that time, we were working hand in hand to introduce this legislation that would take care of the workers. I remember that we even went together to the ILO, and we discussed this Bill very laudably with them.

We have a long history of trade union action for the betterment of the working class. In the 80's, when we engineered the economic miracle, the then Government did everything to see to it that our workers get their share. Our only wealth was our human resources at that time, and we had to do everything to promote the welfare of the working class. If I am not mistaken, I think the EPZ Welfare Fund was the first welfare fund created for the workers.

(Interruptions)

Yes, it was the second. The Sugar Industry Welfare Fund was the first. Then, we came forward with the EPZ Welfare Fund, which was created in 1987-1988. It had a very important role because there were almost 80,000 workers in that sector, and they were working hard to honour the orders.

Definitely, with this new Bill, we are going to increase the workers' contribution and the funds will be increased. I have gone through the Bill and there is no mention about accountability, but the hon. Minister has given some details about the activities of the Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been in recent years - as my hon. friend mentioned - allegation of wrongdoing in the management of the EPZ Welfare Fund. Really, it is a pity, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Fund created for the welfare of the workers of the manufacturing sector is being mismanaged. In my opinion, we cannot blame the hon. Minister because I remember that when we created this EPZ Welfare Fund, it was rightly decided that the Chairman should be the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry. The pattern was ever since maintained and the Chairperson remained the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations. It should be a person who can be trusted and who knows the technicalities of the Ministry. It is a good initiative of the hon. Minister to open it to factory workers. As we have many EPZ workers, I think it's a good initiative that the factory workers should also contribute.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we had a problem recently with a General Manager. I am sure that the hon. Minister has a lot of problems because most of the time the General Manager is chosen by the Ministry - I do not know exactly. Recently, we had a case of a General Manager of *le Jardin des Pamplémousses*. We have seen how many problems there are when we don't have a qualified General Manager. For this post, as my hon. friend has mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, we should not create a situation where political appointees with no competence are nominated, thus resulting in mismanagement of this new Fund.

As we know the new Fund will regroup thousands of workers of the private sector contributing tens of millions of rupees. I think good governance should be our main objective. Hence, I propose that the post of General Manager should be an open advertisement to ensure that the Fund benefits from the best candidate, without any political interference. I wish that the hon. Minister will be in full consultation with the trade union as I think it would be in the interest of the hon. Minister himself to have qualified people applying. As my friend mentioned, we encountered problems with the former General Manager.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, when setting up the EPZ Welfare Fund in 1987, the Chairperson was not a political nominee and there was no mismanagement. I don't think that there was any mismanagement when the Permanent Secretary presided over this Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for several years there has been constant growth in the construction sector. However, the workers of the construction sector have been kept aside and we have nothing for these workers. I suggest that workers of the construction sector also be taken into

consideration when the Minister is now coming forward with the factory workers. I think this is the only sector that remains if I am not mistaken.

I make a humble appeal to the Minister because we have more than 50,000 workers in the construction industry. I think it is high time to set up a 'Construction Welfare Fund', in order to give the same facilities to these workers. My hon. colleague made a valuable suggestion and I am not blaming the hon. Minister as such, but I am sure that he is going to consider the suggestion made concerning the General Manager and Chairman.

I think it is a good suggestion that has been made. I have been Minister of Labour myself and I know that workers choose their own representatives. The workers are not well informed about the right person in the right place. I think we can leave it to the members of the trade unions to choose their own representatives in a very democratic way.

M. le président je voudrais insister sur le fait que la gestion du fonds des travailleurs doit être géré en toute transparence afin d'inspirer confiance parmi les travailleurs.

This question of transparency is very important. And as my friend mentioned - I am sure that the accountability of this Fund is referred to the Director of Audit also. With the representatives of the workers, with the representatives of the employers and those of different Ministries I am sure that we will have a better control. Because, Sir, they will have access to the accounts and knowledge on how the fund is being utilised.

Sir, I also accept that we did not think much about migrant workers. In fact, I myself have to say that when I was Minister I did not do much for the migrant workers because we were concerned with the local workers but, it is not too late and we can do more for them. Sometimes it is very difficult to organise things, but it would be a good thing if we could arrange something together with the local and migrant workers. Normally, local workers benefit from a lot of advantages. For example, there is a loan for wedding, a loan for buying school books and facilities for scholarship. I think that is a very good decision to increase the Fund because if you don't have enough fund you can't do much. I am making an appeal to Government in that direction. I remember that since the beginning of the setting of this Fund, Government contributed only Rs4 m.

I am making a request to the hon. Minister that due to the increase in the cost of living that this Fund be increased. I think in the past it was one rupee or two rupees and they increase it around Rs3 to Rs9, but Government's contribution has remained the same.

To end, Mr Speaker, Sir, once again I must say that we are happy that not only the workers of the export sector but those of the manufacturing sector also will have the same opportunities. I think it was an anomaly and today they are going to correct it.

With this, I would like to thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.57 p.m.)

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank hon. Soodhun for his suggestions and ideas. As far as his suggestion concerning the workers in the construction industry, let me admit that I believe that indeed it is a valid suggestion. Clearly, it cannot be considered under this particular piece of legislation. However, I believe that it would be an interesting suggestion to go for the creation of a new Fund altogether for the employees of the construction industry. I will look into that and I thank him for his suggestion.

Now, as we all realise, you yourself have been Minister of Labour so you are aware of all the intricacies of the need to have migrant workers on board. As it stands for migrant workers, as yet, there is no legal impediment - when you look at the law that says that they cannot take advantage of the benefits of the Fund.

Let me, at least, enlighten Members of this august Assembly that with regard to the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund, as we speak, as at now, there have been 57,093 beneficiaries from 1989 to June 2012. We have scholarship schemes; stipend for SC and HSC exam fees for 1,510 people, tertiary: 225. We have, for example, Housing Enhancing Scheme for 2,756 people; transport facilities for outings. 29,340 people have benefitted. We have 8,530 people who have benefitted from the migrant deal that has started in 2002. So, in actual fact 57,093 people have benefitted from the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund.

I would humbly disagree with hon. Baloomoody because I do not believe that it is right to say that only a few people have benefitted from that Fund. I believe that when we talk about 45,000 workers right now, already more than 57,000 people have benefitted from it. It has, in other words, been a very successful Fund.

As far as the appointment of the Chairman is concerned, the Chairman, up to now, before this new Bill will be voted, is the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour. True it is, there have been problems with the former General Manager who was appointed ever since 1989 – one of the first General Managers - and at the same time, the Chairman then was the Permanent

Secretary. I am not saying that the Permanent Secretary was at fault for anything, but, in actual fact, it does not necessarily, therefore, mean that it is only a Permanent Secretary who has to be there in order to avoid problems arising.

Now, as far as issues of accountability are concerned - because the issue of lack of transparency and accountability was raised - let me say that the Fund is managed by the Board and all procedures and requirements regarding the submission of Annual Reports and other procedures are respected and the accounts are laid down on the Table of the National Assembly. So, as far as the issues of transparency and accountability are concerned, I am of the humble view that this has been taken care of.

Now, as far as appointment of the Chairman is concerned and the issue of political appointment is concerned and the issue of, once again, what type of person we are going to appoint, let's not forget that I am Minister responsible for the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund. Now, this Fund is going to change its appellation and *on va brasser plus large*; 70,000 or so workers, but whoever is appointed there by the Minister, it is open. I am accountable to this august Assembly and if I am to appoint someone who has no qualification and who has got a criminal record, for instance, I mean, I would be accountable, and I would have to stand or fall by the type of person that is appointed. I can, therefore, reassure the hon. Members of this august Assembly, Mr Speaker, Sir, that you can have no better means of verification tests than this august Assembly itself. So, I believe that we are all hon. Members and for that reason we have to believe in the system of checks and verification present, here, in this august Assembly.

With regards to Mr Mohit, yes, there has been a problem at some stage when he was General Manager. I have answered a question in this august Assembly with regards to this. There was a Disciplinary Committee that was held. He was asked to retire in the interest of the Fund and, therefore, things are moving as they are.

Now, with regards to, as I have said already, migrant workers, I would like to come back on that. True it is, as hon. Soodhun has said, sometimes you say that you have yourself not really thought about the issue of migrant workers. But, I must say that you will recall that the Bangladeshi workers that passed away on this very tragic road accident and, here, I would like to commend the Chairman of the Board who is my Permanent Secretary and all the members of the Board, the General Manager there, who did an excellent job, because, in actual fact, when we had to repatriate those poor migrant workers to Dhaka, financially it was the EPZ Labour

Welfare Fund - not only through the various Mosques and the Mauritians that helped - that intervened and intervened rapidly and paid whatever had to be paid and it was quite hefty sums.

Also, with regards to migrant workers, the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund, once again, you will hear recently there was the problem with the Bentley Factory where you had workers from Bangladesh who were stranded because the Receiver- Manager was not giving the amounts of money required in order for them to eat even and to be repatriated and a lot of them were going around asking for help from the inhabitants of the Camp Yolloff, Plaine Verte and Cité Martial area. But I must say that when I heard about that, I spoke to my Permanent Secretary and I, once again, thanked the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund. They have intervened to give each of those workers, if I am not mistaken, a minimum of Rs3,000 going up to a maximum of Rs5,000, if need be, in order to help them to eat and survive for a few days. A big help it has been, and they were very thankful about it. So, where we can see that, yes, the EPZ Labour Welfare Fund has also helped, in other words, migrant workers not only going to Migrant Day or '*Anou Alle La Mer*', etc., but they have helped in moments when really the help of this organisation was really required. So, in other words, let me say that I can assure the hon. Members, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is not in our habit in any way to go for a piece of legislation that we have not thought of very carefully.

With regard to sportspersons that can be brought in, there is a clause in the Bill that provides for co-opting of members. So, I am sure if ever the issue of sports does arise - and I am sure it will at some stage - there will be co-opting of members.

With regard to the trade unionists on Board, I mean, they are there, there are consultations, Mr Speaker, Sir, as hon. Soodhun and Mrs Bappoo said. Once again, if I, as Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, am to appoint someone who was not at all suggested during the consultations, I open myself to questions in this august Assembly as 'well, you know, you have gone against the suggestions made by trade unionists'. And I would not take that risk. I can assure you. So, we have, in our political Parliamentary system, an excellent means of checks and balances and we thank God for that. That is why I believe that we cannot write each and every single detail in a piece of legislation. We are a mature democracy and we have to, therefore, have respect for our democracy like other foreigners have.

So, for those reasons I thank, once again, all hon. Members for their interests and I would like to conclude on the following: this piece of legislation shows that once again it is the hon.

Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam as the Leader of the House, who has encouraged me to come forward with this piece of legislation because he has at heart the interests of all workers and would like me to increase the 45,000 workers who benefit from the Fund to more workers that were being left out. And I am happy to see that not only we have our Prime Minister who thinks for the benefit of workers; we also have a constructive debate today where all of us are thinking alike.

Thank you, very much.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Bill (No. XXVI of 2012) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund Bill (No. XXVI of 2012) was read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 18 December 2012 at 11.30 a.m.

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

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 7.17 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 18 December 2012 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**COUGH MIXTURES - IMPORTS**

(No. B/691) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the cough mixtures containing codeine and codeine-derivatives, he will state -

- (a) if they are readily available in public hospitals, and
- (b) the policy of his Ministry for the issue of import permits therefor to the private sector, indicating the -
 - (i) protocol for the distribution thereof by the importers and to the individual pharmacies, and
 - (ii) monitoring effected, if any, for the prevention of dispensing abuse by the pharmacies.

Reply: I am informed that opiate derivatives are used as ingredients in cough mixtures for treating dry cough. These opiate derivatives include pholcodine, codeine and codeine derivatives and tincture of opium in Gee's linctus. In public hospitals, pholcodine mixture and Gee's linctus are used.

With regard to part (b), special permits are granted to the private sector for the import of codeine based products. The quantum to be imported is determined on the basis of consumption patterns which are monitored by the Pharmacy Board of my Ministry.

With regard to part (c), I am informed that importers in turn set a monthly quota of supply to individual retail pharmacies. Furthermore, the following measures are in place to ensure that there is no abuse or misuse of codeine related products on the market -

- (i) strict monitoring is exercised on the import of codeine based products. Since 2010, all quota for import of codeine based products have been reduced by an average 50%;
- (ii) circular letters have been issued to all pharmacies since 2007 informing them that all sales of codeine preparations including cough syrups should be on prescription only;

- (iii) regular inspections of private pharmacies are carried out by Government Pharmacists. There are two types of inspections carried out -
 - (1) routine inspections and
 - (2) those carried out together with the ADSU
- (iv) routine inspections are regularly done at the request of the Registrar of the Pharmacy Board. Inspectors work according to a check-list provided to them and make reports of irregularities on the sale of Codeine syrups and Codeine based cough syrups. These reports are transmitted to the Pharmacy Board for necessary action. And, whenever deemed necessary, the Pharmacy Board has taken disciplinary actions. The Pharmacy Board also reports illegal transactions to the Police for further enquiry and actions including Court proceedings, and
- (v) inspections with the ADSU are carried out following information gathered by the ADSU. In two cases, the outcome has been the arrest of the pharmacist as well as of the licensee.

Furthermore, following advice from the Attorney General's Office, my Ministry proposes to take the following additional measures under the Pharmacy Act 1983 -

- (i) a Poison Book will be kept by retail pharmacies containing all the identification details of the purchaser and the prescriber for the purpose of traceability;
- (ii) all prescriptions of codeine based products will be kept for a period of two years for verification whenever required, and
- (iii) Pharmacists will be required to submit weekly returns of sales of codeine based products to the Pharmacy Board.

Furthermore, my Ministry will introduce triplicate prescription forms for the sale of codeine based products.

This measure will enable my Ministry to closely monitor the sale of such products by cross checking the Poison's Book together with the original prescription forwarded to the Ministry.

WORKERS (FOREIGN) - NATIONALITY

(No. B/692) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the foreign workers, he will state the number thereof currently working in Mauritius, category-wise and sector-wise, indicating their respective nationality, since 2010 to date.

(Withdrawn)

DOUBLE TAXATION AVOIDANCE TREATIES

(No. B/693) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the double taxation avoidance treaties, he will state if he has received requests for the renegotiation thereof, and if so, indicate in each case, the -

- (a) name of the country;
- (b) details of the changes sought, and
- (c) outcome thereof.

Reply: The Government has always adopted a strategy for the development of our Financial Services Sector which is based on being recognised as a jurisdiction of good repute and compliant with international standards. In that regard, my Ministry has over the last seven years been continuously engaged in updating our existing Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAA), either upon request received from our treaty partners or on our own initiative. Moreover, we have also been engaged in negotiating a number of Tax Information Exchange

Agreements based on the international standards recommended by the OECD during the same period.

With regard to part (a) of the question, as at 11 December 2012, we have over the years received requests for renegotiations of Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements from 14 Countries namely, China, Germany, South Africa, Sweden, Rwanda, Oman, Mozambique, Seychelles, Malaysia, Barbados, Lesotho, Nigeria, Singapore and India. We have on our own initiated actions to update our agreements with the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Belgium and Luxembourg. We have also negotiated Tax Information Agreements with Australia, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Greece, Guernsey and India.

Regarding parts (b) and (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that in view of the fact that the agreements have not yet been finalised, it would not be proper at this stage to disclose on the changes proposed as well as the outcome thereof. However, we will ensure that at all times our interest is preserved.

For the DTAAAs with China, the United Kingdom, France Italy, Germany, Sweden and Seychelles, to the extent that all legal procedures have already been completed, I am tabling details on the changes brought to them.

SCHOOLS (PUBLIC) - EXPENDITURE

(No. B/694) Mr J.F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the public schools, he will state the average expenditure incurred for the education of a student thereof, respectively at pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels, giving a breakdown thereof.

Reply: The average expenditure for the education of a student in a public school in the Island of Mauritius, per year, is as follows -

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------|---|-----------|
| (a) | Pre-primary | : | Rs 17,352 |
| (b) | Primary | : | Rs 28,000 |

(c) Secondary : Rs 42,000

A copy each of the breakdowns in pre-primary, primary and secondary levels in respect of the Island of Mauritius is being laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

The expenditure figures for Rodrigues are being compiled.

With regard to information for the tertiary level, I have referred the matter to the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science Research & Technology.

SCHOOLS – ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/695) Mr J.F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of the new subject *entrepreneurship* in the schools by the year 2013, he will state where matters stand, giving details thereof.

Reply: Entrepreneurship education is a lifelong learning process. Its initiation in schools would help lay students' foundations for self employment and further education in academic or vocational streams.

As announced in the Government Programme 2012-2015, my Ministry is introducing Entrepreneurship studies as part of the secondary school curriculum.

As an immediate measure, Entrepreneurship Education will be introduced as a compulsory core component of Social Studies as from Term II in Form I on a pilot basis and a compulsory module in Lower VI as from next year.

In Lower 6, it will be of 15 hour duration over 2 terms and will be sanctioned by an Award Certificate.

I wish to add that Social Studies are presently being taught during 4 periods per week in Form 1. However, as from next year 5 periods will be devoted to it, of which 2 of them will be reserved for the teaching of Entrepreneurship Education.

Some 17 schools, 4 in each zone, comprising state and private schools including 1 in Rodrigues, namely Le Chou College, will pilot the Entrepreneurship Education in 2013. It is envisaged to extend the project to all schools in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega, after the pilot stage.

In a near future, my Ministry is envisaging to have Entrepreneurship Education as an optional subject in Forms IV and V also. Modalities will be worked out in consultation with the

Mauritius Examination Syndicate and the Cambridge International Examinations so that Entrepreneurship Education will be an optional examinable subject at School Certificate level.

The overall aim is to enhance the life skills and entrepreneurship skills of our young students and prepare them for the world of work, especially for those who will not be able to go for further studies, and will enter '*de plain-pied*' the world of work. This will be an excellent opportunity to link school with the world of work.

CWA - CHAIRPERSON - CAR PURCHASE

(No. B/696) 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 Mr P. S., Chairperson of the Central Water Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the year of purchase of the car presently put at his disposal and the mileage thereof as at date, indicating if an order has been placed for the replacement thereof and, if so, indicate the price thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Water Authority that the car presently put at the disposal of the Chairperson of the Central Water Board was purchased on 26 October 2012 for the sum of Rs2,282,086.96 excluding VAT. The mileage as at 07 December 2012 was 1375 km.

The previous car used by the Chairman was purchased in January 2006 and the mileage thereof as at end of August 2012 was 176,426 km.

CUREPIPE - FORUM BUILDING - RENOVATION

(No. B/697) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the building housing the Forum in Curepipe, he will state if he has been informed of the new initiatives taken for the -

- (a) pulling down and the reconstruction thereof, and
- (b) leasing out of the land on which stands the building and vested in the Municipal Council of Curepipe and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, in each case, information as to the -
 - (i) reasons therefor;
 - (ii) expected expenditure to be incurred/revenue to be accrued, and
 - (iii) timing thereof.

Reply: I am informed that the Municipal Council of Curepipe has decided that the building should not be pulled down, but renovated instead.

In this context, a team of professionals from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping comprising Architects, Quantity Surveyors, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers has recommended that the Council should appoint a consulting team to assess the extent and nature of the renovation works required and to make an estimate of the costs involved. I am informed that the tender documents for the appointment of the consulting team have already been prepared and the Council will call for public tender in due course.

As soon as the details of the renovation works are known, an appropriate formula will be worked out for their funding.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Council has no intention to lease out the land on which stands Le Forum and which is vested in it as the building will be renovated for use as a market fair.

MAURICE ILE DURABLE FUND - MONEY APPROPRIATED

(No. B/698) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the Maurice Ile Durable Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fund, information as to the -

- (a) amount of money appropriated thereto, including the MID tax and grants from donor organisations;
- (b) number of programmes implemented thereunder, indicating in each case, the costs thereof;
- (c) amount of money disbursed by the Fund, on a yearly basis, since the implementation thereof to date, and
- (d) reasons as to why Mr V. J. is no longer the President of the Fund.

Reply: I am informed that the amount of money appropriated to the *Maurice Ile Durable* Fund since the setting up of the Fund in 2008 is Rs1400 m.

I am also informed that the amount collected as MID Levy is credited directly to the Consolidated Fund from where the required amount is transferred to the MID Fund. Besides, no grants from donor organisations have been credited to the MID Fund.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am tabling a list of 24 programmes implemented so far under the MID Fund.

The amount of money disbursed by the Fund since 2008 is as follows –

Year	Amount (Rs)
July 2008-June 2009	103 m.
July 2009-Dec 2009	205 m.
2010	140 m.
2011	10 m.
2012 (up to 10 December)	158.5 m.

Mr V. J. resigned as Chairperson of the MID Fund on 08 August 2012 as he was not agreeable with the quantum of fees payable to him as Chairperson.

LA TOUR KOENIG HEALTH CENTRE - UPGRADING

(No. B/699) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the La Tour Koenig Health Centre, he will state if there is any project for the improvement thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed that the building housing the Michael Leal Community Health Centre at La Tour Koenig is small, with a surface area of about 400 sq ft.

The population in the catchment area has increased significantly over the years and consequently my Ministry envisaged the upgrading of the Community Health Centre. However, upon the advice of the then Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping to the effect that the site did not allow for extension of the building, my Ministry approached the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the identification of an alternate site to construct a new Community Health Centre.

Since no suitable site was identified, my Ministry took the decision of renting a building of around 1200-2000 sq ft.

Unfortunately on two different occasions, tenders were launched, but no responsive bid was received, with the result that specifications have now been reviewed and tenders will be launched shortly.

Now that we have recruited additional doctors, my Ministry has taken the following actions as an interim measure pending longer term solutions -

- (i) the number of weekly doctor consultations has been increased from 6 to 8;
- (ii) the number of blood collection sessions has been increased to twice weekly, and
- (iii) infrastructural works have been carried out, including the construction of a counter for the records section on an outside wall of the CHC, the renovation of the adjoining shed, the installation of benches and enclosure with galvanised sheets in order to create a larger waiting area for patients. Direct access for patients from the waiting area to the consultation room has also been provided by opening another door in the consultation room.

These measures will allow for a better flow of patients, thus reducing overcrowding and improving the service delivery at the Health Centre.

PETIT CAMP, PHOENIX - FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/700) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the construction of a football ground at Petit Camp, Phoenix, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

PRE-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION – EXTENSION PROGRAMME

(No. B/701) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the pre-vocational streams in secondary schools, he will state if the promotion to Form IV will be effected in January 2013.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that in the context of the implementation of the educational policy reform agenda encapsulated in the Education and Human Resource Strategy Plan 2008-2020, Government approved a new strategy for the prevocational education sector on 16 December 2011 with a view to making it an integral part of the secondary schooling.

The objective is to give Prevocational Education a new strategic orientation such that it addresses the current challenges and becomes responsive to the needs of an economy which is becoming more and more skills and technology driven.

This new strategy is being implemented as from January 2012 in a phased manner.

One of the pillars of the new strategy is the extension of the programme duration from 3 to 4 years with a new curriculum aligned on the New Curriculum Framework for the secondary and implementation will be done in collaboration with the MITD.

During the transition phase, those students who have been attending Prevocational Year 3 in 2012 and who have not been exposed to the new curriculum will be enrolled in 2013 for the National Certificate Foundation Course at the MITD, as it has always been the case

This Foundation course will now be delivered over 3 full days at the MITD Training Centres. The remaining 2 days would be held at the secondary schools and would be utilised to run a special remedial programme focusing more on literacy and numeracy.

I would like to highlight that this new programme will lead to a formal certification pitched on the National Qualifications Framework recognized by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority, thereby allowing the Pre Voc students for pathways for lifelong learning.

SIR SEEWOOSAGUR RAMGOOLAM BOTANIC GARDEN - UPGRADING

(No. B/702) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security whether, in regard to the Sir Seewoosagur Botanic Garden, he will state if he has been informed of the severe degradation thereof, and if so, indicate the remedial measures taken, if any.

Reply: I am informed that there is no degradation at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden. However, an infestation of the Giant Water Lily pond by the Golden Apple Snail was reported thereat. The snails were causing significant damage to the leaves of the Giant Water Lily, commonly known as “Nenuphars”.

Subsequently, an assessment of the situation regarding the pond and the Water Lily was carried out. Appropriate measures were taken immediately.

Following the measures taken, I am informed that the Giant Water Lilies have already started regenerating.

AUTOMATIC SYSTEMS LTD. & GLOBALSPORTS LTD. – POOLS -COMMINGLING

(No. B/703) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to Automatic Systems Ltd. and Globalsports Ltd., he will state if he has approved the decision of the Competition Commission to authorise the commingling of pools between these two companies.

Reply: Section 39 of the Gambling Regulatory Act, provides that it is the Gambling Regulatory Authority that can receive application and authorise a totalisator operator to combine its pools with the corresponding pool of another totalisator operator as per approved terms and conditions.

I am informed by the Gambling Regulatory Authority that it approved on 13 September 2011 the Commingling of pools between the two Totalisator companies namely Automatic Systems Ltd and Globalsports Ltd, operating under the trade name Supertote and Totelepep respectively, after it had obtained confirmation from the Competition Commission of Mauritius that the proposed commingling would not lead to any infringement to the provisions of the Competition Act 2007.

Both Supertote and Totelepep have to comply strictly with the undertakings signed on 11 August 2011 by both of them and Competition Commission of Mauritius.

TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS - QUALITY ASSURANCE MODEL

(No. B/704) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the presentation of the Approach, Deployment, Results, Improvement Quality Assurance Model made to publicly funded tertiary education institutions during the Quality Assurance Committee meeting held on 19 October 2011, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission –

- (a) copy thereof and table same;
- (b) information as to;
 - (i) if same was approved by the management of the Commission;
 - (ii) the name of the officers involved in the preparation thereof, indicating their respective designations and qualifications, and
 - (iii) the name of the officer who made the presentation.

Reply: I am tabling a copy of the Approach, Deployment, Result and Improvement (ADRI) Quality Assurance Model presented to Tertiary Education Institutions during a meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee of Tertiary Education Commission held on 19 October 2011. As I indicated in my written reply to PQ B/340 of 19 June 2012 from the hon. member, the Tertiary Education Commission recommended that model to Tertiary Education Institutions for submission of progress reports on actions taken to address recommendations of an Audit Report.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that -

- (i) the presentation is a routine exercise of sharing of best practices as an update on quality assurance initiatives used internationally and which professionals adapt to their requirements,
- (ii) a team comprising Dr P. Mohadeb, ex-Executive Director, Mrs K Putty-Rogbeer, Quality Assurance & Accreditation Officer who participated in an auditor's training workshop organised by the Australian Universities Quality Agency and Ms R. Keejoo, Research Assistant worked on the presentation. I am tabling a copy of their qualifications, and

- (iii) the presentation was made by Mrs K. Putty-Rogbeer, Quality Assurance & Accreditation Officer.

CENTRAL FLACQ - NEW MARKET - STALLS

(No. B/705) Mr P. Roopun (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the new market at Central Flacq, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Moka Flacq, information as to -

- (a) the number of stalls available, indicating the -
 - (i) terms and conditions of lease thereof, and
 - (ii) criteria and procedure followed for the allocation thereof
- (b) if it was informed of an incident involving stall holders and members of the public requiring police intervention, indicating the nature thereof, and
- (c) if it has received representations in relation to the allocation of the stalls thereat and if so, the actions taken in relation thereto.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Moka-Flacq District Council that there is a total number of 1,338 stalls available as follows –

Fair: Haberdashery Section	617
Vegetable & Fruits Section	588
7 Days Market	38
Meat/Poultry/Fish: Beef	1
Pork	1
Venison	1
Poultry	3
Fish	3
Foodcourt	78
Craft Market	8

With regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed that the lease is for a period not exceeding 3 years in accordance with of the Local Government Act 2011 Section 57 and may expressly be renewed for a further period not exceeding 3 years.

With regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that the following criteria were followed for the allocation of stalls –

- to existing stall holders in ex-market, ex-fair, temporary fair in ex-Fire Station;
- illegal operators and holders of hawkers licence operating regularly in an illegal manner within 1 km of the fair on a daily basis and who earn a living out of this activity;
- the sellers should be resident of Moka and Flacq Districts;
- the stall holders have no arrears due to the Council, and
- their products category falls in the following zones –

(i)	Vegetable	-	Operating Wednesdays and Sundays
(ii)	Potato	-	Operating Wednesdays and Sundays
(iii)	Fruits	-	Operating Wednesdays and Sundays
(iv)	Eggs	-	Operating Wednesdays and Sundays
(v)	Food Court I and II	-	Operating on a 7 days basis
(vi)	Beverage	-	Operating on a 7 days basis
(vii)	Craft Market	-	Operating on a 7 days basis
(viii)	7 Days Market	-	Operating on a 7 days basis
(ix)	Meat/Poultry/Fish/Pork	-	Operating on a 7 days basis
(x)	Haberdashery	-	Operating from Tuesdays to Sundays

The following procedures were followed –

- stalls were allocated to sellers falling in these criteria through drawing of lots, and

- before signature of contract – stallholders were required to settle all arrears and pay for their rental up to 31 December 2012.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that there was an incident on Wednesday 24 October 2012 regarding disturbance caused by two stallholders and members of the public in the fair where police intervention was required. I am further informed that two persons were arrested and released on bail.

As regard part (c) of the question, I am informed that the following representations have been received after allocation of stalls –

- complaint regarding shifting of stalls from one category to another which has already been entertained where possible;
- request for additional stalls which could not be entertained;
- modification of stalls and several infrastructural adjustment in the market/fair are presently being taken care of to ease the operation of the stallholders, and
- agents operating on a stall requesting to have lease transferred in their names which cannot be entertained because relevant stalls are already leased and the agents are employees of the lessee.

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS – B.PHARM COURSE

(No. B/706) Mr P. Roopun (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the B.Pharm course, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University of Mauritius, information as to the –

- (a) number of students enrolled therefor, over the past four years, indicating the number thereof who -
- (i) successfully completed same, and
 - (ii) dropped out, following refusal of accreditation by the Pharmacy Board and
- (b) procedure followed -
- (i) to assess the advisability for the running thereof, and

- (ii) in designing the course structure, indicating the extent to which the support of relevant entities such as the Tertiary Education Commission, the Pharmacy Board and the Mauritius Qualification Authority were enlisted therefor.

Reply: I am informed by the University of Mauritius that –

- (i) the number of students enrolled on the Bachelor of Pharmacy (BPharm) programme over the last 4 years is –

Academic Year					
	2008/09	009/10	010/11	011/12	2012/13 (<i>present year</i>)
No. of students enrolled	22	12	17	13	15

- (ii) only one first batch of 18 students, comprising 14 who enrolled in 2008/2009 and 4 holding a diploma who joined year 3 of the Programme in 2010/11, has successfully completed the programme, which is of a duration of four years and graduated in October 2012, and
- (iii) two second year students have withdrawn from the programme between August to November 2012.

As regards part (b) of the question, I do not want to cause any prejudice as a Visitor has been appointed by the Prime Minister in accordance with Section 4 of the Statutes of the University of Mauritius to enquire into the matter.

ST JEAN ROAD, QUATRE-BORNES - TRAFFIC CONGESTION

(No. B/707) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the St Jean Road, in Quatre-Bornes, he will state if Government proposes to come up with a Master Plan to alleviate the hazards linked with the traffic congestion occurring thereat and in the vicinity thereof and if so, when and if not, why not.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that as the traffic on the existing road system in cities grows, congestion becomes a serious problem. St. Jean Road is a major arterial road in Quatre Bornes where capacity is not enough to cater for the peak demands.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has already implemented a clearway along the paid parking zone from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes up to Poivre Avenue with a view to increasing the capacity of St. Jean Road to moving traffic in the direction of Motorway M1 during morning peak.

Additionally, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit is coming up with a new traffic management plan in Quatre Bornes with a view to altering the pattern of traffic movement to make the most efficient use of the road system. The main objective is to convert most of the two way roads joining St. Jean Road with Sodnac Avenue into one-way roads in combination with other traffic management measures such as banned turning movements at major road junctions, and installation of traffic signals at the cross-junction Draper Avenue/St. Jean road/Glaieuls Avenue. Thus, there will be a better canalisation of the vehicular traffic on to the St Jean Road. It will also provide a clearway from Tulipes Avenue up to Glaieuls Avenue with a view to increasing the capacity of St. Jean Road to moving traffic in the direction of La Louise both during morning and afternoon peak hours. The TMRSU is presently consulting relevant stakeholders, namely the Police Traffic Branch, the CAB of Quatre Bornes and the National Transport Authority on the proposals before a final decision is taken.

Moreover, contract for the upgrading of Avenue Tulipes has already been awarded to the tune of Rs82 m. The enlargement of the road will provide some relief to the users. Hillcrest Avenue will also be linked to the motorway by means of a roundabout.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit is also investigating into the possibility of providing a co-ordinated control of traffic signals along St. Jean Road with a view to reducing delays and avoiding the main traffic stream from having to stop at every road junction. This new system will also prevent the queue of vehicles at one intersection from extending to and reaching the next intersection.

TERRE ROUGE-VERDUN ROAD PROJECT

(No. B/708) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the construction of the Terre Rouge-Verdun road, he will state the contractual date of completion thereof, indicating if there is variation works, and if so, the amount claimed and paid as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT - ALLEGED

FRAUDULENT PRACTICES -

(No. B/709) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Financial Intelligence Unit, he will state if he is aware of allegation of fraudulent practices thereat and, if so, indicate if he has taken any action, in relation thereto and, if not, why not.

Reply: I presume that the hon. Member is referring to an anonymous letter dated 20 October 2012 written to the Director of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and which was copied to various bodies, Ministries including my Ministry and the press regarding alleged fraudulent practices at the Financial Intelligence Unit.

Since, the said anonymous letter is addressed to the Director of ICAC, I would leave it to the ICAC to investigate and take appropriate actions accordingly.

In addition, I wish to inform the House that the accounts of the FIU are audited by the National Audit Office in the recent report on the FIU accounts for 2011, the National Audit Office has not reported any wrong doing.

CWA – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/710) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the measures taken for an adequate supply thereof during the coming months when rainfall is reportedly low.

(Withdrawn)

CHEMIN GRENIER - MARKET FAIR - CONSTRUCTION

(No. A/285) Mrs J. Radegonde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a new market fair at Chemin Grenier, near the village hall, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: From information received from the Grand Port-Savanne District Council a plot of private land of about four acres has been identified near the Chemin Grenier village hall for the construction of a new market fair.

The Grand Port-Savanne District Council has submitted the Project Request Form and feasibility study of the project through the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands for approval.

The project will be considered once all clearances including finance would have been obtained.

ASSESSMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE - CASES

(No. A/288) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Assessment Review Committee, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Committee, information as to the number of cases lodged thereat, which are awaiting-

- (a) hearing, and
- (b) judgment, indicating in each case, the amount in dispute.

Reply: With regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, the information as at mid November 2012 is as follows –

Cases at ARC	Mauritius Revenue Authority		Registrar-General's Department		Total	
	Number	Amount	Number	Amount (Rs)	Number	Amount (Rs)
Lodged Awaiting Hearing	627	2.8 billion	1,695	120 million	2,322	2.92 billion
Awaiting Judgment	102	145 million	38	7 million	140	152 million
Total	729	2.9 billion	1,733	127 million	2,462	3 billion

With regard to the 2,322 cases lodged before the ARC, but awaiting hearing, the House may wish to note that -

- (i) 286 cases have already been convened for Pro-Forma Meeting;
- (ii) 757 cases have already been called Pro Forma but not yet fixed for Hearing;

- (iii) 763 cases have already been fixed for Hearing;
- (iv) 99 cases have been heard but not completed, and
- (v) 417 cases have not yet been processed.

CIVIL SERVICE - RECRUITMENT

(No. A/289) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the civil service, he will state the number of persons recruited under delegated powers from the Public Service Commission, since 2005 to date, indicating the -

- (a) Ministries and departments concerned;
- (b) job titles, and
- (c) methods of recruitment used.

Reply: The information asked for has been laid in the Library.

PAPA'S DREAM LTD. – PLEASURE CRAFT LICENCE – APPLICATION

(No. A/290) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the application for the issue of a Pleasure Craft Licence by one Mr K. S. R., acting on behalf of Papa's Dream Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, information as to-

- (a) when same was submitted;
- (b) if a Letter of Intent has been issued to that effect, and
- (c) if the licence has been issued and, if not, why not.

Reply: According to information obtained from the Tourism Authority, an application for, *inter-alia*, a security boat was received from Papa's Dream Ltd on 25 September 2009, and in respect of which no Letter of Intent was issued.

Regarding part (c) of the question, the issue of a licence to Papa's Dream Ltd does not arise as the company no longer had an agreement with a hotel for the operation of a boathouse to which a security boat is attached.

CITÉ LOYSEAU – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. A/291) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the leveling, upgrading and lighting of the football ground at Cité Loyseau, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: Financial clearances have already been issued to the Municipal Council of Curepipe for fencing works and lighting of the football ground at Cité Loyseau.

From information received from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, contracts for both projects have been awarded on 23 October 2012 and will be for the duration of 120 days.

Works are in progress.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS – TEACHERS - ASSAULT

(No. A/292) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the teachers of the primary and secondary schools, he will state the number of reported cases in which they have been victims of assault at their workplace, over the past five years, giving a breakdown thereof and indicating the measures his Ministry proposes to take to reinforce the security thereof thereat.

Reply: The answer to the first part of the question is being compiled and will be tabled shortly.

Regarding the second part of the question, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has established a close collaborative networking and partnership with a number of institutions and stakeholders to address the issue of violence at schools and in particular the security of school personnel.

Focussed meetings on Indiscipline and Violence at Schools are regularly held at my Ministry, with relevant stakeholders, including the Police Authorities, the *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*, the Trade Unions, the Child Development Unit, the probation and After Care Service. The Committee recommended the implementation of the following measures as a preventive measure to guard against assault and violence at schools -

- (i) access to school compound is strictly controlled;

- (ii) regular Police patrolling is being carried in the vicinity of State and private Schools to enhance surveillance and vigilance. This measure acts as a deterrent to defaulters and minimise risks. The Police Authorities have already been provided with a list of high risk schools;
- (iii) Police are also having recourse to Intelligence-led policing and Community Participation so as to circumscribe cases of Violence/Assault. Community support is essential in this endeavour and is instrumental in helping the Police to act promptly;
- (iv) sanctions are taken against students who are involved in cases of violence, which may also lead to their rustication from school for a period of time;
- (v) active campaigns are carried out by respective Heads of Schools, with the participation of the school community at large (PTAs, students Councils, teachers, Pastoral Care and Disciplinary Committees) for the creation of a fully disciplined school environment, and
- (vi) CCTV cameras have already been installed in some high risk schools

My Ministry had meetings with trade unions on this issue of security with a view to beef up security measures at schools. The possibility of providing security services during the day to risky schools is also being considered.

LA TOUR KOENIG – ROAD CONSTRUCTION

(No. A/293) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if his Ministry has received representations from the inhabitants of Pointe aux Sables to connect Le Peuplier Street to the newly constructed road access to La Tour Koenig to ease traffic from La Pointe to the City Centre and to the Plaines Wilhems, and if so, indicate the actions taken, if any, in relation thereto.

Reply: The new road at La Tour Koenig has been constructed to provide improved and efficient access to the Industrial Zone of La Tour Koenig, which is being expanded to accommodate new industries. The road has been planned, designed and constructed to serve exclusively the Industrial Zone and for industrial traffic. As such no connection has been planned with the existing road known as Peuplier Avenue (which is essentially a residential road) or to other roads in the region of La Tour Koenig/Pointe aux Sables.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit and the Road Development Authority have been requested to examine the proposal of the inhabitants of Pointe aux Sables.

ICTA - EXPENSES

(No. A/294) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the Information and Communication Technology Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, since 2005 to date -

- (a) a breakdown of the travel and related expenses incurred in respect of the-
 - (i) Executive Director thereof;
 - (ii) Chairperson thereof;
 - (iii) each Board Director thereof;
 - (iv) Permanent Secretary and any other officer of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, and
- (b) total expenses incurred in sponsorship of various events, indicating the benefits derived therefrom, in each case.

Reply: The Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) has provided the details with respect to part (a) of the question in documents placed in the Library.

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology acts as the Administration of Mauritius *viz* international organisations in the ICT sector such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), African Telecommunications Union (ATU) and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO), and has been contributing to the annual membership fees in respect thereof. The ICTA, as the technical arm of the Administration of Mauritius, benefits from the membership to these international organisations. The Ministry as well as the ICTA participate in the international conferences organised by the latter.

As regards part (b) of the question, the ICTA has provided the expenses incurred for the sponsorship of events in documents placed in the Library, and has informed that the benefits derived from the ICT-BPO International Conferences are as follows –

- (i) Mauritius has been featured in the World Economic Forum Report in April 2012, thus giving visibility to the ICT sector of Mauritius.

- (ii) Mauritius has established strong links with the Broadband Commission established under the International Telecommunication Union, which has, in September 2012, also reported in a case study the experience of Mauritius in the broadband plan formulation.
- (iii) Mauritius was featured, on 24 October 2012, in a report in the Outsourcing Magazine of Australia under the title 'Mauritius : the thinking person's ICT-BPO island', written by Martin Conboy, President of Australian Process Outsourcing Association. This again has given visibility to the ICT sector of the country.
- (iv) BPO operators such as Infosys, Ceridian, Euro-CRM, amongst others, have diversified their activities in Mauritius thus leading to more job creation in the ICT-BPO sector.
- (v) World renowned companies in ICT, such as Hewlett Packard (HP) have signed with companies in Mauritius for the purpose of skill development and training in ICT.

SMEs – CREDIT FACILITIES

(No. A/295) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Rs3 billion line of credit provided for the Small and Medium Enterprises, he will state the total amount of credit facilities granted, since 2012 to date, indicating the amount granted for the -

- (a) renewal of existing facilities;
- (b) restructuring of existing facilities, and
- (c) loans and overdrafts for new projects, sector-wise.

Reply: The banking sector has agreed to extend credit facilities to SMEs for an amount of Rs 3 billion over three years at repo plus 3 percent i.e. presently at 7.9 percent. On a yearly basis, banks are thus required to grant Rs 1 billion worth of credit facilities to the SMEs effective 01 December 2011.

Banking facilities include renewal of existing credit facilities, new term loans/working capital, finance leases and import loans for activities where there are value addition (i.e., trading, etc, are excluded).

This Finance Scheme is proving to be very popular among the SME community. The planned financing of Rs 1 billion to the sector in 2012 has already been exceeded. Indeed, after only 11 months of operation, an aggregate amount of Rs 1,368 m. has been approved by participating banks under the SME Finance Scheme as at end October 2012.

As regards parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed that of the Rs1,368 m. approved during the period 01 December 2011 to 31 October 2012, Rs476.8 m. and Rs13.6 m. represented renewed and restructured facilities respectively.

The House may wish to note that, in practice, overdraft facilities are extended for a maturity period of one year and they are generally renewed on a yearly basis. Consequently, it is difficult to establish the quantum that has been allocated for new projects.

As regard sector-wise distribution of facilities, the main beneficiaries are SMEs in the manufacturing sector for an amount of Rs 481.6 m. representing 35.2 per cent of the aggregated amount. The detailed sector-wise distribution of facilities approved as at 30 October 2012 is being placed in the Library.

PORT LOUIS MARITIME & PORT LOUIS EAST – RESERVOIRS

(No. A/297) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for the upgrading of the service reservoirs supplying water in the regions thereof, having regard to the increasing population thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the CWA that the regions in Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, are supplied from two service reservoirs, namely

- (i) Diego Garcia reservoir with a capacity of 3,600 m³, and
- (ii) Priest Peak reservoir with a capacity of 6,600 m³

The normal hours of supply are as follows -

4.00 am – 9.00 am

4.00 pm – 9.00 pm

These service reservoirs are of adequate capacity and there is no urgent need for the time being for their upgrading to provide for additional capacity. The main constraint is lack of water resources and this will be addressed upon the completion of the Bagatelle Dam project by the end of 2014 following which an additional volume of 30,000 m³ of water will be diverted on a regular basis to the Port Louis Water Supply System.

Furthermore, the Bagatelle Dam will regulate the flow in Grand River North West to sustain requirement at Pailles Water Treatment Plant which supplies Port Louis.

CWA – SERVICE RESERVOIRS

(No. A/298) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the service reservoirs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, a list thereof, indicating the location thereof and the regions being supplied by each of them.

Reply: A list of all the service reservoirs together with their location and the regions supplied by each of them is being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

MORCELLEMENT GUIBIES, PAILLES

- CRECERELLE 3 AVENUE – STREET LANTERNS

(No. A/299) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Crecerelle 3 Avenue, in Morcellement Guibies, Pailles, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Black River District Council, information as to if it has been informed of the –

- (a) bad state thereof and, if so, indicate if consideration will be given for the
 - (i) reinstatement and tarring thereof, and
 - (ii) realignment of the street lanterns found thereat, and
- (b) the abandoned state of the plot of land situated next to the house of one Mr B. and of the presence of wastes thereat and, if so, indicate if remedial measures will be taken.

Reply: I am informed by the Black River District Council that no complaint whatsoever has been received regarding the state of the road at Avenue Crecerelle No.3 in Morcellement Guibies, Pailles. However, an inspection carried out by the officers of the Council has revealed that –

- (a) the road surface is relatively in good condition with no major potholes warranting reinstatement or tarring, and
- (b) the street lanterns found thereat have been attended to.

As regards part (b) of the question pertaining to the abandoned state of the plot of land situated next to the house of Mr Bheekareea, I am informed that the owner of the land in question is unknown. Nevertheless, the Council is conducting searches with a view to identifying the owner and thereafter a notice will be served upon him to abate the nuisance caused thereat.

COROMANDEL – POLICE QUARTERS – WATER SUPPLY

(No. A/300) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Police Quarters, in Coromandel, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to if –

- (a) additional measures will be taken for a regular supply of water thereat, and
- (b) the defective water pumps have now been repaired and, if not, why not.

Reply: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to Parliamentary Question A/215 of 10 July 2012. The onus is on the Police Department to have the defective pump replaced.

PORT LOUIS FIRE STATION - HAZARDS

(No. A/301) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Port Louis Fire Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Government Fire Services, information as to if it is in a derelict state and if so, of the inherent hazards thereof, indicating -

- (a) when officers of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure last carried out a survey thereat to assess the infrastructural and electrical conditions thereof, indicating the outcome thereof, and
- (b) the additional measures that are being envisaged in the –

- (i) short term, and
- (ii) long term.

Reply: I am informed by the Fire Services Department that –

- (a) on 22 November 2006, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping submitted a Structural Investigation Report on the Port Louis Fire Station which states that the building suffers from visible structural defects in particular the first floor and roof;
- (b) a survey was conducted on 18 July 2007 by the Energy Services Division of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities with a view to assessing the overall condition of the electrical installations in the building. The Energy Services Division had highlighted that the electrical installations in the building was in a very poor state and represented a serious hazard for its occupants. It had recommended that a complete electrical rewiring be carried out, and
- (c) the Occupational Safety and Health Unit has in its last report of January 2012, requested management to take necessary action to urgently relocate the Fire Station.

I am informed that as a short term measure, the roof has already been repaired and minor electrical rewiring works have been undertaken by the City Council of Port Louis. In the long term, a request has been made to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping to reconsider the site at Colline Monneron for the construction of a new Fire Station for Port Louis.