



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**SECOND SESSION
TUESDAY 04 JUNE 2013**

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS (*Oral*)

MOTION

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

BILL (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

QUESTIONS (*Written*)

Members

Members

THE CABINET**(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)**

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, 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
Hon. Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum	Minister of Information and Communication Technology
Hon. Louis Joseph Von-Mally, GOSK	Minister of Fisheries
Hon. Satyaprakash Ritoo	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Louis Hervé Aimée	Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands
Hon. Mookhesswur Choonee	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment
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
Hon. Jangbahadoorsing Iswurdeo Mola Roopchand Seetaram	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
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
<i>Clerk Assistant</i>	Ramchurn, Ms Urmeelah Devi
<i>Clerk Assistant</i>	Gopall, Mr Navin
<i>Hansard Editor</i>	Jankee, Mrs Chitra
<i>Senior Library Officer</i>	Pallen, Mr Noël
<i>Serjeant-at-Arms</i>	Munroop, Mr Kishore

MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 10 of 2013

Sitting of 04 June 2013

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

- A. **Prime Minister's Office** –
- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Revenue and Valuation Appeal Tribunal Bill (No. XI of 2013).
 - (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Prime Minister's Cyclone Relief Fund for the year ended 31 December 2012. (*In original*)
 - (c) The Annual Report of the Data Protection Office for the year 2012.
- B. **Ministry of Finance and Economic Development** –
- (a) The Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 110 of 2013).
 - (b) The Insurance (General Insurance Business Solvency) (Amendment) Rules 2013 (Government Notice No. 111 of 2013).
 - (c) The Insurance (Long-Term Insurance Business Solvency) (Amendment) Rules 2013 (Government Notice No. 112 of 2013).
- C. **Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security** –
- The Annual Report 2011 of the Tea Board.
- D. **Ministry of Fisheries** –
- The Annual Report 2011 of the Fishermen Investment Trust.
- E. **Attorney General's Office** –
- The *Institutions Agréées* (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 109 of 2013).
- F. **Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare** –
- The Annual Report 2011 of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

CEB - SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC ENERGY PROJECTS

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr A. Ganoo) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Solar Photovoltaic Energy Projects, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to, from the –

- (a) Central Electricity Board, regarding –
 - (i) Sarako PVP Co. Ltd. –
 - (A) when discussions were held and the Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement was signed;
 - (B) the agreed tariff per kWh, and
 - (C) if it has received a letter from a former shareholder thereof informing of alleged swindling by Sarako PVP Co. Ltd. and, if so, the actions taken, if any;
 - (ii) the Solar PV Farm of up to 10 MW, when an Expression of Interest and a Request For Proposal were launched, indicating –
 - (A) when bidders were shortlisted and letters of intent issued;
 - (B) if any Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement has been signed, and
 - (C) the agreed tariff per kWh with the lowest bidders, and
 - (iii) the number of applications received on a no-tariff basis, indicating their capacity and if approved, and
- (b) *Maurice Ile Durable* Fund, the annual subsidy to be disbursed to Sarako PVP Co. Ltd.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, pursuant to the national Long Term Energy Strategy 2009-2025, the objective is to increase the contribution of renewable energy technologies, including wind and solar, in the global energy mix. The promotion of renewable energy technologies is fully consonant with Government vision of ensuring sustainable development as advocated by the *Maurice Ile Durable* concept. Furthermore, Government strategy is to democratise the generation of electricity to allow new players into the market.

In this context, the Small Scale Distributed Generation (SSDG) Scheme, was launched in December 2010 for a capacity of 2 MW, later increased to 3 MW.

To benchmark purchase prices of wind and solar technologies, the CEB launched two bids, one for a wind farm of capacity 29.4 MW and the other for a 10 MW Solar PV Farm, in units of 1 or 2 MW.

As regards the purchase price of electricity from PV, the benchmark price is Rs6.06/kWh.

As regards part (a) (i) (A), Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Central Electricity Board that it received a proposal from Sarako PV Co. Ltd in April 2012. The proposal was examined within the framework of the Finance Act 2008 allowing promoters to discuss directly with the Central Electricity Board with a view to completing an agreement for the purchase of electricity.

Discussions started with Sarako PV Co. Ltd in June 2012 and were completed in May 2013. The Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement was signed on 21 May 2013.

As regards part (a) (i) (B), the tariff per kWh agreed is Rs6.06.

As regards part (a) (i) (C), Yamei Energy Group was the initial partner of Sarako PV Co. Ltd. On 17 February 2013, Sarako PV Co. Ltd informed Central Electricity Board that Yamei Energy Group had informed that they cannot sustain the project with a new tariff of Rs6.06/kWh, from an initial tariff of Rs7.50/kWh and subsequently negotiated downwards to Rs6.49/kWh.

On 15 May 2013, the Central Electricity Board received an e-mail from one, Mr J. Yin, claiming to be the president of Yamei Energy Group and alleging that Sarako PV Co. Ltd has embezzled and misappropriated its design of the PV project, qualifying same as being an "*escroquerie*." This is what they say. Central Electricity Board immediately investigated into the matter by sending an e-mail to Mr J. Yin on 16 May 2013, that is, the next day, requesting him to provide his contact details for further discussions on his allegations. As no response was received, the CEB sent another mail to Mr J. Yin on 19 May 2013.

On 21 May 2013, Mr J. Yin replied that he was not in China and provided his phone number. Mr J. Yin sent a further e-mail on 22 May 2013 explaining that he has no land facility for the project and Sarako PV Co. Ltd did not obtain his consent to proceed further with the project. Moreover, on 17 May 2013, Sarako informed the Central Electricity Board that Yamei was never their formal partner in the project and that Mr Yin is not the President of Yamei, and Mr Yin's contribution was limited to providing technical advice and to sell their solar panels.

Sarako gave an undertaking in a letter dated 17 May 2013, rendering Central Electricity Board harmless in the event of any dispute between the initial, current and future collaborators or shareholders of Sarako, in any form whatsoever, regarding issues such as copyright, advisory, professional consultancy and other issues related to the internal administration of the Sarako company.

At the same time, Sarako gave another undertaking to the fullest extent permitted by law to hold harmless and indemnify the Central Electricity Board, its elected and appointed officials, employees and volunteers and other workers on behalf of the Central Electricity Board against all claims, demands, suits or loss including all costs connected therewith, and for any damages which may be asserted, claimed or recovered against or from Central Electricity Board.

The undertaking given by Sarako was vetted by Moollan Chambers, legal advisers of Central Electricity Board, and the State Law Office through my Ministry. The content of the “hold harmless” letter forms an integral part of the Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement (ESPA).

Part (ii) (A)

An Expression of Interest was launched in March 2011. Subsequently, Central Electricity Board with the assistance of EDF Réunion, prepared a Request for Proposal for 10 MW PV project, which was launched in March 2012. By the closing date of 14 September 2012, thirty-five (35) bids were received, which included fifty-six (56) proposals. Following an evaluation exercise, three (3) bidders were shortlisted in December 2012, namely

- Harel Mallac - 2 MW
- Synnove Energy - 2 X 2 MW
- Astonfield Solar Mauritius - 2 X 2 MW

The Letter of Intent was issued to the preferred bidder, Harel Mallac on 10 May 2013.

Part (ii) (B)

The Central Electricity Board is awaiting the final comments of these three (3) promoters to finalise the Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement (ESPA).

Part (ii) (C)

Following negotiations on the purchase price per kWh, Harel Mallac agreed to revise its price downwards, from Rs6.06/kWh to Rs5.90/kWh on account of a lower cost of land conversion tax by Rs21 m. and lower interest rate assumed in their financial model.

The two other preferred bidders, Synnove Energy and Astonfield Solar Mauritius, were requested to match the price of Rs5.90/kWh and they agreed.

I am informed that the price of Rs6.06/kWh paid to Sarako with an indexation formula based on 70% foreign currency and 30% in rupees would be more beneficial to the Central Electricity Board, over the 20-year period of the contract, compared to Rs5.90/kWh with an indexation formula of 80% foreign currency and 20% in rupees, applied to other companies.

Part a (iii)

I am advised by the Central Electricity Board that a total of hundred (100) applications have been received for the connections to the grid on a no-tariff basis for a total capacity of about 2 MW. Out of the hundred (100) applications, three (3) are already approved for a capacity of about 500 kW. Eight (8) other applications for a capacity of 131 KW are currently being processed for proclamation as an

undertaker for connection to the grid. As regards the remaining applications which have been received recently, they are being processed.

Part (b)

The financial support from Maurice Ile Durable Fund for renewable energy is disbursed to the Central Electricity Board and not to any promoter, and this applies to all renewable energy projects, like Suzlon and Aerowatt wind farms, Landfill Gas to Energy project, and Small Scale Distributed Generation (SSDG) projects. The financial support is calculated on the basis of the difference between Central Electricity Board's marginal cost and the purchase price of electricity from each project. A sum of Rs37 m. annually for an output of 24 GWh has been earmarked from the Maurice Ile Durable Fund for the Sarako Project, and this may vary downwards as the marginal cost of electricity is expected to increase in the future with the rising price of fossil fuels. For the information of the House, for the 10 MW Solar project, a sum of Rs27 m. is earmarked annually as a financial support.

Mr Ganoo: I missed one figure. Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister tell the number of applications received for the no-tariff applicant please?

The Ag. Prime Minister: 100.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in an answer which the hon. Ag. Prime Minister gave a few weeks ago to another PQ relating to the same issue, he informed the House that, in fact, in this case, negotiations started between the CEB and Sarako on 01 March 2013. Negotiations started on 01 March 2013 and today the hon. Ag. Prime Minister has informed the House that the Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement (ESPA) has been signed on 21 May 2013, that is, within 2 to 3 months negotiations started and the ESPA has already been signed. Doesn't the hon. Ag. Prime Minister agree that this is the fastest energy project that has been ever approved in the history of this country within an amazing delay of two months?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we talk the same language we hear different things. What I have answered today is complementary to what has been said previously and I mentioned it. The proposal was received in April 2012 and then discussions in June 2012. So, it is an ongoing process for one year and it happened in two months. It has to happen some time. In this case, it happened within two months, but it has been going on for one year.

Mr Ganoo: May I remind the hon. Ag. Prime Minister - I am not misleading the House - that he said in the last question that negotiations started on 01 March 2012. This is the question of 23 April 2013.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Let me answer this one! Between negotiations and discussions, there is a difference.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister, even if we go by what he says, that discussions started in June 2012, that would have been the fastest energy project approved and after

which the ESPA has been signed. There has been never any energy project, be it renewable or not, which has been agreed upon, ESPA signed within twelve months.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am a little puzzled by the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition. When we go fast, he says we go too fast. When we don't act, he says we never do anything. Remarks have been made that the Ministry of Energy does nothing, it has no energy. Now that we have energy, he is complaining!

(Interruptions)

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

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm that the ESPA, therefore, was signed on 21 May of this year and on 20 May, the CEB Board had approved the ESPA and it was on the previous day i.e. Sunday 19 May this year that the Prime Minister had, during a socio-cultural gathering, strongly and publicly pledged his personal support to this project. On the next day, i.e. Monday, the Board met and on Tuesday the ESPA was signed.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I see no contradiction in what has happened.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I want some silence.

The Ag. Prime Minister: There has been imputation of motive. This has been going on. I would like to remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the fastest ever project approved was the CTDS Project and when he was Minister.

(Interruptions)

So, I am sorry, I cannot claim the ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was proudly claiming the record, but I have not got it, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has the record.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: This, I deny.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

I do not want any interruption, please!

Mr Ganoo: May I put it to the hon. Ag. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I said no interruption! Order! Proceed, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Ganoo: May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister, in the case of CTDS, in fact, besides negotiations there were two committees presided by a University Professor Mr Baguant and Mr Wong So. They were genuine Bid Evaluation Committees and they gave the green light to the project.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Assirvaden! I want Members to understand that there will be no warning. I am going to apply Standing Order 48 and I hope you know what it means: asking Member to withdraw from this august Assembly. Do you have a question?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, a question has been put.

Mr Ganoo: The CTDS had taken longer than the Sarako Project. If the Ag. Prime Minister goes back to the file, he will see.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not want to be sidetracked, but I would remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I insist, CTDS Project got its approval within few months and the EIA within days.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: This is not true. I strongly deny that! Go and check the files ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister tell us why this unsolicited bid of Sarako was entertained despite the European Union had expressed its disapproval with regard to unsolicited bids and even the Board of Investment had, in March this year, in a letter addressed to another promoter, stated the following and I quote -

“Unsolicited bids on renewable projects are currently not being entertained”

I table the letter of the BOI.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I start with the last one. The last one is a letter where it is said that currently unsolicited bids are not being entertained. This is a conversation at BOI level between three persons; one is from Italy, one from here, a former Member of this House and the other one from BOI. What had he come to say, Mr Speaker, Sir? He had come to propose (PV) Photovoltaic generated electricity with storage capacity - very good - at Rs21 per kWh, and we are going to say: yes, come on!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! I say, silence!

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I complete the answer? Quite rightly, at some time, when we were discussing the CT Power 100 MW project, there was a question of having another 100 MW project, EU suggested that we appoint a Transaction Advisor to look at projects. But this was in relation to something quite different, it was not in relation to 15 MW or 2 MW or 10 MW.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Ganoo: It is because the EU provides fund to the MID Fund that the EU is against unsolicited projects! Does the hon. Ag. Prime Minister agree that, as he said himself, in the case of the Solar PV farm of 10 MW, the CEB negotiated with the bidders and brought down the price to Rs5.90? Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister explain why in the case of Sarako, the price given to them was Rs6.06 and no negotiations were conducted to bring down the price, as in the case of the 10 Solar PV, to Rs5.90?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, negotiations were held to bring down the price and the price was brought down, but with a different ratio of foreign currency and rupees, which was unacceptable. In the end, instead of 70:30 ratio, they proposed 80:20 which was disadvantageous. I still maintain and I repeat, the net present value is more advantageous to the Sarako than to the 10 MW Photovoltaic, I insist on that.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister explain how the production of 2 MW of the same energy can cost more than the production of 15 MW of like energy especially when you look at the scale of economies?

The Ag. Prime Minister: No. I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition made a mistake. He should have said cost less, not cost more. The answer is simple. As I said, the tariff is 80% foreign currency, that's one

Secondly, the metering is made at the facility itself at 22 KV. So, there is no loss of electricity in transmission. For the Sarako Project, the metering is at the injection point, 4.5 kilometers at 66 KV. So, it is different. As I said last time, do not compare like with unlike, compare like with like.

Mr Ganoo: If the Ag. Prime Minister said that the deal which has been clinched with Sarako is more beneficial to the CEB, therefore, the CEB should have obtained, negotiated or willingly offered same deal to the other Solar PV Operators i.e. Rs6.06 per KWH!

The Ag. Prime Minister: They were not agreeable, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

...because of the change.

(Interruptions)

No. I think either the hon. Leader of the Opposition understands it or he does not understand. The information is simple.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Ag. Prime Minister: The tariff is made of two components: foreign currency and local. We know that. With a 80:20 ratio PV farms and a 70:30 ratio Sarako, it is quite different.

(Interruptions)

As I am reminded, with a projection over 20 years, it makes a lot of difference.

Mr Ganoo: Even on this question of Forex, the mix of the rupee and the dollar does not stand because it can work either way in the coming 20 years depending on the evolution of the currency! But I will ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he does not agree that there is a difference of *16 sous entre R 6.06 et R 5.90*? If we calculate on the basis of the production of 23 million kWh per year over a period of 20 years, this represents, therefore, a loss of Rs73 m. for the MID Fund over 20 years.

The Ag. Prime Minister: But again, this is today's calculation. As I have said, if you take it over the years, it won't be the same, it will go down. I wish that the hon. Leader of the Opposition will understand this. It is a moving target; it is not a static thing.

Mr Ganoo: Does the hon. Ag. Prime Minister also agree that over and above *le R 6.06* that CEB has willingly granted to the Sarako PVP Co. Ltd., the CEB will have to bear additional hidden costs to maintain spinning reserve to cater for the loss of power from the PV plant when the sky is covered with clouds and therefore the tariff amounts to more than Rs6.06?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this applies to all Renewable Energy Projects, whether it is wind or solar, it applies to all the projects. So, why single out one project in particular?

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Ag. Prime Minister talks about the strategy to implement a step by step approach to promote and democratise renewable energy by the SSDG and the small operators. This policy is to spread the operators everywhere in the country. But now, in the case of Sarako, doesn't he think that by accommodating this unsolicited proposal of 15 MW on a fast track basis, as this has been done, this has defeated the very *raison d'être*, the essence of CEB's long-term structure plan for renewable energy in this country?

The Ag. Prime Minister: It so happens, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this site was suitable for the Sarako project because of the injection point at 66 KW ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jugnauth!

Mr Jugnauth: Will the Ag. Prime Minister agree that granting an Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement to Sarako in Zone 6 - the Ag. Prime Minister knows what I am talking about - to supply the 15 MW goes against the policy of CEB which, they, themselves, had restricted the supply from that zone

to a maximum of 2 MW as this 15 MW interconnection would cause very serious capacity problems to CEB, as indicated by the high level technicians of the CEB?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not sure this is correct.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to price match between Sarako and the preferred bidder, can the Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether that decision of asking Sarako to match the price was taken by the Board of the CEB? If yes, when? And whether when that decision was conveyed to Sarako, was it a decision of the Board or a decision of the Chairperson of the Central Electricity Board alone, asking the General Manager to forward that letter to Sarako?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, sorry, I am not a 'bye looké', I don't know what is going on...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

Please, proceed!

The Ag. Prime Minister: I only know what is official and I have no information on this matter.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Ag. Prime Minister just mentioned that Sarako has agreed to indemnify the CEB. May I know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister what is the worth of Sarako and what asset did Sarako give as collateral to guarantee the payment of any indemnity to the CEB?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, on signing the ESPA and the final approval there is quite a lot of conditions being put, including the financial capability of Sarako. It is in the ESPA, it will be seen there. I am sure, though the hon. Member is not supposed to have a copy, he does have it, and so he has to look at it.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, this whole thing of Sarako stinks a great scandal. Can I know from the Ag. Prime Minister, after the saga of 80 arpents given to the same company at Bambous, a prime Government land, an agricultural land which has been converted for this purpose, 50 million of our Mauritian rupees for the *téléphérique* project, writing-off of loans at banks worth millions...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, no! I am not going to allow you to proceed the way you are doing.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I...

Mr Speaker: No, you are not here...

(Interruptions)

I am sorry, I have said...

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet!

(Interruptions)

No! I say no! You have to put a question, don't make a statement! Yes, put a question!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the same question then, Sir? When I said that this whole thing stinks scandal, can I ask the Ag. Prime Minister...

Mr Speaker: Look, I have ruled hon. Bhagwan and you have to abide by my ruling! Put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: I am asking the question ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Put your question! Do not waste time, put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: I am asking my question. The question that I asked again last time: does this scandal, this saga of Sarako is a prize for somebody to cross the floor and become a Government Member?

(Interruptions)

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Ag. Prime Minister: Like last time, I am going to say that I do not think I have ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Do not disturb!

The Ag. Prime Minister: ...to reply to that sort of question.

Mr Ganoo: Does the hon. Ag. Prime Minister agree that in the same mail which Yamei sent...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Do not disturb the hon. Leader of the Opposition, please!

Mr Ganoo: ... to CEB, and also in the project of Yamei which I have in my hands '*Projet de la centrale photovoltaïque*' of Sarako-Yamei, in both of these documents which I am going to table, the tariff proposed is cheaper and would have resulted in a saving of millions of rupees for the country and the MID Fund. I table the documents for the attention of the House.

Mr Speaker: Put your question, time is running!

Mr Ganoo: I am asking the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether it is not because of this letter which was sent by Yamei Energy on 15 May proposing a lower tariff than we have obtained for Rs6.06 as

evidenced in this Project Document which I am going to table, this is why with utmost celerity, the ESPA was signed a few days after receiving this letter!

(Interruptions)

I table the documents, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the ESPA was already for signing and the hon. Members can look at this email either way. It was a move to put a spanner in the works and stop the ESPA being signed and the genuiness of the letter has not been established here. The same technician - I call him a technician – who, in February, thought Rs6.06 was unacceptable – so, he moved out; the letter was written on 27 February by Sarako that Mr Yin had moved out - two months later he comes with another proposal. It is not serious.

Mr Speaker: Last question to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I say last question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Hoping that the Ag. Prime Minister will stick to his pledge of producing the Energy Supply and Purchase Agreement which he told us last time when a similar question was put to him. How can the Ag. Prime Minister explain whilst Government is subsidising the promotion of PV energy through the MID Fund to the tune of millions of rupees per year including to foreign companies like Aerowatt or whoever else, yet in the case of these hundred local applicants on a no-tariff basis, where some humble Mauritians who have proposed a no-tariff basis for the production of green energy for their own consumption and free of charge to CEB in case of surplus, why no decision has been taken as yet by the CEB? This is a negation of the concept of democratisation of the economy!

(Interruptions)

The Ag. Prime Minister: Quite the reverse!

(Interruptions)

Quite the reverse!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Ag. Prime Minister: The first beneficiary of this was the MCB and this is not a poor...

(Interruptions)

One minute! They even ask...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say silence!

The Ag. Prime Minister: Do know you why they accepted a no tariff? It is because they had to use the CEB to stabilise their system. That is number one. Number two: what has been happening, Mr

Speaker, Sir? It is a very interesting development in power production from renewable energy. People till three years ago used to talk of projects of 100 MW, 200 MW, but now they are talking of small projects in terms of KW. I understand that now that the market is open for small producers, it is being inundated. A lot of the applicants, Mr Speaker, Sir, have already installed illegally and are waiting to be officialised and approved.

(Interruptions)

Because of the efforts and this is where the market comes in...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Ag. Prime Minister: ...and it is a very interesting development. The market now dictates what is happening. So, we are moving fast. Do not forget, I mentioned 100, 3 approved, 8 being processed, the others will be taken care of promptly, but with safety precautions.

Mr Speaker: Time is up!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister table the ESPA as I just asked him?

Mr Speaker: Alright, clarify this, hon. Ag. Prime Minister!

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I said last time, the ESPA will be tabled when the time comes. I am not going to table it today. The hon. Members already got a copy, anyway!

(Interruptions)

But, it will be tabled and it will be tabled officially when the time comes.

Mr Speaker: Tme is over!

(Interruptions)

Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister which will be answered by the hon. Ag. Prime Minister. The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/410, B/413 and B/421 have been withdrawn. Therefore, we come to question No. B/411. Hon. Jhugroo!

MURDERS/MANSLAUGHTERS - CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

(No. B/410) 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 capital punishment, he will state if consideration will be given for the re-introduction thereof with a view to combating cases of atrocious murders/manslaughters and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

SORÈZE - FATAL ROAD ACCIDENT

(No. B/411) **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 recent fatal road accident which occurred at Sorèze, on 03 May 2013, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiries carried out thereinto.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, following the accident which occurred at Sorèze on 03 May, the statements of 42 out of the 43 passengers have been recorded. The statement of one Mrs O. H. has not yet been recorded, as she is still in the Intensive Care Unit of Victoria Hospital.

The Principal Engineer of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, assisted by the Motor Diesel Mechanics, and in the presence of Police and Forensic Science Laboratory Officers, carried out an examination of the motor bus. He has submitted his report to the Police.

The Police are awaiting, amongst others, the medical certificates of the injured passengers, the reconstitution exercise of the accident, as the bus conductor is at present not in a position to do so, and the report of the traffic expert.

On completion of the Police inquiry, the case file will be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House what is the outcome of the enquiries conducted by the foreign experts from India, who were supposed to be of high calibre and competent engineers?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As far as I understand, the Police do not work with the foreign experts. The foreign experts are submitting a report to the hon. Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister will decide.

Mr Baloomoody: Can we know, in that case, how many enquiries are being conducted? There is one by the Police, one by the Prime Minister and one by the Ministry of Public Utilities!

The Ag. Prime Minister: The main one is the Police, with help from the Technical Officers.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, are we to understand that the report from the Indian experts of Ashok Leyland has still, at this point, not been submitted to the Prime Minister's Office?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I understand it has, but it is up to the Prime Minister to decide what to do with the report.

Mr Jugnauth: Is the Ag. Prime Minister aware that both the reports from the Indian experts and from the mechanical workshop of the MPI have confirmed that the alternative security braking system had failed when the brakes failed? Will he confirm that?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I don't think we should look at the report piecemeal, bit by bit, and extract certain excerpts. I think we should look at it as a whole. As I have said, it is not complete yet. There are others that have to submit their views before it is made public. I'll answer to that in terms of the Indian experts. When the whole investigations are completed, I expect the Prime Minister will decide accordingly.

Mr Uteem: Being given that there has been allegation of brake malfunction in that bus, may I know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether the Police have taken any statement from the General Manager and the mechanics of the NTC?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I leave it to the Police to have a full enquiry, and they will do what is best for them. I know that the report submitted is being given to the NTC to make its comment. We will see what happens.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the case of the floods that took place on 31 March, immediately after the visit of the Singaporean experts as soon as they had left, the contents of the report were made public. Since there is a Police enquiry which has been conducted, and since the Indian experts had come to conduct an enquiry outside the realm of the Police enquiry, can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether he can transmit our message to the hon. Prime Minister that the nation at large and the relatives of the so many victims in this accident would be very grateful if the contents of the report made by the Indian experts be made public as soon as possible?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I will certainly, but I want to stress again that the Indian experts' report is in conjunction with other reports as well. So, it has to be read together with.

Mr Jhugroo: Can we know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether any enquiry report has been obtained from the Road Security Adviser of the Prime Minister, Mr Ben Buntipilly, who was present in the morning of that particular date, where he removed the bandage which was attached to the foot of the wounded driver of the bus and emptied the pockets like Mr Colombo?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, wait a minute! Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Wait a minute! I am speaking to you. You have the right to put a question. I have repeated, in this Assembly, that the purpose of putting a question is to seek information and to press for action. Your question is tantamount to giving information. So, what is your question? I give you another chance to put your question!

Mr Jhugroo: Will the Ag. Prime Minister confirm what I just mentioned?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: It's correct, but this is not a fair manner of putting a question. Nevertheless, I allow it! This is a colourable device.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can't.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I know whether there has been any report submitted by the Security Adviser of the Prime Minister regarding this fatal accident?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am not aware, but I will find out.

Mr Balamoody: I continue on the question put by my learned colleague, hon. Uteem. In a case of such fatal accident, in a normal course of affairs, the Director of the company or the owner of the vehicle is questioned, and in many cases they are questioned under warning. Can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether, in this case, there has been any statement recorded from not only the Chairman but any Director of the NTC, and if so, whether it has been taken under warning? Because the 42 witnesses...

Mr Speaker: Please don't give the reason!

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I repeat again. The Police investigation is not complete yet. Let's wait for a complete investigation, with comments from NTC, and then we will look at it.

Mr Speaker: Last question to hon. Jhugroo! No more question on this.

Mr Jhugroo: Can we know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether there has been a follow-up regarding the passengers who have been seriously injured in this fatal accident?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I said, unfortunately, one of the victims is still in hospital. The others are faring well, as far as I know. I would add - even not being asked - that they are being provided with psychological support as well.

DRIVING LICENCE – ISSUE

(No. B/412) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the driving licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the criteria considered for the issue thereof

- (a) to drive;
 - (i) heavy goods vehicles and;
 - (ii) public transport vehicles, and
- (b) to persons suffering from chronic diseases, including epilepsy.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, driving licences for heavy goods and public transport vehicles are issued in accordance with sections 42 and 45 of

the Road Traffic Act and Regulation 50 of the Road Traffic Regulations. The criteria to be respected are stipulated in the law and are as follows -

- (i) he/she should be a holder of a licence to drive motor cars for at least six months;
- (ii) he/she should make a declaration in the prescribed form as to whether he/she is suffering from any disease or physical disability, and
- (iii) he/she should have passed a test on mechanical knowledge of the vehicle he/she wishes to be tested and practical driving.

In order to upgrade the standard of driving in Mauritius, the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development runs a Professional Drivers Training Centre to train both provisional and competent drivers of heavy goods and public transport vehicles. From 10 to 14 June 2013, four experts in professional driving from Belgium will provide training to professional drivers of heavy goods and public transport vehicles.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply the Dr. the hon. Prime Minister made to Parliamentary Question No. B/561 on 23 October 2012, wherein he had described the process and criteria considered for the issue of a driving licence to a person suffering from chronic diseases, including epilepsy. He had also mentioned that we will be having a fresh look at the whole question of issue of driving licences.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is reviewing the existing criteria for the issue of driving licences which will provide, *inter alia*, for higher minimum age limits for professional drivers of different categories of vehicles such as heavy goods and public transport vehicles. In this respect, the assistance of an expert from the European Commission has been obtained and he will be in Mauritius by August 2013. He will study the existing laws and regulations pertaining to drivers' medical fitness and advise on the implementation of new medical fitness evaluation procedures for the issue of driving licences.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, considering that in the wake of the Sorèze accident, a loose statement, or maybe a statement, was made by the General Manager of the NTC stating that he could not outrule the presence of disease in the driver. So, considering that loose statement, could the hon. Ag. Prime Minister state to the House whether it would not be logical to have specific regulations to ascertain the fitness of a driver, especially of heavy goods vehicles and transport?

The Ag. Prime Minister: This is what the answer is about, to look at the procedures and assess what has to be changed and I would say one thing also, if anyone has a driving licence and happens to be ill, his licence can be suspended for a while. If he happens to be incapacitated, his licence may be changed. So, there are many things that are happening already.

Dr. S. Boolell: Does the hon. Ag. Prime Minister consider it logical that it is up to the driver to submit on a form to the Police a statement concerning his state of health? As we all know, all will say that they are well until an accident happens.

The Ag. Prime Minister: But, it is not only the driver who reports it. It is the person employing him or others. So, it is not limited to the driver only and this is the only way. You cannot ask somebody every week, every month, every six months, to come and report. But, it should be reported by others who are employing him.

Dr. S. Boolell: In a statement by the hon. Prime Minister in October 2012, there was a promise of a Driver Education and Testing Centre which was meant to be set up to promote formal and systematic training. Now, I hear it is the MITD, amongst other things, which is going to do this kind of activity. Can we have an update, hon. Ag. Prime Minister, on this issue?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am assured by my colleague, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping that it is ongoing and it will happen soon.

Mr Jhugroo: Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether there is any age limit regarding drivers of heavy goods vehicles and public transport, including buses?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Not as at present.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, my understanding is that as things stand, will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister confirm, once a person ...

Mr Speaker: No, no! The Ag. Prime Minister cannot confirm, he can only state.

Mr Obeegadoo: Will the Ag. Prime Minister say, if I am correct

Mr Speaker: State!

Mr Obeegadoo: Will he state that, at present, as things stand, once a person is the holder of a driver's licence, whatever be his age, whether he is 70, 80, 90 or 100, unless and until he chooses to disclose any handicaps to drive or he is caught by the Police, that person can freely use our roads and, if that is so, does the hon. Deputy Prime Minister not agree that there is an urgent need ...

Mr Speaker: If I may interrupt the hon. Member. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister is actually the Ag. Prime Minister. So, if you can address him as such.

Mr Obeegadoo: Does the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Ag. Prime Minister not agree that in the wake of the Sorèze accident, there is an urgent necessity to provide adequate safeguards and guarantee the safety of road users?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I understand rightly - I may be wrong on this - there was an age limit of 60 or so after which you had to produce a medical certificate, but this is out.

(Interruptions)

It is out because it was appealed in court, as you know. But, what I have said, and I repeat the last part of my answer, is that there is an expert from the European Commission who is coming to study the existing laws and regulations pertaining to drivers' medical fitness and advise - and this is the important part - on the implementation of new medical fitness evaluation procedures for the issue of driving licences, and he will look at all the issues that have been raised.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Dr. S. Boolell!

Dr. S. Boolell: In an answer on the issue of driving licences concerning epilepsy, the hon. Prime Minister stated that we have to relook at that. May I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether we have relooked at that or whether we are still looking at *permis à points* and the flashing lights of the motorways?

The Ag. Prime Minister: No, but this will be addressed also and I take note of this. The hon. Member should know - and I say it for the record and the House would like to know - between 2000 and 2012, there were 14 requests for driving licences for persons suffering from epilepsy; 14 in 10 years, about one every year. Seven applications were recommended, including two from hon. Dr. S. Boolell himself. So, I get his point there. But, the point I wanted to raise was why the others were turned down, and I could not get a reply.

POLICE - MOTORCYCLES - PURCHASE

(No. B/413) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the motorcycles of the Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to -

- (a) the number thereof in service, indicating the engine capacity thereof in each case;
- (b) if the purchase of new ones is being considered and, if so, indicate if the type and specifications thereof are being reviewed following complaints received, and
- (c) training courses offered to the Traffic Officers in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

GRAND PORT DISTRICT COUNCIL – COUNCILLOR – ALLEGED ASSAULT

(No. B/414) 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 an alleged case of assault of a District Councillor of the Grand Port District Council during a council meeting held on 08 April 2013, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the matter has been reported thereto and, if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that no case of assault upon any District Councillor of Grand Port District Council during a Council meeting held on 08 April 2013, has been reported.

However, on 18 April 2013, one Mr B. R., Village Councillor of Cluny Village and member of the Grand Port District Council, reported a case of "Assault" against one Mr R. K. J., a Village Councillor of Quatre Soeurs Village and member of the Grand Port District Council, at the Rose Belle Police Station. The incident allegedly occurred whilst a Council meeting was being held on 18 April 2013.

The enquiry has been completed and the case file has been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président, est-ce que le Premier ministre par intérim peut nous dire quand l'enquête a débuté?

The Ag. Prime Minister: The Police initiated an enquiry on the matter on 18 April.

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président, d'après mes informations, l'enquête a débuté seulement après que cette question ait été posée au Parlement. Donc, il semblerait que, ces jours-ci, quand les proches du pouvoir sont mêlés dans des incidents, il faut attendre, comme on dit dans la Police, l'instruction qui vient d'en haut. Peut-on savoir du Premier ministre par intérim, l'identité de cette personne qui est en haut, qui donne des instructions?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not sure why the hon. Member should think that this question prompted the action. It started on 18 April and by now, it is at the DPP. So, it is a very prompt enquiry.

Mr Speaker: Yes. One last question!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the Ag. Prime Minister inform the House whether any action has been taken by the Police after 18 of April and, if not, why not?

The Ag. Prime Minister: It is being referred to the DPP. I think we will leave it for action to be taken. It is already at the DPP.

Mr Speaker: One more question! Hon. Jugnauth!

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Ag. Prime Minister has said that the Police started enquiry on 18 April. Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister say, specifically, what did the Police do on 18 April; what action, whether any statement has been taken, whether any witnesses have been called upon to record any statement? What has been done specifically?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information I have is that the Police initiated an enquiry on 18 April and completed the enquiry on 31 May. This file has been sent to the DPP on the same day.

Mr Speaker: Before we move to the next question, I have to announce that the Table has been advised that PQ No. B/416 has been withdrawn. So, we move to question No. B/415. Hon. Ameer Meea!

TROU FANFARON POLICE STATION – RELOCATION

(No. B/415) 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 the Trou Fanfaron Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) if unhygienic conditions prevail thereat;
- (b) there is a lack of space thereat, and
- (c) where matters stand as to the proposed relocation thereof, indicating if consideration is being given for a Police Post to be installed in the locus instead.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Trou Fanfaron Police Station is an old building constructed in the year 1779 and particular attention is given for its maintenance and cleanliness in order to preserve a healthy working environment thereat. Daily cleaning is done by a Police Attendant who is posted at the Trou Fanfaron Police Station. Also repairs and maintenance works are carried out as and when required by the Technical Unit of the Special Support Unit. A survey has been carried out by the Occupational Safety and Health Officer posted at the Police Department and remedial and corrective action, concerning most of the recommendations of the Occupational Safety and Health Report have already been implemented. The building is, therefore, not in an unhygienic condition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, the Trou Fanfaron Police Station is listed as a national Heritage building. It has a floor space of 455 square metres and there is no land available to extend the building.

In regard to part (c) of the question, a plot of land of an extent of 4,500 square metres, in the vicinity of Quay D, Port Louis and belonging to the Mauritius Ports Authority, has been identified for the construction of the new Trou Fanfaron Police Station. The lease agreement is being finalised, thereafter the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping will carry out the design of the building. The construction of the building is expected to start by September 2014.

The Commissioner of Police has also informed that it is not planned to use the existing building as a Police Post. In view of the recent installation of the CCTV Street Surveillance System and round the clock Police patrols in the area, there will be no need for having a Police Post at Trou Fanfaron when the new Police Station will have been constructed.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the construction of a new Police station at Trou Fanfaron has been long on the cards and let me quote from Hansard a question by me in March 2011 to the hon. Prime Minister –

“I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the decision to relocate Trou Fanfaron Police Station to a new site at Quay D roundabout has been taken. In regard a plot of land of an extent of 4,200 m² belonging to the Mauritius Ports Authority has been identified. The construction of the new Police station is planned for 2012.”

This question was put in 2011. To another Parliamentary Question put by me in 2012, the hon. Prime Minister stated, I quote -

“The Police, therefore, envisage to shift the Trou Fanfaron Police station to a new building. A plot of an extent of 4,200 m² in the vicinity of Quay D roundabout and belonging to the MPA has been identified. The construction of the new building is scheduled to start in 2013.”

And now, we just heard from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister that the construction is scheduled in 2014. Can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister why is this every time being postponed? What is the time frame, whether the tender has been launched, where is the problem that every year...

Mr Speaker: Too many questions! Put a question at a time!

(Interruptions)

The Ag. Prime Minister: The tender has not been launched yet. I will transmit to the hon. Prime Minister the concern of the hon. Member about this.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Any more questions! Last question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Why last question, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker: Carry on!

Mr Ameer Meea: As I said, this building is a very old building, it has been there for long years and there are leakages in the roof and the policemen posted there are complaining of the very bad state with unhygienic conditions. So, may I appeal to the hon. Ag. Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Sit down! I am on my feet. Hon. Member, you have to put a question. You should not appeal. Appealing to the hon. Ag. Prime Minister is not a question. See how you can put it in a question form!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister to try to speed up the matter just like the case of Sarako, to do that in a TGV way, that this Police station is constructed in the least delay?

(Interruptions)

The Ag. Prime Minister: I will, Mr Speaker, Sir. But I hope that the hon. Member is not proposing that we turn it into an energy producing centre!

Mr Speaker: Now, we move to the next question. The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/417 has been withdrawn. Therefore, we move to PQ No. B/418. Hon Soodhun!

MEDIA - REPORT

(No. B/416) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the media, he will state the follow up actions being envisaged by Government following the submission of the report in relation thereto by Mr G. R., QC, indicating the timeframe set therefor.

(Withdrawn)

MISSING PERSONS – INQUIRIES

(No. B/417) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the missing persons, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since 2010 to date, indicating the –

- (a) age group thereof, and
- (b) number thereof having been found, indicating where matters stand as to the inquiries being carried out in the remaining cases thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS - ALLEGED ARMS TRAFFICKING

(No. B/418) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the recent case of alleged arms trafficking in which Mauritius is allegedly involved, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Independent Commission Against Corruption, information as to if a statement has been taken from Mrs K. L. A. in relation thereto.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that, by virtue of section 81 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, it would be contrary to the law for the Commission to disclose at this stage any information on the case.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Ag. Prime Minister inform the House who decided that the statement be made at the High Commission of Mauritius in London?

The Ag. Prime Minister: As I said, I am not in a position to reveal any of this until it is over.

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Ag. Prime Minister say whether any statement has been taken from either the hon. Minister of Industrial Relations or his brother or his father up to now?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I am not aware of any facts of the case. All I know is that ICAC is enquiring. Therefore, I leave it to ICAC.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister – he just mentioned ICAC – who else did ICAC inform that they were going to take a statement from Ms K. L. A. in London? Who else did ICAC inform?

Mr Speaker: No mention of name is allowed.

(Interruptions)

Yes, it is a warning! The Ag. Prime Minister may answer the question.

The Ag. Prime Minister: I expect it is the Mauritius High Commission which should know.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Ag. Prime Minister whether a statement was, in fact, taken and whether lawyers of the third party did have access to Ms K. L. A. in London at the date and time when she was at the High Commission which is governed by the Convention of Geneva?

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sorry, I go by the reply that I have said that I am not in a position to reveal anything.

Mr Ganoo: The information that this House wants to have from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister is the following: since we have learnt that when this lady was at the High Commission, she was served with a Summons, process papers in the context of a private civil suit. So, the question that the nation wants to know is: how come when a lady who is a witness and who has been given an appointment by the ICAC in our High Commission, a third party, the usher or the lawyer appears and serves a Court document on the said witness? Wasn't this a trap? This is what we want to know!

The Ag. Prime Minister: As far as I understand, it was served outside the Commission, not inside.

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Jugnauth!

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Ag. Prime Minister, today, is saying that he cannot give information to the House, but the Prime Minister in his answer to the PNQ of 15 November 2012 said that not less than three banks have not complied with the laws and regulations in this affair. So, may I know from the hon. Ag. Prime Minister what actions have been initiated against those banks so far?

The Ag. Prime Minister: I need notice of this question. I am not aware of all the details.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Bodha!

POLICE FORCE – TRAFFIC REGULATION

(No. B/419) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the regulation of traffic, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Police Officers who are on duty therefor, on a daily basis, indicating the number thereof from each unit of the Police Force involved therein.

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, regulation of traffic on the public roads is one of the main duties of the Police Force, as laid down in the Police Act 1974. It involves directing vehicular and pedestrians' traffic with a view to ensuring a smooth traffic flow.

The operational control of the members of the Police Force falls under the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police under section 71(4) of the Constitution and it is for him to decide on their deployment for specific duties including regulation of traffic.

I am assured by the Commissioner of Police that adequate Police personnel is deployed for the regulation of traffic across the island depending on requirements and exigencies. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would add that it would not be in order for Police to reveal number of officers deployed on various duties.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Ag. Prime Minister whether he does not have the perception that more Police Officers today are being given as duties, to regulate the traffic than to address the issue of law and order. That was why I asked this question about the numbers involving traffic regulation and the number of policemen we have to provide security and law and order in this country.

The Ag. Prime Minister: From what the hon. Member has said, I put it to the Commissioner of Police whether it is evenly distributed for the purposes that they are employed.

HAMILTON COLLEGE – ALLEGED PAEDOPHILIA CASE

(No. B/421) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the recent arrest of one Mr A. A., following an alleged case of paedophilia at the Hamilton College, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto, indicating –

- (a) if Mr A. A.3, had previously been involved in a sexual offence and, if so, indicate where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto, and
- (b) if the victims are being harassed and, if so, the measures being taken, if any, for the prevention thereof.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: I think time is over; we have to stop. Now, questions addressed to the hon. Ministers. I have to announce that Dr. the hon. Minister of Education has informed me that he has to attend a funeral of a close relative and has asked leave for Parliamentary Question No. B/427 addressed to him by the hon. Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill, hon. Mrs Ribot, to be taken out of turn. I have accepted this request. Hon. Mrs Ribot!

MEDCO TRINITY - PSSA - INQUIRY

(No. B/427) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the allegation against Mr L. L., of the Medco Trinity for making his students work on school days in his family's private cleaning business, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Private Secondary Schools Authority, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for allowing me to answer this question now and the hon. Member as well for allowing me to reply to a question at this time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Private Secondary Schools Authority (PSSA) that representations were made by some students of MEDCO Trinity Secondary School in February and March 2013, to the effect that they were being requested to work, on school days, for a cleaning Company "Klin Tank", in which Mr. L. L., then Rector of the School, held an interest.

Following meetings held with the students concerned and their parents, MEDCO carried out a preliminary investigation into the allegations of the students at the level of the school and with the Companies Division with regards to the shareholding of "Klin Tank" company. Explanations were also sought from Mr L. L. on the allegations made.

Following the internal enquiry and unsatisfactory explanations of Mr L. L., the latter was suspended with immediate effect on 12 April 2013.

The PSSA was requested on 18 April 2013 by the Manager of MEDCO Trinity Secondary School to initiate disciplinary proceedings against Mr L.L. A Memorandum of facts on the complaints was submitted.

In the meantime, another Rector is covering the duties of Mr. L.L. at MEDCO Trinity Secondary School.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the PSSA is in the process of setting up a Board of Discipline, in accordance with Regulation 10 of the PSSA (Board of Discipline) Regulations 1988, as amended by GN No. 7 of 1998, to look into the complaints made against Mr L.L. To this effect, the particulars of the charges, as required by the PSSA Regulations, have been drafted and submitted to the Attorney-General's Office on 2 May 2013. I am further informed that once the particulars of charges

would have been vetted by the Attorney General's Office, my Ministry would make arrangements for the establishment of the Board of Discipline.

This case is being followed up very closely.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Education whether the Ministry of Child Development and the Ministry of Labour have been informed of that abuse on the part of the Rector.

Dr. Bunwaree: I personally had a word with my colleague, the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment, and the management of the school has been requested by my Ministry to send the request to the Ministry of Labour because, in fact, it is a question involving child labour.

Mr Obeegadoo: Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether these children are aged below 18 and whether he has received a report from the Ombudsperson for children in that regard?

Dr. Bunwaree: I believe they should be below 18. But I am speaking from what I have heard, because I have not got all the details with me. In any case, I don't have, in the file, any communication from the Ombudsperson. But everything that has to be done will be done, and the way it has been dealt with has been satisfactory up to now.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister when, for the first time, was the Ministry of Education made aware of that incident.

Dr. Bunwaree: Well, in the second half of the month of March.

Mr Obeegadoo: The Minister does not seem to have the ages of the students involved. But to the extent that the disciplinary procedures at the PSSA may last a very long time and that this case may disclose recourse to child labour, has this matter been reported to the Police, and if not, why not?

Dr. Bunwaree: Well, the Board of discipline is being set up. We have to wait also because we are *un Etat de droit, donc il faut laisser les institutions travailler*. But the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment is going to take care of that aspect concerning child labour, and if it has to be sent to the Police in one way or the other it would be done.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether these are not two separate issues - on the one side, we have the abuse of power of the Rector and on the other side, we have child labour - and whether we are not wasting time, waiting for the Board of discipline to be set up. Why not refer the case immediately to the Police?

Dr. Bunwaree: I think it has to be examined by the Ministry of Labour first, which is the Ministry responsible to look into the question of child labour because there are allegations. I, personally, have gone through part of the file because all the details have not reached me on time. In fact, I have seen certain difficulties here and there, but I must say that according to the information I have, the outcome of the enquiry, the Disciplinary Committee is being set up and further actions will be determined. But, we

are doing our best we can to have the Disciplinary Committee set up as quickly as possible, and the question of child labour being looked into by the Ministry of my colleague.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, this incident is in breach with the Child Protection Act because child labour is illegal in Mauritius. Can I know from the hon. Minister why we have to wait for the Disciplinary Board before sending the matter to the Police?

Dr. Bunwaree: The question is that there are allegations and we feel that there are some truths in it, but it has to be looked into in more details.

(Interruptions)

We can't blame without enquiry. I am, personally, of the opinion that this Rector has failed in his duties. I am of this opinion. We have to respect the institutions as well.

Mr Baloomoody: I must say I am very surprised by the way this enquiry is being conducted. The more so that the Minister comes and tells us that there is an allegation, according to him, of child labour, but he does not know the age of the student. This would have been the first thing we should have asked. And if he is a child, we should refer the matter to the Police. There is a criminal offence; we should refer the matter to the Police.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is being looked into by the institutions. The enquiry has taken place. The Rector has been suspended. The case has been referred. I cannot offhand go to the Board of Discipline, for example. We have to draft the terms of reference, we have to send it to the State Law Office. All this has been done, and the matter of child labour is being looked into at another level. Everything will have to be done according to the outcome of the *démarches* that we are doing.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just stated there is an alleged case of criminal offence, which is child labour. Is it not for the Police to enquire into an alleged case of criminal offence?

Dr. Bunwaree: It has to be done; it will be done. But then I need to have the advice of other institutions, and I am not going to be the one to go to the Police. There is a Board there; they have been informed of everything and they will have to take their responsibilities. Insofar as they have acted, they have gone according to the regulations; they have gone according to the facts that they have obtained. They have set up their enquiry. They have already sent it to where they ought to have sent it. Now the Police will have to look into it at some point in time. If it is confirmed, whatever report I'll get from the Ministry, once we get it, we will send it to the Board of MEDCO.

Mr Roopun: In the light of the remarks made by hon. Members from the Opposition, does not the hon. Minister think that he should, as the Minister responsible for this department, take measures and direct whoever is in charge of that institution that the matter should be reported to the Police? Whatever is

being done is usurping the role of the Police as an institution to carry out enquiries whenever there is any alleged breach of the law.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, when I got the details of this case, I, myself, found it queer that certain things were not done. This is very recent. I did what I believe had to be done including *les démarches à faire pour la police*. I have been advised that it will come, but before we have to do certain other things. I am going according to advice.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the advice of the State Law Office, which offers legal advice to his Ministry, has been sought on this matter?

Dr. Bunwaree: I said that the matter has been sent to the State Law Office to look into all the facts that have been raised, but this is more towards the Board of Discipline. The enquiry is still on by the Board. They are still looking into the matter.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that Mr L. L. asked those students who came to work for him to lie and not tell anything to their parents; the very proof that he knows that what he was doing was quite illegal.

Dr. Bunwaree: I have said in the reply that the management of the MEDCO School has received the children together with their parents and they have spoken very freely, and it is on the basis of what they have said that the MEDCO Board has taken the decisions which I have mentioned

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House who took the decision not to refer this case to the Police?

Dr. Bunwaree: There is not a decision taken not to refer. I think the hon. Member is wrong all round. There is no decision taken not to refer the case to the Police, but, according to institutions, we have to get more information from the institution concerned, which is the Ministry responsible for child labour.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Obeegadoo: May I, on behalf of the Members on this side of the House, make an appeal to the Minister?

Mr Speaker: Your question!

Mr Obeegadoo: Will the hon. Minister agree to our appeal, therefore - because we are an *Etat de droit*; because we have learned that this is a very serious matter of an allegation of a criminal offence of child labour, and since he does not even have the ages of the children - to look into this issue, ascertain the age of the children, and to the extent that there is a serious allegation of child labour, to refer this matter for inquiry to the Police immediately, irrespective of administrative procedures for a disciplinary hearing?

Dr. Bunwaree: I have no quarrel with that. I have no quarrel at all with that. What the hon. Member must understand - I have said I don't have the exact age of the children, but I have said that they

are children – is that it is a question of alleged child labour. I have mentioned it myself in the reply. So, don't come and do as if I do not know that they are children. I said I have had a word with the Minister responsible. We have given directives to the school to report the case - I hope it is done - to the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations as, according to me, it is an alleged case involving child labour. For the Police, of course, it will be done, but I have to respect certain information that I have been given. This will be done *en temps et lieu, et le plus vite possible*.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it would seem that the authorities have failed on several counts in this case. Clearly in this matter, these children have been “exposed to harm” by having been forced to work! Can I ask the hon. Minister then if he does not agree that this is a case where section 11 of the Child Protection Act applies again, when children have been “exposed to harm”? Especially when school staff comes to know about what occurred, they should have reported the matter to the PS of the Ministry of Child Protection immediately to conduct an enquiry.

Dr. Bunwaree: I have come to know this now. In fact, this is a fact. The Ministry has sent circulars already since last year - January or February - to inform all school teachers, all members of staff and so on to this section of the law, but until now there are some difficulties I have noticed. We have to press on the staff to follow the regulations as they are. I will come and inform the House very soon of the efforts that the Ministry is doing to sensitise teachers because in this case *les professeurs sont responsables de ces enfants. Ils doivent savoir et agir en fonction de la loi. Il me semble que certains professeurs ont effectivement certaines faiblesses et n'arrivent pas à maîtriser cela, et à faire ce qu'il faut en temps et lieu. Le ministère fait le maximum pour que cela puisse être généralisé et que les professeurs puissent prendre leurs responsabilités et agir en connaissance.*

Mr Speaker: Now, I think this matter has been sufficiently aired. The Table has been advised that PQ B/454 has been withdrawn. So, this is a proper time to break. We suspend for one and a half.

At 1.00 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

HOSPITALS - RADIATION THERAPY/CHEMOTHERAPY

(No. B/422) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to Radiation Therapy and Chemotherapy, he will state the number of patients who have been undergoing sessions therefor respectively, since August 2011 to date.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that from August 2011 to date, 2738 patients are following radiation therapy and 2689 chemotherapy.

Furthermore, I wish to point out that with a view to alleviating hardship faced by these patients, my Ministry has taken the following measures -

Firstly, decentralisation of the chemotherapy service.

As from September 2012, chemotherapy services are being provided at SSRN Hospital where 404 patients are following treatment. Likewise, some more are following treatment at J. Nehru Hospital as from February 2013. Measures are also being taken to operate another unit, that is, a Chemotherapy Unit at Dr A.G. Jeetoo Hospital as from the end of this month. It is also envisaged to set up a unit at Flacq once the one at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital becomes operational. These measures will decrease the number of patients attending Victoria Hospital which was getting overcrowded.

Secondly, action has already been initiated for the modernisation of the Radiotherapy services through the procurement of a new Linear Accelerator and accessories and the construction of a new Bunker.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware, decentralisation or not, that patients who come for Radiation Therapy or who come for Chemotherapy by the Ministry's ambulance, after they have undergone treatment, have to wait for long hours, sitting on benches after this treatment to wait for the ambulance to bring them back home? Is he aware of that situation?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is precisely since I assumed office - I was aware of this - that we have started with the decentralisation programme. Since I have assumed office, I opened a unit at SSRN, another one at Jawaharlall Nehru Hospital and by the end of this month, we are going to open one at the Jeetoo Hospital and, hopefully, God willing, very soon at Flacq Hospital. I am also aware of the difficulties being faced by patients after they have undergone painful - I would not use the word traumatising - difficult process of radiation therapy. If I am not mistaken, since the hon. Member was Minister, she has given some instructions to buy reclining chairs. I have checked the information. They have purchased, at least, a dozen of reclining chairs at the Victoria Hospital. When I opened the one at the Jawaharlall Nehru Hospital, the female ward consisted already of three reclining chairs, but I agree that in the main ward there is not, at present, reclining chairs. We have already initiated action in order to have these reclining chairs. With regard to time of waiting for the patients to go back to their place of residence, I am prepared to look at it in order to facilitate matters and to reduce as much as possible this waiting time, so as to enable patients, after this experience of radiation therapy and chemotherapy, to be at home, in their own environment, as soon as possible

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I tell the hon. Minister that decentralisation answers only part of the problem, but that after treatment this is essential because cancer patients sometimes are terminal patients? Can I ask the hon. Minister what has been done for palliative care for cancer patients?

Mr Speaker: I have to make an observation here. Your question deals with a number of issues; it should be specific. But, in view of the answer of the hon. Minister, I will allow the question.

(Interruptions)

He has opened the door. Yes, answer now!

Mr Bundhoo: In fact, much is being done, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to palliative treatment. There is a Cancer Plan Strategy which is being implemented, and this includes palliative treatment.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Since the hon. Minister is saying that there will be a unit for palliative care, is he aware that there are no trained personnel for palliative care and what has been done for the training of personnel?

Mr Speaker: No, one question!

Mr Bundhoo: No, no, no! In fact, the hon. Member seems to have forgotten. If I am not mistaken, it was the hon. Member who has sent...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister!

Mr Bundhoo:...these people to Nairobi for training...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister! This is the second time you are...

Mr Bundhoo:...and they are being trained at the moment.

Mr Speaker: This is the second time you have used the words "if I am not mistaken". In my view, a Minister has no right to be mistaken. He has to be sure and certain about his facts.

Mr Bundhoo: I can assure the hon. Member that all necessary efforts are being taken in order to equip all the cancer units with trained personnel with regard to palliative treatment.

Mr Bhagwan: We have heard it very often, and we have come across two cases as MPs about the environment itself - I am taking the example of Victoria Hospital. What is being done, at least, to make sure that these cancer patients who attend hospitals find themselves in a better environment, not mixing the patients, that is ladies as well as male patients? The cleanliness of the area which I have seen myself *laisse à désirer*. Will the Minister say what is being done, at least, to upgrade the facility at Victoria Hospital?

Mr Bundhoo: I have to refer the hon. Member to what I have just said earlier. Since I assumed office, we have opened two new units fully equipped of Chemotherapy, with cleanliness in a proper environment, with TV, air-conditioner and everything. I invite you, next time you go to Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam Hospital, go and visit it; next time you go to Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, go and visit it. And by doing so in these two hospitals, we have alleviated the burden at Victoria Hospital and, simultaneously, measures are being taken to improve the present conditions at Victoria Hospital.

Mr Obeegadoo: Two questions, Sir, if you will allow me!

Mr Speaker: Yes, I will allow you.

Mr Obeegadoo: The first question is: will the hon. Minister confirm that the Chemotherapy Unit in the north was funded or co-funded by an NGO – I think the name is Solaris – and that we are, therefore, blessed with a number of NGOs now in this area, which are willing to assist? So, if that is the case, will he undertake to set up the appropriate framework – it does not have to be legal; institutional - a platform for regular exchanges between the Ministry and these NGOs, so that we can tap their support, and private sector funding for the betterment of the conditions prevailing in all of these Chemotherapy centres, and especially Candos?

Mr Bundhoo: This is quite interesting, Sir. I will surely take on board the suggestion of the hon. Member.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is an idea that is being mooted - I am not for or against -; that of a cancer hospital as such that would offer all modern services to cancer patients. As we know, cancer is very much on the rise now in our country. I would just like to know from the hon. Minister whether Government is studying this idea, and whether it has taken a decision to go for one major cancer hospital for the island.

Mr Bundhoo: I must say one thing. It is 50-50, if I can use the word. We are a very small country; whether we can have a standalone cancer institute is one thing, or whether we should have one within the premises of a regional hospital is debatable. For example, in France, Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital, if I am not mistaken, has got one of the very excellent cancer units within the hospital, whereas there are other places in Paris, France, where you have one standalone institute for cancer. But, at the same time, Paris has 11 million people and they have the resources and, as hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee rightly said earlier, they have the personnel to do that. Little Mauritius still has some problems to have doctors and specialists with regard to cancer. I put myself the question whether we have the necessary personnel and resources to have a standalone institute for cancer.

Mr Speaker: That is the Minister's own supplementary question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Previously, I asked a question with regard to Victoria Hospital. I am asking the hon. Minister to, at least, expedite matters as far as Victoria Hospital is concerned where the situation is very bad. Another question, Sir, concerns training. The hon. Minister has replied that training has been given to officers in Nairobi. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether any medical practitioner or doctor has been given scholarship in this palliative care, and whether there are actually doctors following training abroad?

Mr Bundhoo: I have the reply with me with regard to the number of oncologists and surgeons, and I will circulate it. But I must also hasten to add that a couple of weeks ago, when I was in Paris, I did have a discussion with Prof. Khayat, who is one of the leading professors with regard to cancer. He will

be coming to Mauritius in September to have a review of our present system, and he has taken an undertaking to consider the possibility of providing for three consecutive years free training for three specialists in cancer, with different specialities.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister saying that, in fact, reclining chairs have been purchased for cancer patients who attend these centres. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether, recently, he has visited those cancer units in the different hospitals and that, in fact, the reclining chairs are there for the patients' benefit after the treatment?

Mr Speaker: The Minister can only state; not confirm!

Mr Bundhoo: I can state that I have enquired, and this is what I have been told from the RHD. But I can always have a visit there because I just opened the ones at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and SSRN Hospital. I can always check it up and inform the hon. Members.

COPYRIGHT BILL – INTRODUCTION

(No. B/423) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the proposed introduction of a new Copyrights Bill, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/587, I mentioned that, with a view to having a coherent approach and give a strong signal to our international partners on the issues relating to intellectual property, Government proposes to come up with a Consolidated Intellectual Property Legislation, which will incorporate copyright.

The drafting of this Consolidated Bill is underway at the level of the State Law Office. However, in view of the complexity of intellectual property, the Consolidated Bill will take some time.

Following further consultations I had with the Attorney General and the Ministerial Committee, we have agreed that, pending the Consolidated Bill, individual legislations would first be introduced.

The Consolidated Intellectual Property Bill would then incorporate these individual legislations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards copyright, I had mentioned the draft Bill is almost ready. In fact, the Bill would have already been proposed to the National Assembly, had I not received further representations from artists associations who had asked for clarifications.

At their requests, I agreed to postpone the introduction of the Copyright Bill and held several meetings with associations of artists, producers, authors, composers, performers, interpreters, architects with their legal advisers, and also representatives of the Mauritius Society of Authors.

Additional proposals are awaited from them this week, and in the light thereof, the Copyright Bill will be finalised and presented to Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the House that copyright is one of the top priorities for my Ministry, and the Copyright Bill will be introduced during this session of the National Assembly.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, from the draft Bill and reaction from the AACM and other relevant stakeholders, we learn that provision has not been made on the role of Internet in music...

Mr Speaker: I have to interrupt the hon. Member again. The hon. Member has a question; she has to put it. If she is going to make a long introduction and then put a question, other Members who have put questions and have the legitimate expectation to have an answer to their question will not have the chance to have their questions answered. So, let us try to be fair to other Members of the National Assembly.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: My question is: does the hon. Minister understand that we do not still ride ox carts to go around? We are living in a digital world. Will consideration be given to Internet in the new Bill to protect the constitutional rights of the songwriters on behalf of other companies like Apple, iTunes, iPod or iPad, and safeguard our cultural heritage?

Mr Choonee: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, last year, in October, seven long months ago, the Minister justified the long delay in presenting the legislation by saying that he was going to introduce a Consolidated Intellectual Property Bill. Seven months later, he comes to say he has dropped that approach and he will now go for individual Bills until eventually, God knows when, the Consolidated Bill comes along and replaces and subsumes all the individual Bills. May we know what are the individual Bills that are now ready and when they will be introduced before the House?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is true that I mentioned that we will be having a Consolidated Bill. I would like to inform the House further that there is a Ministerial Committee composed of six Ministers, which is chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, hon. Dr. A. Boolell. The Ministerial Committee is looking after all aspects that concern patents...

(Interruptions)

It is the same Committee! They are still considering so many aspects. It is so complex a thing! So many Ministries are involved; I said it last year. I come back to say that the Chairman of the Committee is hon. Minister Dr. A. Boolell. We have the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, the hon. Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology, the Attorney General...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has said six Ministers! Go on!

(Interruptions)

Mr Choonee: What I mean, Sir, is that the complexity of the issue makes it difficult. So, they are working. Because it concerns copyright dealing with artists, I took the Bills separately, and I am coming with the Bill. Now that I am coming with the Bill, artists want some more time. I am ready to give them some time because I want every aspect of the Bill to take on board all that the artists want. I want them to be comfortable with the Bill.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with what the hon. Minister just said, can he tell us whether representations from *l'Association des Artistes Compositeurs (AACM)* and other relevant stakeholders in relation to clauses 13 and 29 - that are no longer part of the zero draft Bill - have been taken on board and what measures are being taken?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. lady is referring to an article related to MASA (Mauritius Society of Authors). This new Bill will incorporate everything - the Copyrights Bill I am talking of at the Ministry of Arts and Culture. Every aspect will be taken care of and that is why we are not coming with regulations right now for the other sections that the hon. Member mentioned. We will incorporate everything in the new Bill.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned a Ministerial Committee. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has information with regard to the number of meetings held and the date of the last meeting of this Ministerial Committee?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot talk about all the Ministerial Committees pertaining to the Consolidated Bill, but I can only give details on consultations we had for the Copyrights Bill at the level of my Ministry. We have had seven meetings, both international and local.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: But the question is about the meeting!

Mr Roopun: Mr Speaker, Sir, last Tuesday, during the debate on the Seeds Bill, during which the hon. Minister also intervened, we heard exactly the opposite to what the Minister is stating today. I raised the issue about International Property Rights and the Minister of Agriculture stated exactly the contrary; that we were coming with a consolidated IP law which will integrate everything, but ...

Mr Speaker: No! Hon. Roopun, no speech! Question, please!

Mr Roopun: But just for the sake of clarity to my question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to know. We have exactly ...

Mr Speaker: Look, I am on my feet! You are allowed to introduce a question, but it is not fair. It is not allowed to make a long introduction which amounts to a speech, and then put a question.

Mr Roopun: Can the hon. Minister reconcile what he stated right now to what the hon. Minister of Agriculture stated, namely that there is going to be one Consolidated Bill? And now, the hon. Minister is stating that, at the first stage, there are going to be three separate legislation and, subsequently, an IP Consolidated Bill. This is why I want to have clarification.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I never mentioned three. I am talking about my Ministry's vocation, the Copyrights Bill for artists. I know my colleague mentioned about the Consolidated Bill, just as I am mentioning. That will come at a later stage; they are still working on it, but my Bill is almost ready.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell us if he is working on a framework and if there is a deadline for the Copyrights Bill to be introduced to the House?

Mr Choonee: Well, I have consulted the Attorney General, and he told me that it is going to be during this session, any moment from now, maybe one month.

ARTS & CULTURE - WHITE PAPER

(No. B/424) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the preparation of the White Paper on Arts and Culture, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ B/378, I mentioned that public views would be sought on the White Paper on Arts and Culture.

We have started by meeting artists' associations and now I propose to hold wider consultations with all stakeholders. In this same vein, the Ministry is organising a workshop in July in order to take on board all views.

Mr Speaker, Sir, thus I am confident that we are on the right track regarding our objective of making arts and culture, a new pillar of our economy.

Mr Speaker: Yes, but what about the White Paper? The question is about the White Paper.

Mr Choonee: Yes, I mentioned it!

Mr Speaker: You mentioned the White Paper?

Mr Choonee: I mentioned it. In my reply to PQ No. B/378, I mentioned that public views would be sought on the White Paper on Arts and Culture.

Mr Speaker: Ok, next question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Obeegadoo: Yes, a year ago, in June 2012, the Minister said that he will seek the green light of the Cabinet and then invite public views on the White Paper. A year later, he tells us that ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet, please!

Mr Obeegadoo: It seems to be shrieks...

Mr Speaker: I said silence! Carry on!

Mr Obeegadoo: ...of pain on the other side, Mr Speaker, Sir! The question to the hon. Minister - and I hope there is only one Minister of Arts and Culture for the time being - is: how can he justify that, a year later, he still comes to announce to the House that he will, in July, consult the public, when this was the very same answer given a year ago?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, a year ago, it is true, I had some consultations, but the interest is so much; we have so much of interest from all quarters that we have to – *mo la paye pu augmenter la, atann!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait! Hon. Minister, you have no right to point a finger to any Member; you cannot point a finger to any Member.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the interest has developed in all artists of different art forms. That is why I am coming back again to say - because we have had many consultations; they still want more, so we are organising a workshop.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell us whether the White Paper was a recommendation from the study commissioned by his Ministry in collaboration with UNESCO to recognise our cultural industry as an important sector in our economy?

Mr Choonee: Yes, it is part of it, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister why he has not tabled a copy of that study and why he has not used the example of Jamaica where, in 1996, the National Industry Policy has identified the cultural industry as a key growth sector, as recommended in the study, and to table a copy of that study?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, if it is possible for me to table it, I won't mind doing it.

A1-M1 LINK ROAD BRIDGE PROJECT – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/425) 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 A1-M1 Link Road bridge through Public Private Partnership, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to;
 - (i) the location thereof;
 - (ii) how traffic to and from Sorèze will be accessed there from and;
 - (iii) if the surroundings on both sides of the road will be affected therewith and, if so, how, and
- (b) table the prequalification and the bidding documents thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker Sir, the proposed A1-M1 Bridge will provide a link between Belle Etoile, Coromandel on A1 road, in the vicinity of Beachwear Exports Co Ltd. and Sorèze on Motorway M1 to the south of the new Ring Road interchange

With the implementation of the project, traffic to and from Sorèze will be accessed *via* a new grade separated interchange, while ensuring safe and uninterrupted traffic flow. Both extremities of the link will become major junctions and appropriate designs will be provided. The land required for this project has already been acquired and there are no buildings on the acquired portions. Any disrupted access will be resorted to.

In regard to part (b) of the question, the A1-M1 Link is a component of the PPP Road Decongestion Programme and, as such, its design and construction forms part of the PPP procurement. The question of prequalification and bidding documents therefore does not arise.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether, what we call the three level graded separated interchange will be integrated at the Sorèze *couloir de la mort*?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of any *couloir de la mort*. That is the reason why I refrain from answering this question.

Dr. Sorefan: Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether on the Chapman site, Belle Etoile Residential area will be relocated and “Christ People Church” will be demolished?

Mr Bachoo: I have just mentioned in my answer -if the hon. Member had listened to me properly - that on the portions of land which have been acquired, there are no buildings. This means no building would be pulled down, neither the Church nor any buildings in the vicinity.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House how far the potable water supply to Port Louis will be free from contamination during implementation of the A1-M1 bridge?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking in terms of the roads. The question of water supply has to be addressed to the CWA because I am concerned with the construction of the bridge.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Minister the extent of the land which Government has acquired and if he can circulate later on a list of the owners?

Mr Bachoo: Definitely I’ll do so, I’ll circulate a copy.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister what is the cost of the project? Who is going to fund it - because it is going to be a PPP - and whether we have a time frame for the implementation of the project?

Mr Bachoo: In fact, this forms part of the whole PPP project which I had earlier mentioned in the House. We have been quoting an estimated sum of Rs30 billion for the whole project, and now we are waiting impatiently for the award to be made. It is only then that I will be in a position to know.

Mr Bhagwan: This is delicate; we have to cross a river. Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether, within the project, Government would commission a strategic EIA to be done by professionals, at least to see all the impacts, not only residential, social, within not only the surroundings of Mare Gravier, Belle Étoile, and also the question of the part of Grand River?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, well, I have definitely the impression that these works will have to be undertaken because so much of money is being invested. It is, in fact, a real mega project for the whole country, and all aspects will have to be taken care of before we proceed with such a project.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether this road will form part of the toll roads and covered under the 8020 PPP?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, earlier I had answered questions on this; that it will form part of the toll road system.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that this forms part of the PPP and the last part of my question, prequalification and the bid document, is related to the PPP, and A1-M1 forms part of the PPP. I would like to know whether the hon. Vice-Prime Minister is prepared to table it, as he did for Proguard.

Mr Bachoo: No, but, in fact, I have just answered the question in the main reply which I have given. It forms part of the PPP project. The question does not arise for me to submit because the evaluations are on, and the award has to be given.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether, within that project the reconstruction, of the redesign of the existing road from, I would say, Gamma Civic downwards to Grand River, also forms part in terms of enlargement and also traffic security?

Mr Bachoo: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was supposed to answer a question later on when I am going to talk about Vandermeersch. In fact, this has also been taken care of; the existing road also, the network which has to be upgraded because we know the difficulties that people get, and this is considered to be one of the dark spots.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister has said that this project forms part of the mega PPP project and he has also informed the House just now that negotiations are still going on. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister tell us who are negotiating at the moment and where are the negotiations taking place, and when will these negotiations be over?

Mr Bachoo: In fact, when I use the word negotiation, that is, I mean to say that at the CPB, the discussions are on because there is, what they call, a BAFO agreement because once evaluations are done and then the best offers are examined, and discussions are launched...

Mr Speaker: You cannot answer for the CPB.

Mr Bachoo: Yes, of course, I won't be able to answer but, in fact, discussions are on, and I am informed by the RDA that towards the beginning of July, the award will be made.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether, within that project of the reconstruction of the existing road, being given that several cases of accident have occurred at Belle Étoile and Coromandel, provision has been made for *passerelle* either in Belle Étoile and Coromandel for people attending church from one side to the other?

Mr Bachoo: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware about the details, but one thing I can assure the hon. Member is that this region has been taken care of. As to what are the steps that will be taken, I am not in a position as at now to say, but I can assure the hon. Member that this is being taken care of in the works.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give us a guarantee that, with the construction of the A1-M1 Link Road, this will decongest the traffic flow in Beau Bassin/Rose Hill?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are here as human beings to make efforts, and the results will follow.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan, your last question! It is your question. You have no question. Okay. Therefore, we move to the question of hon. Mrs Labelle, PQ No. B/426.

TEC – FORMER DIRECTOR

(No. B/426) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the former Director of the Tertiary Education Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission -

- (a) copy of the report;
 - (i) submitted by Professor Torul to the Board of the Commission on 16 February 2012 and table same, and
 - (ii) of the disciplinary committee set up to look into the alleged malpractices against him and table same, and
- (b) information as to the substantive post and salary upon which his lump sum and retirement benefits, if any, are being calculated.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) (i) of the question, the hon. Member may refer to the reply to the Private Notice Question on 22 November 2012 wherein I informed the House that Professor Torul gave an undertaking to officers deponing before him that names and statements cited in the report will be kept confidential.

Professor Torul has been consulted on whether the report may be made public by deleting the names of the deponents. He has stated that it would still be prejudicial to the staff members to disclose the report as such and this would be against the undertaking given by him.

With regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that the release of the report of the Disciplinary Committee might be prejudicial to the interests of the Commission given that the former Executive Director has informed the Commission that he reserves the right to legal actions and has made a complaint at the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commission that this is still under consideration and that any benefits will be according to the prevailing provisions of the law.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has received information under which position will the benefits be calculated?

Dr. Jeetah: I have replied, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is still under consideration. I am awaiting the outcome of the deliberations.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, must I take it that the Board is considering whether it will be under the illegally occupied position of Executive Deputy Director or Financial Controller?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Member is referring to this illegal position of Deputy Executive Director, it took place on 15 April 2005 under the then hon. Minister of Education, who happened to be your colleague, hon. Steven Obeegadoo. This appointment was converted later from contractual to assignment of duties. I am sure the Board will take all these issues into consideration.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to clarify because I was referring to the fact that the position which was a contract-based one was converted into a permanent one without the approval of the hon. Minister, and it was not my colleague at that time who was Minister. This is what I am referring to.

Dr. Jeetah: Actually, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a fact that on 15 April this gentleman was nominated as Deputy Executive Director on contract and later the appointment was converted to assignment of duties for three years. The hon. Member is also suggesting that there is a case where the Minister's approval was not sought, and I am sure the Board will take all these issues into consideration.

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Minister does not want to disclose or communicate the proceedings of the Committee. Can he at least inform the House of the findings of that Committee, whether there was any malpractice?

Dr. Jeetah: Not wanting to be sounding patronising, but I have a judgement 3055 Administrative Tribunal of ILO which the hon. Member would understand better, and I would like to quote from this judgement here -

“As a general rule, an organisation should refrain from passing on damaging information about a staff member. If the recipient of that information has a legitimate interest in knowing the truth, it should refrain from passing on damaging information without first giving the staff member an opportunity to challenge it and give his or her own account.”

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to rely on the indulgence of the hon. Members. Let the process take its course, and in due time we will provide whatever information that we have.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the advice of the State Law Office has been taken in the light of the Disciplinary Committee that was held; whether the advice of the State Law Office has been sought as to if any compensation should be payable to this person?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have given directives to my Permanent Secretary although she happens to be on the TEC Board is in her personal capacity. I have given instructions to make sure that we seek advice from SLO before any compensation or whatever decision taken by the Board will have to be strictly according to legal provisions of this country.

Mr Speaker: Before we move to the next question, I have to announce that the Table has been advised that PQ B/429 and PQ B/446 have been withdrawn. Hon. Ms Anquetil.

HENRIETTA – FAMILY HEALTH CLINIC

(No. B/428) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Health Centre at Henrietta, he will state if consideration will be given for the construction of a new modern building for the housing thereof, following the recent demolition of the building which was housing same and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the hon. Member that the Health Centre at Henrietta was, in fact, a family health clinic providing, *inter alia*, maternal and child health services, including family planning. This building was in a decrepit state and was condemned by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure in December 2010. Public access thereto was restricted for safety reasons. With the closure of the Henrietta Family Health Clinic, the services are now available at Glen Park Community Health Centre which is 2 to 3 kms away.

The public was informed accordingly.

It is to be noted that inhabitants of Henrietta and adjoining localities were already attending Glen Park Community Health Centre for all other basic health services.

Consideration is being given to the setting up of a Family Health Clinic/Community Health Centre at Henrietta.

Ms Anquetil: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state if budgetary provisions will be made in the next Budget?

Mr Bundhoo: Yes, it could be considered, Mr Speaker, Sir. It would be considered, of course.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to a PQ dated 15 June 2010, the then Minister of Health stated and I quote -

“This project has been included in the Capital Budget 2010 of my Ministry for implementation within this financial year.”

May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of this state of affairs and any reason why this project has not been implemented, and we are now hearing that it could be considered to put in the next Budget?

Mr Bundhoo: I think my hon. colleague is not reading the remaining part of the reply where Mrs Hanoomanjee, the then Minister, said -

“We will take into consideration the established new criteria for a study to be carried out.”

I think we are reading the same reply. It is a PQ dated 15 June 2010.

(Interruptions)

No, this is what she said. I quote Mrs Hanoomanjee -

“But, as I said, I will have a needs assessment, and then I’ll see whether those services are required there.”

Mrs Labelle: With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am reading from Hansard, answer to PQ IB/42. The first part of the question is: the building is not in a good state and so on and so forth.

“This project has been included in Capital Budget 2010 of my Ministry for implementation within this financial year.”

May I be allowed to give it to the hon. Minister?

Mr Bundhoo: I already have a copy, Mr Speaker, Sir. In a subsequent Parliamentary Question, supplementary questions were asked by my good friend, hon. Mrs Labelle. The then hon. Minister of Health replied, and I quote -

“But, as I said, I will have a needs assessment, and then I’ll see whether those services are required there.”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Mrs Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: This will be the last question!

Mrs Labelle: I am taking very seriously the part the hon. Minister is referring to. I was talking about the people of Camp Savanne and Camp Mapou regarding the distance these people have to cover to go to the Glen Park Health Centre. Because it is being said that people can go up to 3 kms, I was saying that for people from Camp Savanne, Camp Mapou and so on, the distance is more than that usually agreed upon.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not quarrelling over that. I just wanted, for the purpose of the record, to give the full reply that was given by my colleague, the then hon. Minister of Health. I must say she was right in what she said at that time, and she is still right. But the thing is that I have given a reply to hon. Ms Anquetil. Hon. Mrs Bappoo has spoken with me. The hon. Member has taken the matter. I can assure the House that I will look into it with a fresh mind and would probably consider the possibility of setting up a new, modern health centre in this part in order to serve the population.

(Interruptions)

I am prepared to do that. There is no problem about this.

PORT LOUIS EASTERN POST OFFICE – RENOVATION

(No. B/429) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the Port Louis Eastern Post Office, located at the Corner Nicolay and Magon Streets, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Post Limited, information as to if –

- (a) there is a lack of space thereat, and
- (b) the building housing same is in a bad state and, if so, indicate if remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

MORCELLEMENT LA CONFIANCE, BEAU BASSIN – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/430) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) 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 a football ground at Morcellement La Confiance, in Beau Bassin, he will state where matters stand.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the contract for the construction of a Football ground at Morcellement la Confiance, Beau Bassin was awarded on 05 December 2012 to SDR Construction Co. Ltd. for the sum of Rs4,749,425.

However, during the execution of works, the contractor informed NDU on 08 February 2013 that an additional amount of Rs3,765,776 will be required to complete the works because of site conditions.

Given that this additional sum represents more than 30% of the initial contract value, decision was taken to cancel the contract as per section 44 (3) of the Public Procurement Regulations of 2008.

In order not to delay the implementation of the project, the contract has been awarded to the zonal contractor for the sum of Rs12,329,038.78 inclusive of other works like reinforced retaining wall and high level fencing.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, si je comprends bien, le contrat alloué à SDR Construction Co. Ltd a été annulé et le contrat a été alloué à un nouveau contracteur. Peut-on savoir de l'honorable vice-Premier ministre quand les travaux vont démarrer à nouveau, et combien de temps cela va prendre pour que les jeunes de la région de Maingard puissent bénéficier d'un terrain de foot?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the work had started, but, unfortunately, it had to be stopped. I will see to it that the work starts as fast as possible. I don't know exactly how much of time we have given to the contractor, but I will try to personally monitor this because it is a long-standing issue, since many years. But I will see to it that the works are completed on time.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister has made mention of a zone contractor. Can we know who that contractor is, and can he circulate the scope of work awarded to that contractor?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the scope of work, firstly, preliminaries and general items; site clearance and other works; reinforced retaining walls; boundaries walls and concrete works; finishes and fencing; miscellaneous items and contingencies. The name of the contractor is Safety Construction. Mr Speaker, Sir, I know the apprehension of the hon. Member. That is the reason why I have mentioned clearly that I am going to monitor. The nomination of contractors is not in my hands. In fact, the work is done by the CPB. We have received the contractor. I have to work with the contractor.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister is well aware that the contractor is not reliable. He has effected a few works which have been given to him in an improper manner. What assurance can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give to the House, despite he will monitor, that that contractor will deliver? There are several cases where that contractor has started work within the constituency and has left.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a report which was submitted by my own Ministry, the contractor was suspended and he made an appeal. In fact, he got the appeal, and warning was issued to the contractor. Now, he is working under warning. I don't have the legal right to oust the contractor, but I have mentioned to the House that we are going to monitor, and I have given strict instructions to the Engineer who is responsible for the region to see to it that the work is properly done. As for the recent works which have been accomplished by the contractor, I get the feeling that it has been done properly.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister has just said that the contractor is working under warning. Can we ask him to see to it - in public interest because it is public money - that the contractor won't start work and then leave the site of work, and whether the Ministry has reported the case to the CPB? How can the Central Procurement Board appoint such contractor who is under warning?

Mr Speaker: As I said this morning, the hon. Minister cannot answer for the CPB.

(Interruptions)

If you wish to answer, go on.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned it was on our recommendation that action was taken, but when there was a hearing, he won his case and, in fact, warning was issued to the contractor. Now, a number of works have been undertaken by the contractor, and I get the feeling that the work is being done on time and is being properly monitored. So, let's see.

HADJ 2013 – MEASURES

(No.B/431) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the Hadj 2013, he will state the measures taken by his Ministry to avoid the recurrence of the problems faced by the Hadjees during previous Hadjs.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. I am informed by the Islamic Cultural Centre that the following problems were encountered by Hadjees in previous years -

- (i) Internal transport in Saudi Arabia during the five days of Hadj;
- (ii) Accommodation;
- (iii) Food;
- (iv) Infrastructure such as tents, sanitary facilities and water in Mina and Arafat; and
- (v) Hadj Operators.

Regarding internal transport the Saudi Authorities have, since the last three years, introduced a new shuttle transport system for the five days of Hadj which has been instrumental in giving Hadjees the opportunity to conduct all rituals in serenity. I am informed by the ICC that the same arrangement will be maintained this year.

With regard to food, accommodation and infrastructure in Mina and Arafat, I am further informed that since the introduction of a special service for Mauritian pilgrims since the last three years, which includes inter alia local transport within the Holy Sites by the Saudi Authorities, there have been no substantial complaints.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the main problem the Hadjees have encountered lately is through unscrupulous Hadj Organisers who took deposits from prospective Hadjees, but failed to refund same promptly especially to those who did not receive any visa. The ICC had to intervene on several occasions on behalf of those who could not secure a visa to have their money refunded at the last minute.

Mr Speaker Sir, on the one hand the prospective Hadjees could not proceed to holy pilgrimage and on the other, they had been exploited by some unscrupulous operators. These organisers have undermined the smooth running of Hadj Operation and these are the same people who campaign against the ICC year in year out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by the ICC that last year a fire broke out in a hotel where Hadjees were accommodated by an operator. The operator who had to incur additional expenses for an alternate accommodation arranged by the Hadj Mission for these Hadjees did not allow them to leave the hotel in spite of several instructions given by the Hadj Mission with regard to the security aspect of these pilgrims.

Mr Speaker Sir, this unprofessional, unjustified, unsafe and negative attitude towards Hadjees will not be tolerated.

My Ministry has given instructions to the ICC to ensure that such operators do not get a license in the future.

For the last three years no substantial complaints were made by operators and Hadjees. However, any difficulty that is encountered is diligently addressed by the Hadj Mission on the spot.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the following actions have been initiated for this year -

1. Registration of potential operators has started and today 04 June is the deadline.
2. Members of the Ulemas will be called upon to provide assistance in the preparation of stringent criteria for the selection of Hadj Operators.
3. In order to be more transparent, with regard to the cost of airfare, the ICC will shortly issue an Expression of Interest to Airlines. This will enable prospective Organisers/Hadjees to choose from the shortlisted carriers.
4. Mr Speaker Sir, with regard to visas problems which prevail for some years, this year, we have been informed officially that Mauritius will be granted 1300 visas, all preparations and commitments are being taken on this base figure in order to avoid deception and disappointment;

The ICC issued a Communique on 12, 13 and 14 April 2013 inviting all prospective Hadjees intending to perform Hadj for the first time to have themselves registered at the seat of the ICC.

593 prospective Hadjees from the list of 2012 are on a priority list and have all been sent a correspondence to confirm their intention to perform Hadj this year;

The ICC in consultation with all stakeholders concerned including the Members of the ICC Trust, the Muftis, Maulanas, Shaykhs and Ulemas has discussed the Modus Operandi on how to allocate the remaining 707 visas and at a meeting held on 30 April 2013 decided that the designation of the Hadjees for 2013 by drawing of lots was Shariah compliant, and it is the only acceptable alternative. Thus, religious leaders from different schools of thoughts have worked together for the benefit of the Hadjees. This is Mr Speaker, Sir, a major breakthrough for the Muslim Ummah of Mauritius.

The ICC in collaboration with the Ulemas and representative of the Electoral Commission Office has proceeded to the drawing of lots on Thursday 30 May 2013 and has thus finalised the list of 1300 prospective Hadjees. The list is already in the media.

5. A National Hadj Register is being introduced to record application for Hadj for subsequent years as from 2014. It will include those registered this year, but who could not be selected through the drawing of lots. Criteria will be finalised in consultation with the Ulemas.
6. Members of the Hadj Mission will be responsible to liaise with the Saudi Authorities to facilitate procedures and ensure that operators give Hadjees the best service. Problems will be diligently addressed on the spot.
7. The ICC is also ensuring follow-up on the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus issue with the Saudi Authorities.

Mr Uteem: I have two questions. Mr Speaker, Sir, the first one, hon. Reza Issack has made certain very serious allegations to ICAC with respect to the ICC, Islamic Cultural Centre, and the organisation of the Hadj. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has requested the people who have been pinpointed to step down pending the outcome of the enquiry of ICAC?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, that shouldn't be the case. If that is the case, then everybody has to step down in the country.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the problems faced by Hadjees during previous years, in a PQ asked by myself earlier, the hon. Minister stated that a Ministerial Committee co-chaired by the Chairman of ICC and hon. Reza Issack was set up, and that a report was prepared and was not yet signed - though it has been signed by hon. Reza Issack, but up to now has not been signed by the Chairman - on the problems that occurred on the previous Hadj. May I ask the hon. Minister where matters stand concerning that report on which several recommendations were made by hon. Reza Issack in order to improve the conditions of future Hadjees?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a serious matter. It was not a Ministerial Committee, as you can guess. It was a Committee co-chaired by hon. Reza Issack and the Chairman of the Islamic Cultural Centre Trust Board. Both of them were co-chairing, and a report was prepared. But the report that was prepared, Mr Speaker, Sir, was not, as the hon. Member rightly pointed out, signed by the co-Chairman, that is, the Chairman of the Islamic Cultural Centre Trust Board. When it was not signed, it means that the report was not an official one. That report has been circulated to the press. Do you know what happened at the ICC? The Chairman of the ICC Board, at his end, sent a notice with 200 queries on the report made by hon. Reza Issack, and after that there has been no follow-up. Hon. Reza Issack or his legal person should have come back to the ICC to say: you have so many queries, let's clear everything, get

everything signed, get a final report which will be considered as the official report. How can we act on a report which is not the official report?

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not going to comment on this report. I would like to know from the hon. Minister how many Hajj organisers have been issued licence this year?

Mr Choonee: We are still working. I have mentioned today is the meeting. Further to that, we will have consultations with the Ulemas; we will get the best Hajj organisers this year. Last year, from 44 who are interested, it was reduced to 15, but this year I don't know how many will be selected, but, as you know, each organiser should have a minimum of 100 Hajjes and a maximum of 200 Hajjes.

Mr Soodhun: On the same line, as the Minister just mentioned, they have just finalised. I agree with him. I have no quarrel on it. I would like to know whether the Minister is aware that there are Hajj organisers who are now in Saudi Arabia looking for the houses. How can this happen if the selection is still under process? I can give the names of the Hajj organisers who are actually in Saudi Arabia to the Minister.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, these organisers do that exercise at their own risk and peril. They are free to do anything, but nothing has been finalised in Mauritius.

Mr Bhagwan: I am sure the Minister has in mind, has at heart the interests of our brothers and sisters who go for Hajj. How can it be that the Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Don't disturb!

Mr Bhagwan: I have taken cognizance of what hon. Issack has written in his report. So, can the Minister inform the House whether he does not agree or he condones what a hon. Member of this House, whom we trust, has made observations on what has happened in the Hajj mission?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government or me, at least, as Minister of Arts and Culture, cannot act on a report other than the official report presented to Government.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, after a lot of negotiations, the Government of Mauritius was allowed to hold pre-Hajj missions every year, where they make requests such as increasing visas and accommodation facilities. May I know from the hon. Minister why have this Government and its Ministers this year not been invited to any pre-Hajj mission by the Saudi authorities?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the pre-Hajj mission goes, as pointed out by the hon. Member, on the invitation of the Saudi authorities. This year, the Saudi authorities did not invite the pre-Hajj mission because they have reduced the number of Hajjes for this year. It is only 1300 for Mauritius. They have not been invited; however, when the Hajj mission goes, it will clear every doubt, everything concerning the Hajjes.

Mr Fakeemeeah: I would like to know from the hon. Minister where matters stand following my proposal in this very House to officially offer my service to the ICC in shouldering the responsibility of Hajj organisation, as I am Arabic speaking having stayed 10 years in Saudi, with more than 20 years experience in the field of Hajj organising.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am so sorry to say to this House, and I have to make it official. It is good that the hon. Member has experience in the language, he can communicate and all. But when we talk of the fire incident in the hotel, I understand he was the organiser who could not move his Hajjes from the hotel. This is number one. Second, he was refused a Hajj visa. I should not have said all this against him, but he was refused a Hajj visa. He went there unofficially. When we have such a scientifically organised system of issuing Hajj visas, of working in direct collaboration with the Government of Saudi Arabia, how can we just speculate and work like that? We cannot do that. Further, I would like to mention here I have had a lot of support with the Minister responsible for Hajj matters, Dr. Abu Kasenally. He has facilitated the task of all organisers of Hajj missions and, of course, the Ministry of Arts and Culture. Further to that, Mr Speaker, Sir, my good friend next to me, hon. Shakeel Mohamed, has his own network. He has his network to link with *le roi de* Saudi Arabia, and I am sure he will come back with outcomes that will be of interest to Mauritius, in favour of all Hajjes of Mauritius.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Committee that was co-chaired by the Chairman of ICC and hon. Reza Issack was, in fact, a recommendation of a Ministerial Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is not his duty to press upon the Chairman of ICC - because as Minister, he is responsible for everything that goes on in ICC - to sign the report, and if ever he is not signing the report, to come forward with the reason why he is not signing the report prepared by hon. Reza Issack?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is true that a Ministerial Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister was responsible for finding ways and means to delink the activities of ICC with Hajj matters. Further to that, coming to what the hon. Member wants to get clarified: The Chairperson of ICC has 200 queries on the report signed by my good friend, hon. Reza Issack, which he did not sign, and he is right now expecting a reaction from my good friend. Until and unless my friend reacts to those queries, how can he sign, and how can I act?

Mr Jugnauth: Le ministre est au courant que l'honorable Reza Issack a fait une déclaration à l'ICAC concernant le *malpractice* de l'ICC. Est-ce que cela n'interpelle pas le ministre? Mettons le rapport qui n'a pas été signé de côté. Est-ce que, en tant que ministre responsable, n'est-il pas de son devoir au moins d'enquêter après de ce qui a été dit par l'honorable Issack, qui est membre du côté du gouvernement ; de faire une enquête au moins pour savoir la véracité des propos, dont une plainte a été faite à l'ICAC par l'honorable Reza Issack?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think ICAC is a responsible and independent organisation, and it is for the ICAC to do it independently; it is not for me to do it. However, *la présomption d'innocence existe dans ce pays*.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I understand what the Minsiter has just mentioned, as from this year, there will not be any Hajj mission headed by the Minister. Let me remind the House that when a Minsiter heads a Hajj delegation to discuss Hajj affairs with his counterpart in Saudi Arabia, it is completely different of the Hajj of mission headed by the Chairman of ICC.

Mr Speaker: What is your question?

Mr Soodhun: My question is: the Government should and must insist with the Saudi authorities that the Hajj mission, headed by the Minister, as you know well...

Mr Speaker: This is a speech hon. Soodhun.

Mr Soodhun: No, no, I just want...

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet! I will not allow you.

(Interruptions)

I allowed you a question, but you are making a speech. We are not debating the issue of Hajj. If you have a question, you may stand up and put it. If you have no question, then...

Mr Soodhun: I would like to know from the Minister whether he is aware of the importance of having a delegation headed by a Minister. Can I ask the Minister to write to the Saudi authorities for an official Hajji delegation headed by the Minister responsible for Hajj affairs?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not want to politicise this issue.

Mr Speaker: Of course!

Mr Choonee: We work for the benefit, for the welfare of the Hajjis. That's all.

Mr Fakeemeeah: I would like to ask the hon. Minister why he doesn't try me this year. I promise to bring 500 more visas.

Mr Speaker: Please, the hon. Member should put his question!

Mr Fakeemeeah: My question is: why doesn't the hon. Minister try me this year? I promise to bring some 500 more visas.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Sorefan, put your question!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned a minimum of 100 and a maximum of 200 Hajjis per agent. Will the hon. Minister assure the House whether one agent can cope with a minimum of 100 and a maximum of 200 with so many persons present there?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: It is a matter of opinion!

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the selection of Hajj organisers has not been done yet. The Ulemas will advise, and I think they are the best authority to advise us on how we should proceed.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister, in his reply, mentioned unscrupulous Hajj organisers with regard to problems relating to deposits, which I tend to agree. Can the hon. Minister name and shame those Hajj organisers?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not want to make politics of that answer.

BANKING SECTOR - FACILITIES

(No. B/432) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the banking sector, he will state if consideration will be given for the democratisation thereof through the introduction of financial institutions such as the *agence de refinancement* and other deposit lending institutions, and if so, when, and if not, why not.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, as at to date, 21 commercial banks with 219 branches nationwide and eight non-bank deposit taking institutions...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Too much noise, please!

Mr Duval:...are operating in Mauritius. The number of commercial banks and deposit taking institutions is considered to be sufficient for Mauritius given the size of the economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the introduction of an "*agence de refinancement*", should an application be received by the Bank of Mauritius the Bank will look at it on the merits of the application.

The House will also note...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ministers should keep quiet!

Mr Duval:...that many banks themselves offer refinance plans to their customers. In addition, Government has set up several financial instruments such as finance, leasing, equity finance, factoring for the SMEs and facilities offered by the Restructuring Working Group, which comes to the assistance of companies in difficulty on a burden sharing basis with commercial banks.

In the 2013 Budget Speech, I also announced that, in order to better regulate the banking sector, the Bank of Mauritius will ensure that commercial banks apply a "Treat your Customers Fairly"

programme. The Bank of Mauritius has set up a Task Force on unfair terms and conditions in banking and related financial contracts. A Report thereon is expected by end of this year.

In addition, Government has set up the office of the Commissioner for the Protection of Borrowers in 2007 to protect borrowers with loans less than Rs2 m. and who have difficulty to pay. The Office of the Commissioner acts as an intermediary with the creditors, and tries to resolve the problem of payments. Rescheduling of the loans is among the several options being proposed to the borrowers in difficulty. This will be dealt with more fully in PQ B/435 in a few moments.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister agree that there is an urgent need to put a stop to the *cartélisation du secteur bancaire* by the Mauritius Bankers Association, and allow more competition in that sector?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a valid point. On the face of it, at least, it looks like there is a lot of congruence in terms of what the banks practise. This is also why the Bank of Mauritius is looking at the issue of ‘treating your customers fairly’ and the whole issue of interest rate, charges, etc.

NTC – RESTRUCTURING PLAN

(No. B/433) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the recent fatal road accident which occurred at Sorèze, on 03 May 2013, he will state if consideration will be given for full financial and technical audits of the National Transport Corporation to be carried out by an independent firm, and if not, why not.

The Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr. A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not envisaged at this point in time to carry out financial and technical audits of the NTC by an independent firm.

It is a fact that the NTC has been facing a critical financial situation over the last years due to several factors, often beyond its control. This prompted Government in 2008 to appoint an independent Consultant, Deloitte, for assessing the financial sustainability of the Corporation and reviewing its organisational structure. Some measures recommended by the Consultant, namely a no recruitment policy and replacement of old buses, are already being implemented. For that matter, 117 buses have been procured.

Moreover, in June 2011, Government agreed that one of the public enterprises which will be accounted for as a performance indicator with the European Union, in the context of disbursement under the second tranche of the Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol for public enterprise reforms, would be the NTC.

In this context, in January this year, Government approved the restructuring plan of the NTC. The measures proposed in the plan, which can be accessed on the website of the Corporation *inter alia*, includes -

- (a) the sale of its Ebene Building to settle part of its outstanding debts, and this has already been effected;
- (b) the procurement of 150 new buses;
- (c) introduction of smartcard;
- (d) rationalisation of its human resources, and
- (e) other measures that would bring return on investments

A Monitoring Committee has been set up at my Ministry to assist the NTC in the implementation of the plan.

Following the accident at Sorèze, instructions have been given to the NTC to ensure that its fleet of buses is fit, roadworthy, and regularly and systematically inspected and maintained. I have also impressed on the NTC to explore the possibility of having a team of Engineers from the Mechanical Division of my Ministry to counter-verify the docking exercise of NTC buses to ensure their safety.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know whether consideration can be given by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to an in-depth inquiry on the purchase of spare parts, and whether the Chairperson and Managing Director are directly involved or through *prête-noms* in those activities.

Mr Speaker: The question has nothing to do with the supplementary question you have put. The Minister is free to answer that one.

Mr Bachoo: I am not in a position to answer whether fake names are being utilised. If such matters are brought to my attention, definitely I will take action.

Mr Bhagwan: I come to the Sorèze accident and also to the question of technical audits. Following the accident of Sorèze, there have been repeated cases reported, not only on the radio and in the press, where doors of the Blue Line buses were falling, outdoor mirrors were just damaging other vehicles. What guarantee does the hon. Minister give to the House and the travelling public that the maximum is being done by the Ministry, at least to ensure public safety, and give confidence to people who travel by these existing Blue Line buses which are on the road actually these days? If this morning the Minister would have listened to 'Radio One' – I was listening to Radio One on my way to Parliament – people were complaining about the Blue Line buses, which had a breakdown at Place Margéot, Rose Hill, and their life was in danger.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, normally I do not go by whatever private radios say, where people are voicing their opinions. There have been many cases where I had personally intervened. I won't say that wild rumours are afloat. In this particular place, a bus caught fire, and in the other place a bus had a

breakdown. I don't say hundred percent that people are wrong, but there are cases where we are investigating. I have just mentioned that I have given instructions to NTC, and I can only give instructions of a general nature. But, here, I have given instructions to NTC about maintenance. For example, the following additional actions have been taken after the fatal accident that occurred at Sorèze. All buses are fitted with speed limiters, and the maintenance of the speed limiters has been outsourced to local agents to see to it that they are in order. The braking system of all the buses is undergoing a thorough check regularly; on a daily basis. Drivers have been advised to stop any bus in operation whenever they suspect any defect in the braking system. The driver has to inform the depot immediately. Training programmes for drivers are under finalisation. One Technical Mechanical Officer will shortly be following the course on training for trainers of drivers organised by the MITD. So, we are taking a series of measures, and at the same time we have already taken the decision to procure 65 additional new buses. In fact, the procurement exercise has already started. This is the maximum that I am trying to do with the fleet of buses that we have. I have to ensure the population that all the buses are properly repaired, are properly maintained. That is all.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, true it is this question bears on the question of a full financial and technical audit of the NTC. But, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he does not think that it is time now for a review, a survey or a full technical and financial audit to be carried out, not necessarily by a private firm, even by the Office of the Public Sector Governance (OPSG) because it is not only a question of technicality, it is a question of *gestion*, of management? Whether we want it or not, - we are not doing politics - the NTC is in an advanced state, I would not say *décomposition*, but it is in a bad shape. So, for the good of the Mauritian population and for the good of everybody, is it not time for some organisation to set up an enquiry to review the whole management and the whole way things are taking place at the NTC? It is not the question of just buying new buses; everything has to be looked into.

Mr Bachoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is fact. But, on these, we are not going to dispute. This is a fact that the situation is very delicate, and we have to do certain things in order to save the NTC. Keeping that in mind, I do not so much believe that we have to get the support from outsiders and outside firms to come and undergo checks and all this, but I am entirely confident of the support that is made available to me in the Government, with the support of the Technical Division of my own Ministry, the Mechanical Division, we are trying to see to it that the buses are really on running conditions.

The quality of service has to be improved and, in fact, a series of measures are being taken. I do not want to hasten to add the hon. Prime Minister's visit to Japan, where you have read in the papers and heard through the radios that the request has been made in order to procure 100 additional Japanese buses. All these are steps that we are taking. At the same time, I get the feeling that some strong measures will

be taken at the level of the technical and administrative staff of NTC to see to it that they become a bit more active and more dynamic.

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister say why is it, after the technical audit was done by the NTC with regard to the batch of the 100 buses that were imported and one of which met with the accident of Sorèze, the NTC is still operating some of the buses and putting the lives of people at risk when those same buses are still mechanically defective, in the sense that when the brakes will not apply, the security system that should come into operation to block the four wheels of the bus is still defective?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the technical report which was available after 2008 was meant for the TATA buses and I had already circulated the report in the House, where certain shortcomings were noted, and the report also mentioned that all actions were already taken to see to it that those faults are corrected. That concerns the 80 buses of TATA, and the technical findings were meant for those buses.

As far as the 20 buses which were bought at the same time from Ashok Leyland are concerned, no shortcomings were noted till the recent accident which occurred. So, I have to mention that the technical report of the TATA buses is completely different from those of the Ashok Leyland.

As far as Ashok Leyland is concerned, it is unfortunate that such an accident occurred but, at the same time, we have started verifying all the Ashok Leyland buses. I am not here to defend any company of India, but wherever faults are found, we are bound to take actions.

Mr Baloomoody: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister himself has given a very, very bleak picture of the situation at the NTC. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has stated that it is in such a bad state, and we keep saying that we are buying buses, we are trying to have new engineers, but the top management itself is sick. When we have a Chairman who has been condemned by a Fact-Finding Committee when he was chairing the Wastewater Authority...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Baloomoody: The General Manager...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Yes, question!

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he is prepared, at least, to look at the top-level management, the Director, the Chairman and all these? They are the people who are bringing the NTC to its death!

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, there is a mistake committed by my hon. friend. The Fact-Finding Committee was not on that particular Chairman who is at the NTC, but I am not defending the Chairman or the administration...

(Interruptions)

Mr Baloomoody: Sorry, on the General Manager!

Mr Bachoo: Oh, I see! But in fact, I also concur with them on many of the issues and the points because this is of national interest, and I can assure the House that, in fact, as a Government, we are taking serious steps in order to avoid such mishaps, and we want to put the NTC once more on its track.

Dr. Sorefan: May we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the buses that serve the students are in perfect order for the safety of the children?

Mr Bachoo: Well, I had answered questions on that earlier also. We are providing good buses, and I would like to inform the House that, in fact, I had discussions with my friend, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

We are trying to put another additional 50 buses for our students. In fact, we have already taken all the measures and we took the decision that we are going to provide 50 additional buses. All the procedures have already started, and if everything goes well, it will be put into practice, let us say, within two or three weeks' time.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the Vice-Prime Minister whether with the measures being taken, the number of NTC buses on the road has been reduced and whether the NTC is contemplating to transfer some of its dedicated lines to private operators?

Mr Bachoo: I have given instructions to the NTC that buses which are not fit to be utilised on the routes have to be removed. Out of 519 buses, many of them will have to be removed and pending the acquisition of new buses, I have given directives of a bit of general nature to see to it that, if other companies are interested - of course, they have to follow the legal means - at least for a year or ten months' time we can give them those lines...

(Interruptions)

...provided the passengers will not have to face any problem.

Mr Speaker: I will allow two more questions because this has been sufficiently aired. Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: It appears that there is unanimity as far as the mess in which the NTC is actually. So, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, at least, accept that one of the main problems is that *il y a eu surpolitisation en termes de recrutement à la CNT? Je parle du* technical, not only administrative, *recrutement des mécaniciens et électriciens*. One of the main causes is that we have incompetent, unqualified...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! I have said several times...

Mr Bhagwan: I am coming with...

Mr Speaker: You are an experienced Member of Parliament...

(Interruptions)

I presume you should know the Standing Orders! Put the question!

(Interruptions)

Therefore, I understand you are answering for the Vice-Prime Minister? So, you put a question and you give the answer yourself! Carry on!

Mr Bhagwan: Will the Vice-Prime Minister agree - I am sure that he will not agree - that *il y a eu surpolitisation en termes de recrutement*? It is a fact that unqualified people have been recruited and this is how, today, there are causes of accidents, either mechanic...

Mr Speaker: That is not a good question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I have never been Minister responsible for the NTC.

Mr Speaker: No, no! Please, address the Chair! Hon. Bhagwan, address the Chair!

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Member is harassing me!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: As usual!

(Interruptions)

I have not been Minister for the NTC, and I am not interested.

Mr Speaker: Okay, now put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: I will let the hon. Vice-Prime Minister reply.

Mr Speaker: Yes.

Mr Bhagwan: And the Vice-Prime Minister must agree that unqualified people have been recruited over the years, and now, the more so that we have a Chairperson who is quarrelling with the Minister and the General Manager.

Mr Speaker: Oh, no!

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, probably the House may be shocked to learn that from 2008 onwards, only one Officer had been recruited; not even a single manual, technical or mechanic had been recruited because I have been very, very strict; no politisation of the Corporation.

(Interruptions)

Unfortunately, whichever Government was in power, enough investment was not made in the buses of NTC. It is now that we have put 117 Japanese buses. We are putting another 65. I hope we will get another 100; that can help us a little bit.

Mr Speaker: Last question! Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House what is the outcome of the internal enquiry which was supposed to be conducted at the level of his Ministry as stated by himself in reply to the PNQ of 07 May?

Mr Speaker: Put a question!

Mr Bachoo: In fact, I could not get him properly, Sir.

Mr Speaker: You see!

Mr Jhugroo: What is the outcome of the internal enquiry which was supposed to be conducted by his Ministry, mentioned by the hon. Minister in the PNQ of 07 May of this year?

Mr Speaker: No, but this question has nothing to do with the PQ. Hon. Jugnauth has a supplementary question.

Mr Jhugroo: Les accidents sont...

Mr Speaker: No, no, no. O.K hon. Jugnauth.

Mr Jugnauth: To a reply the Minister gave to a PQ by hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun on 12 May 2009, he admitted that the CNT was using spare parts in the batch of buses that we are concerned with the road accidents, which were not at all appropriate. They were not genuine. Now, may I know is it because of lack of funds that this is the state of affairs or for any other reason?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2009, when the question was asked, the question had relevance to the TATA buses. Here, the accident which occurred concerned – I know, I still remember that - Ashock Leyland. In fact, being given investigations are on, I don't want to pass any comment regarding the spare parts. I would only request the hon. Member to bear with us, but it is not because of lack of funds. Every month CNT is spending six to seven million rupees on spare parts - later on, I will come to the House myself - and I can give the assurance to the House there is no cover-up of any type. Everything will be made crystal clear and whatever reports are available will be made available. But, unfortunately, now as things are, I can't say anything because investigations are on.

SMEs – CLOSING DOWN

(No. B/434) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives whether, in regard to the small and medium enterprises, he will state the number thereof having closed down, since January 2013 to date, indicating the number of job losses consequent thereto, in respect of each sector of activity.

Mr Seetaram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by Statistics Mauritius, which is the national authoritative body for collection, analysis and interpretation of official statistics, that such data are not compiled and, therefore, not available.

I am also informed that the 'Census of Economic Activities' for businesses, which contains a wide array of questions on SMEs, is carried out every five years in Mauritius as well as in Rodrigues. The last census was conducted in 2007 and the latest one is ongoing right now.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have since assumption of my office noted that statistics in respect of SMEs are essential for effective decision and policy-making. I have, therefore, taken necessary steps with a view to remedy to this lacuna by insisting on the setting-up of a Statistical Unit at the level of my Ministry so that detailed and updated information on SMEs may be made readily available.

As such, I decided to set up a Committee at the level of my Ministry and comprising of officials of Statistics Mauritius, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), Municipalities/District Councils and the Companies Division and also several meetings were held and I am pleased to inform the House that we have been successful to achieve this objective of setting up a Statistical Unit which is fully operational at the SMEDA as from last month. This Unit will collect information from secondary sources of statistics such as the Registrar of Companies, the Mauritius Revenue Authority, the SMEDA on a regular basis. It will also conduct surveys during the Inter Census period to update statistics generated by the Census of Economic Activities.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his answer about the census. It is a very simple question, Mr Speaker, Sir, with due respect to you. The Minister is not aware about how many losses of jobs there have been in the SMEs.

Mr Seetaram: Like I have stated, Mr Speaker, Sir, this information can only be official by the National Authoritative Body which is Statistics Mauritius, and we do not have any official figures as it is not compiled, therefore not available!

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what is, according to his Ministry, the definition of small and medium enterprise that will be in the statistics.

Mr Speaker: Well! Well!

Mr Uteem: No, because he mentioned that he is going to have the statistics. We need to know.

Mr Speaker: No, the main question is not on that! It is different.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister just informed the House that he does not have the number of SMEs that have closed down. But does he have the number of SMEs in the country on a yearly basis?

Mr Seetaram: No, we do not have SMEs on a yearly basis. We do have new SMEs which are registered on a month to month basis, but also I wish to inform the House that these are not official

statistics. I only have registered numbers of SMEs at the level of the SMEDA, but like I said these are not official figures.

Mr Jugnauth: Can the hon. Minister state the number of SMEs which have benefitted from the National Resilience Fund and if he does not have the information whether he can circulate, at least, those companies that have benefitted and the respective amounts?

Mr Seetaram: If the hon. Member can come with a substantive question, I would be very glad to supply the information.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Minister how many SMEs which are registered at his office in the production of solar power...

Mr Speaker: Come on!

Mr Bhagwan: How many SMEs are registered in his Ministry in the field of solar power, fabrication of solar panels and so on?

(Interruptions)

Mr Seetaram: I don't have this information, Sir.

Mr Lesjongard: The hon. Minister must be aware that some time back we amended the legislation governing SMEs in order to qualify small and medium enterprises correctly.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Lesjongard: Does he want to tell us today that even we have brought in legislation, we do not have the proper statistics for these enterprises?

Mr Seetaram: I don't understand the question. The question is about statistics or the definition of SME? Maybe, he could clarify.

Mr Lesjongard: My question is that, in this very House, we have amended the legislation in order to qualify SMEs properly so that we have the necessary statistics available. Does he want to tell us today that even we have voted legislation in this House, we do not, as at to date, have statistics with regard to loss of jobs in small and medium enterprises?

Mr Seetaram: Like I have stated, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have the census of economic activities which is carried out every five years, but in relation to job losses *per se*, we do not have any compilation of that particular area. So, that is what I am saying, we don't have it. I have set up this Statistical Unit at my Ministry to look at that specifically.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, considering that we are presently...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Some silence, please! Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Considering that presently we are going through some difficult times as far as the economic situation is concerned, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he does not consider it to be very, very *grave* that he does not have the statistics on the number of SMEs operating since January 2013, and that he does not even know how many of them are facing difficulties, how are they faring and what support should be provided to such small and medium enterprises?

Mr Seetaram: Let me say it again. Firstly, when a company is starting business, it does not have the duty to register at the SMEDA or any other institutions. Secondly, they can register at the SMEDA. Thirdly, concerning the issue of SMEs, the situation about knowing or not knowing, I have said it in my answer just now; it is not being compiled and I have just set up that particular Unit to deal with that particular problem. That's it.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are dealing with a very important sector with hundreds of thousands of people involved. May I ask the hon. Minister how does he monitor what is happening in that important sector of the industry, how many jobs are being created and how many jobs are being lost? He, himself, said that he knows about the new enterprises being set up. But how does he monitor that very important sector of our economy?

Mr Seetaram: Exactly! The point that the hon. Member is making is how do we monitor. But, unfortunately, he was Minister in Government; why he did not do it? Why he did not initiate it?

(Interruptions)

My answer is...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Hon. Minister, your duty is to answer questions and not to put questions.

Mr Soodhun: Can the hon. Minister inform the House where do matters stand as regards the project of industrial estate for the SMEs?

Mr Seetaram: Being given that this question is not related, I can answer off-the-cuff that we have the next industrial park which shall be opened very soon, in June. That would be in La Tour Koenig and the second one would be at La Valette, Bambous. We have earmarked a few spaces for industrial parks to be set up at Solitude and Plaine Magnien.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Being given that the hon. Minister has just replied that there are new industrial sites which are being set up for industrial parks, can he inform the House whether his Ministry has received any applications for the occupation of one of these parks for the setting up of cabins for telepherics? Can he say whether he has received such requests from the Ministry?

COMMISSIONER FOR THE PROTECTION OF BORROWERS OFFICE - CASES

(No. B/435) **Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the protection of the borrowers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner for Borrowers, information as to, since the adoption of the Protection of the Borrowers Act to date, on a yearly basis, the number of -

- (a) cases referred thereto, indicating the outcome thereof in each case, and
- (b) properties sold at the Master's Court.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, since the setting up of the Office of the Commissioner for the Protection of Borrowers in 2007, a total of 1532 cases have been referred as at to date to the Commissioner for consideration.

The information is being compiled and will be tabled as soon as it is available.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, please!

Mr Duval: However, I am informed that due to the issue of confidentiality, the outcome in each individual case cannot be revealed. Nevertheless, the House may wish to note that the Commissioner, in accordance with the powers vested in him under sections 14, 15, 17 and 18 of the Borrower's Protection Act, has on a number of occasions directed lenders to reschedule credit agreements, held conciliation meetings between borrowers and lenders and has also directed lenders to review the terms and conditions of the credit agreements.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am also informed that no property which falls within the Borrower's Protection Act threshold has been sold at the Master's Court.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, je suis assez surpris par la déclaration du ministre, parce que c'est un fait au niveau du Master's Court. Il y a la vente de pas moins d'une dizaine de propriétés chaque semaine. Même pour les propriétés dont les actes d'emprunts ont été signés peut-être avant mais quand même il y a une dizaine qui sont toujours vendues au niveau de la barre. Ce que j'aurais souhaité poser comme question au ministre c'est s'il n'y a pas lieu d'avoir une bonne évaluation de la loi par le fait que ces cas persistent en cour, qu'il y a une bonne dizaine de propriétés qui sont vendues chaque semaine.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I take note of what the hon. Member has said. This is the information I was given. Anyway, we were intending to review, at budget time, the operation of this Act, but I will take note of that. The information I was given has been passed on to the House.

Mr Uteem: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned about reviewing the law. Would he consider, while reviewing the law, to increase the threshold for qualification and also specify that this

threshold apply to only the principle amount? Because at the moment, it is interpreted as including all the outstanding interests as well.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question of the threshold, obviously, with inflation, it has to be increased probably to about Rs3 m. We are looking at that, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I have taken the point concerning the inclusion of interest accrued, etc. I will look at that issue.

Mr Baloomoody: We know one of the powers of the Commissioner is to intervene. He can intervene in case of a sale by levy at the Master's Court. Can I know in how many cases the Commissioner has intervened?

Mr Duval: The Commissioner has very few staffs. It is taking time for him to compile the information that has been requested by the hon. Member. We will provide it to the House because I also would like to have the precise information. As I mentioned to you, I am informed that no property which comes under his jurisdiction has been sold at the Master's Court. The hon. Member has stated otherwise. I will look into the problem.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/437, B/438, B/439, B/440, B/442, B/444, B/449, and B/453 have been withdrawn.

FOYER NAMASTE - OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN- RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/437) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the Foyer Namasté, she will state if she is aware of the recommendations of the Ombudsperson for Children in relation to the children attending thereto and, if so, indicate the actions taken, if any, by her Ministry in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

MITD – TRADE UNIONS & NGOs - PROTESTS

(No. B/438) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, he will state if he has taken cognizance of the protests of the Trade Unions and of the Non-Governmental Organisations, further to the -

- (a) termination of the contract of Mrs S. S., as teacher thereat;
- (b) suspension of Mrs P. B., as psychologist thereat, and
- (c) issue of a severe warning to Mr H. M., a trade unionist and, if so, indicate if his Ministry has inquired thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – WOMEN - EMPLOYMENT

(No. B/439) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to domestic violence, she will state the number of reported cases of women having been victims thereof, to her Ministry, since 2005 to date, indicating the number thereof who –

- (a) are/were unemployed;
- (b) have been provided with training to enable them to obtain employment and,
- (c) have ultimately joined gainful employment.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL HERITAGE TRUST FUND – DIRECTOR - TRAINING PROGRAM

(No. B/440) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the Director of the National Heritage Trust Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if she has allegedly –

- (a) received money for a course in Delhi which she did not attend, and
- (b) been overpaid in connection with her stay in the United Kingdom for attending a training program and, if so, indicate the –
 - (i) disciplinary measures taken against her in connection therewith, if any, and
 - (ii) if money has been refunded and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

SPEED CAMERAS - PROGUARD LTD. - CONTRACT

(No. B/442) 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 recent supply and installation of speed cameras, he will state -

- (a) when the contract with Proguard Ltd. therefor was signed, indicating the duration thereof and the modalities for payment therefor;
- (b) country of origin and name of the manufacturer of the -
 - (i) cameras, and
 - (ii) posts
- (c) if the contractor had -
 - (i) provided copy of the audited accounts and annual turnover for the past three years and, if so, table copy thereof, and
 - (ii) provided a bank guarantee and if not, why not, and

- (iii) executed contracts for the supply and installation of speed cameras over the past five years.

(Withdrawn)

STC - PETROLEUM GAS - SUPPLY

(No. B/444) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the tender for the supply of liquefied petroleum gas for 2013/2014, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

POVERTY - MONTHLY INCOME

(No. B/446) 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 poor, he will state for the years 2007 and 2012, the number thereof, categorized into rural and urban inhabitants, indicating the -

- (a) average monthly income per poor person, indicating the percentage thereof derived from social transfers, and
- (b) reasons for the change in the Gini coefficient.

(Withdrawn)

MITD – FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE - FEES

(No. B/449) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Fact-Finding Committee set up to look into the recent case of alleged improper behaviour of an instructor of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Institute, information as to the total cost thereof, indicating the fees paid to each member thereof.

(Withdrawn)

MITD – ALLEGED SEXUAL ABUSE

(No. B/453) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the alleged case of sexual abuse at the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Institute, information as to if mention was also made of alleged sexual abuse of students, other than minor V. A., in the report submitted by the psychologist, P. B., in October 2011 and, if so, indicate the actions taken, if any, in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

VANDERMEERSCH STREET, ROSE HILL – TRAFFIC CONGESTION

(No. B/454) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the roundabout, on the Vandermeersch Street, near the Central Electricity Board, in Rose Hill, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to the actions taken, if any, as at to date, under the Road Decongestion Programme, to alleviate the acute road congestion which occur thereat throughout the day.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Time is up!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I 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.

(4.07 p.m.)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

SOREZE – FATAL ACCIDENT- FAMILIES - PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs M. Martin): Mr Speaker, Sir, further to the matter raised on adjournment by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee on 28 May 2013 regarding assistance to the 11-year old child whose parents passed away in the road accident which occurred on Friday 03 May 2013 at Sorèze, I wish to apprise the House that on the day of the accident, I informed through the media that, in view of the exceptional circumstances, officers of my Ministry would visit members of the bereaved families to provide necessary psychological support rather than have them call at the Family Support Bureaux as per current practice.

I am informed that a psychologist of the Family Welfare Protection Unit of my Ministry effected a visit at the place of the Ujodha family on 04 May 2013. Psychological counselling was done with the adult paternal family members who informed that they do not wish further intervention. They requested for a child psychologist for counselling of the minor. The maternal uncle of the 11-year old orphan called at the Family Support Bureau of Phoenix on 10 May 2013 for legal advice.

On 07 May 2013, the officers of the Child Development Unit met the paternal aunt and were informed that the minor was sleeping. Therefore, officers were not able to meet her. However, they were

informed that the minor was being cared for and supported by her grandparents, both maternal and paternal, and relatives as well.

I am further informed that on 10 May 2013, another visit was effected by the officers of the Child Development Unit whereby the minor was met and counselled by the psychologist. On 13 May 2013 and 17 May 2013, respectively, a psychologist effected follow-up visits but nobody was met with.

On 31 May 2013, a visit was effected at the maternal grandparents' place at Flic en Flac where the minor now resides. She was seen again by the psychologist who stated that she is well cared for by her maternal grandparents. The Child Development Unit of Bambous will maintain follow up of this case.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded the Revenue and Valuation Appeal Tribunal Bill (No. XI of 2013) was read a first time.

Mr Speaker: This is a proper time to break. We resume in 45 minutes.

At 4.23 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.04 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Second Reading

THE SUGAR INDUSTRY EFFICIENCY (AMENDMENT) BILL (NO. IX OF 2013)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Sugar Industry Efficiency (Amendment) Bill (No. IX of 2013) be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe it is both pertinent and essential that I briefly place the proposed amendments in its precise background and context before I elaborate on them.

Let me at the very outset state that the motivation for presenting this Bill is to ensure the preservation of agricultural lands which are essential in the wake of the global food crisis that is still looming around us. We are all conscious that Mauritius has limited land resources and pressure from different economic sectors for land is a reality and will continue to be so in the future.

Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are a net food importing country with a food import bill amounting to some Rs25 billion annually and this amount, in fact, rose to around Rs28 billion back in 2007-2008 when there was the problem of food crisis around the world. As a responsible Government we have to increase our food production, food self-sufficiency and food security and to reduce our dependence on food imports.

With the global climate change, food production in food exporting countries may be adversely affected and supply is expected to be erratic as there is a serious risk that these countries can react to such food insecurity in terms of export bans and other protectionist measures. The consequences can be serious, particularly for vulnerable countries such as ours which is so highly trade-dependent for its food supply.

This concern explains our renewed focus and commitment to national food security, which primarily hinges on natural resources, most important of which is land. In this respect, there is the need to preserve a critical extent of the most suitable agricultural land to assure our food security for our present and future generations.

The House will recall that last week, in this very august Assembly, we approved the Seed Bill which would enable, in fact, the development and consolidation of our local seed industry and make Mauritius a seed hub for the African continent. For us to succeed in this endeavour, one of the *sine qua non* factors is the availability of suitable agricultural land and its optimum use.

Mr Speaker Sir, we are also fully aware of the need to strike the right balance between preservation of agricultural land and conversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural use in other economic sectors.

The main objectives of the proposed amendments to the SIE Act relate to the following –

- (a) extending the incentives presently applicable to VRS projects to ERS and phasing out of sugar camps schemes;
- (b) extending the definition of ‘*métayer*’ to include another category of grower through leasing land from planters;
- (c) making better provisions to prevent speculation on agricultural land;
- (d) reviewing part of the component of expenditure in the context of recouping of costs pertaining to the implementation of VRS/ERS/factory closure scheme, and
- (e) setting up time frame for the implementation of approved projects, that is, land on which a conversion permit has been granted.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now elaborate on the amendments that are being brought to the SIE Act.

Clause 3 of the Bill amends Section 11(2) and 2(A) of the Act which deal with the 1:2 Scheme. Under this Scheme, an applicant can offer 1 unit of land to Government and in return be able to convert twice the amount, that is, (2 units) without paying any Land Conversion tax. This section is being repealed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been noted that recently, when Government has made or is in the process of making compulsorily acquisition of land, the ‘aggrieved’ party had requested that the acquisition be

made under the 1:2 Scheme rather than compulsory acquisition. In determining whether to opt for 1:2 Scheme or Compulsory Acquisition, a number of factors should be taken into account, including (i) revenue foregone in terms of land conversion tax versus the amount of compensation payable by Government to the aggrieved party upon compulsorily acquisition. We have also noted that under the 1:2 Scheme, applications for conversion are received for prime agricultural land which, in normal circumstances, would not have been granted. Furthermore, under the 2000 *arpents* Scheme, Government has obtained sufficient land for socio economic projects. Thus, it is felt that we can now do away with the 1:2 Scheme.

Clause 4 of the Bill amends section 14 of the SIE Act, which makes provision for incentives to implement certain schemes with regard to VRS and ERS to be exempted from payment of land duties and taxes.

However, my attention has been drawn recently that this section does not apply to the implementation of the ERS as is the case for the VRS and factory closure projects implemented for the sugarcane industry.

This provision will be now extended to the ERS and factory closure, as it also forms part of the process of the sugar industry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, clause 5 amends section 17 of the SIE Act, which refers to the promotion of agricultural diversification and makes provision amongst others for the producers to rent not less than 65% of the aggregate area of land cultivated in the year 1998 for the production of food crops in interline and rotational lands.

In that respect, Mr Speaker Sir, my attention and that of my Ministry have been drawn regularly by aggrieved food crop growers who have not received lands from the producers for diversification purposes.

In this regard, I am proposing to amend the year indicated at section 17(4) of the SIE Act from 1998 to 2012, that is, last year, to reflect the effective extent presently under cultivation by the producers.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that the producers are complying with this provision, my Ministry is proposing that the MCIA shall henceforth try to settle the matter in case there are complaints and grievances received from any growers with the producers in the first instance before referring the matter to the Judge in Chambers, in order to compel the producers to comply with provision of that particular section.

Clause 6 and 6A relate to sections 25 and 26 of the SIE Act. Mr Speaker Sir, the VRS caters for the voluntary termination of employment for workers/employees working at field level of the Sugarcane Industry as per section 23 of the SIE Act, whereas the ERS refers to the voluntary termination of

employment for workers/employees at the level of a factory, which will continue to operate after the implementation of the ERS, in accordance with section 23(A) of the SIE Act.

The implementation of the VRS/ERS/factory closure/phasing out of sugar camp schemes are considered as schemes deemed to be development in accordance with socioeconomic policies of Government under section 25 of the SIE Act.

Under the existing SIE Act, provision is made under section 26 for workers to be exempted from payment of duty and taxes when benefitting for land under the VRS/ERS/factory closure/phasing out of sugar camp project.

However, during the implementation of the above schemes, there are cases whereby beneficiaries are eligible for land under more than one scheme, either VRS/ERS/factory closure, and the phasing out of sugar camp schemes. At the level of the Registrar General, there is need for greater clarity in implementing the provision under section 26 for the exemption of the payment of duty and taxes under both schemes.

The proposed amendment will allow the Sugar Industry workers and employees to be exempted from payment of duty and taxes when benefitting land from both the phasing out of sugar camp scheme as well as the VRS/ERS/factory closure schemes, whichever is applicable in a particular case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, clause 7(a) of the Bill amends section 27 of the SIE Act, which defines the term Agricultural land. Presently, agricultural land is defined as land which is or has been under cultivation of sugar, tea or tobacco for the last ten years; or land alternatively which is declared to be an irrigation area under the Irrigation Authority Act.

Henceforth, all lands in an agricultural *morcellement* will have to undergo the process of conversion prior to any non-agricultural development.

A *morcellement* is carried out either for agricultural or non-agricultural, that is, residential, commercial or industrial purposes. It has been noted that, recently, land in an agricultural *morcellement* is being used for other non-agricultural developments. This is, in fact, tantamount to a disguised residential *morcellement*, and thus the rationale behind the agricultural *morcellement* is defeated. The promoter often carries out offsite infrastructure (roads, drains, provision of electricity and water) in an agricultural *morcellement* which he is not required to do so, just with a view to lure prospective buyers, to make them believe that these land, although it is found in an agricultural *morcellement*, they can in the future use it for non-agricultural purpose. Furthermore, with the various provisions in the SIE Act, the promoter is not required to apply for a Land Conversion Permit.

Thus, Mr Speaker Sir, this amendment will allow the Land Conversion Committee to have a control over land in an agricultural *morcellement*, which is not the case today.

Mr Speaker Sir, as I have previously mentioned, agricultural land, among others, is defined as land which is or has been under cultivation of sugar, tea or tobacco for the last ten years. We have had cases whereby the owner leaves his land in an abandoned state, and simply waits for the ten years to elapse, so that it does not fall under the purview of the SIE Act. This again defeats the whole purpose of preserving agricultural lands. Hence, the time frame which is provided for, that is, 10 years in the present law, is being removed through clause 8(a) of the Bill, which amends section 28 of the Act.

Furthermore, along the same spirit of preserving agricultural land, clause 8(b) of the Bill, which amends section 28(4)A(b) of the Act, provides that, for land subdivided for agricultural purpose, the applicant will henceforth have to apply for a Land Conversion Permit.

Again, Mr Speaker Sir, presently, the minimum plots size for subdivision of land for agricultural purpose is 10 perches for sites within settlement boundary and 20 perches for sites outside settlement boundary. This is, in fact, not in the legislation. It is a policy applied by my Ministry. A new section has been added as per clause 8(c) of this Bill, which amends section 28 of the SIE Act to include a new subsection, that is, subsection (4AA). Henceforth, the minimum plots size will be 50 perches, except - we have make an exception there - where the subdivision relates to a donation by an ascendant to a descendant. Then, the minimum plots size will remain as 10 perches for sites within settlement boundary and 20 perches for sites outside settlement boundary.

Mr Speaker, Sir, clause 7(b) of the Bill amends section 27 of the SIE Act, which defines the term expenditure in relation to VRS/ERS/factory closure and also sugar camps.

The SIE Act sets the legal framework for Sugar Estates and Milling Companies to implement the VRS and ERS for its employees. The employees are offered a certain extent of land, ranging from 7 perches to 16 perches, depending on length of service, and a cash compensation of around Rs400,000. The Sugar Estates put up all necessary infrastructures, among others provision of water, electricity, road networks and road side drains on the land, to enable it to become a residential *morcellement*.

In return, under section 29 of the Act, they are allowed to recoup these costs in terms of conversion of their lands free from payment of land conversion tax. The Sugar Estates/Milling Companies can also recoup costs incurred for the closure of its factory.

As per the present legislation, in fact, there is a list of expenditure components that are currently used for computation for costs incurred by sugar estates. This, in fact, is being reviewed in the present legislation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Following discussions that Authorities had with the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association, there are costs which are not in the legislation but which have been included. These are -

- Interest payments on dedicated loan raised by Sugar Estates for implementation of the VRS or ERS;

- Off-site infrastructural costs, and
- Any exceptional costs certified by the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority previously by the MSA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the amount to be computed as costs for interest payment was, in fact, calculated on the overall expenditure of the Sugar Estates implying that it was assumed that all the expenditure incurred by them for implementation of VRS and ERS was made by way of loan. Furthermore, the rate charged was at 17% of the overall expenditure in connection with the implementation of the project as the ERS, VRS, Sugar Camp or factory closure.

For the purpose of good governance, there is a need to have more transparency. Accordingly, the amendment will provide that henceforth the interest is computed only on loan taken for the project. Furthermore, the interest will be a cumulative interest at prime lending rate for a maximum period of 2 years. In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have mentioned explicitly that offsite infrastructural works are counted as costs that can be recouped by Sugar Estates. These costs, however, should be approved by my Ministry.

Clause 8F of the Bill amends Section 28(8)A of the principal Act so that it will include a new clause that the Land Conversion Committee reserves the right to direct an applicant that the development of a mixed use comprising residential, commercial, leisure and social components within a defined percentage allocated to each use. This will be based in compliance with the relevant planning policy guidance as per the Planning and Development Act.

Clause 9 of the Bill amends Sections 29(1)(a)(x), 29(1)(a)(xii) and 29(1)(a)(xiii) of the SIE Act which provides for exemption from payment of land conversion tax for projects such as the relocation, expansion or setting up of an industrial enterprise; the construction of such buildings for the provision of pre-primary, primary, secondary or tertiary education, and the setting up of such health institution, or veterinary clinic, as may be approved by the Ministerial Committee set up under section 40B(4) of the Planning and Development Act'.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministerial Committee under the Planning and Development Act has not been set up and this, in my view, is yet another administrative hurdle and accordingly these provisions are being harmonised whereby it will have to be approved by relevant authorities.

Clause 9(b) amends section 29 of the principal Act with regard to the figure of Rs3.5 m. For each Rs3.5 m. incurred as costs for VRS, ERS and factory closure, Sugar Estates are allowed to convert 1 hectare of land free from payment of land conversion tax. The figure of Rs3.5 m. is, in fact, linked to the amount of tax that Sugar Estates would have paid as per the Twelfth Schedule of the SIE Act, had there been no VRS Scheme. In fact, this figure of Rs3.5 m. as tax payable has not been revised since the year 1988, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Accordingly, same is being increased to Rs5.5 m. implying that henceforth to benefit from conversion of 1 hectare of land free from payment of land conversion tax, Sugar Estates have to incur costs to the tune of Rs5.5 m.

Clause 10 of the Bill amends the Twelfth Schedule of the SIE Act so that henceforth an applicant will have a 5-year period as from the date of obtention of the last clearance or permit required to develop the land, the subject matter of the conversion. However, this will not apply for the following cases -

- (i) conversion relating to setting up of a residential unit for own use or for ascendant/descendant, and
- (ii) for projects deemed to be in the economic interest of Mauritius and approved as such by Government, that is, at Cabinet level.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, clause 12 of the Bill deals with the *métayer* issue. My attention was drawn to the problem of lease of sugarcane land by certain producers to planters for which there was a problem regarding the period of lease and the renewal of lease after a cycle of cane production.

In order to address this issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are proposing to amend the definition of the Sugar Insurance Fund Act through consequential amendment of the SIE Act to include also as *métayer*, any person who has been cultivating cane, on land leased from a planter, for a consecutive period of three crop cycles.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am confident that the amendments that we are proposing in the Bill will contribute significantly towards preserving our prime and scarce agricultural lands which are needed to increase food production and enhance our food self-sufficiency and security. Moreover, they will also ensure a proper balanced development with regard to agriculture and other economic sectors which are competing for the same land.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a list of amendments which I will be moving at Committee Stage. I understand that these have been circulated since Friday, and there is one which has been circulated this morning.

With these words, I now commend the draft Bill to the House.

Dr. Bunwaree rose and seconded.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr A. Ganoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Uteem rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

THE MAURITIUS FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE BILL

(NO. X OF 2013)

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée) gave notice of his intention to move the second reading of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service Bill (No. X of 2013) at the next sitting of the Assembly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Ag. Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Tuesday 11 June, 2013, at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr. A. Bachoo) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not propose to raise the specific matter standing in my name today while reserving the right to do so on the next occasion.

At 5.41 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 11 June, 2013, at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

FIRST TIME BUYERS - REGISTRATION DUTY - EXEMPTION

(No. B/436) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the exemption of registration duty for the first time buyers of bare lands and built up lands respectively, he will state if consideration will be given for proposals for amendments to be introduced to the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act to provide for a specified quantum of exemption, irrespective of the selling price thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: As announced in the Budget Speech 2013, first time buyers are now granted full exemption from registration duty on the acquisition of a built-up residential property costing up to Rs4 m. instead of up to Rs1.5 m. previously.

Similarly, the upper limit for exemption of registration duty on the acquisition of bare residential land by a first time buyer has been increased from Rs750,000 to Rs1 m.

However, as explained in the annex to the Budget Speech 2013, the exemption no longer applies if the value of the property exceeds the limit of Rs4 m. for built-up property and Rs1 m. for bare land.

Providing a specified quantum of exemption irrespective of the selling price to a first time buyer is not financially sustainable nor is it desirable.

This measure will accordingly impact more favourably on the lower and middle income groups.

MAURITIUS SHIPPING CORPORATION – VESSELS - REPLACEMENT

(No. B/441) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Mauritius Shipping Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if the replacement of the vessels thereof is being considered and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) names of the existing vessels together with the respective –
 - (i) date of commissioning;
 - (ii) cost, and
 - (iii) country of origin thereof
- (b) procedures initiated for the replacement, indicating the –
 - (i) names of the consultant/s;
 - (ii) expected cost, and
 - (iii) proposed commissioning thereof, and
- (c) date on which Government gave its approval therefor.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that -

Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd currently operates two vessels; namely M/S Mauritius Pride and M/S Mauritius Trochetia. Mauritius Pride carries cargo, livestock and passengers while Mauritius Trochetia carries cargo and passengers.

The M/S Mauritius Pride was built in Germany and commissioned in the year 1990 at the cost of Rs 309,536,580.00.

The M/S Mauritius Trochetia was built in the Republic of China and was commissioned in the year 2001 at the cost of Rs 400,139,801.

In August 2012, tender was launched for a “Consultancy Services for a feasibility study to consider replacement of the M/S Mauritius Pride and consideration of related issues”.

In December 2012, Strategic Networking Partners & Consulting Consortium, Mauritius and the Maritime Group (International) Limited London was awarded the contract for the Consultancy Services for the fixed sum of two hundred and ten thousand dollars (\$210,000) exclusive of VAT and all duties.

The Consultancy works are in progress and the final report is expected by August 2013.

Government will decide on the way forward following the recommendations of the Consultants.

QUATRE SOEURS - INHABITANTS - RELOCATION

(No. B/443) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the project for the relocation of the inhabitants of Quatre Soeurs, he will state the -

- (a) number of households concerned therewith;
- (b) site identified therefor;
- (c) proposals submitted to the inhabitants, and
- (d) difficulties encountered, if any, for the finalisation thereof.

Reply: In regard to part (a) of the question, the number of households concerned with the project for the relocation of the inhabitants of Quatre Soeurs is 11.

The site at which it is proposed to relocate the families is at Camp Ithier.

Each of the eleven families will be allocated a plot of an extent of 11 perches. Furthermore, a housing unit of a total extent of 1,474 square feet will be put up on each of the plot at Government costs.

As regards part (d) of the question, I am not aware of any difficulty being encountered. However, the beneficiaries have requested for an alternative site. This is being looked into. Furthermore, the terms and conditions are still being discussed.

WORKERS - LICENSED RECRUITING AGENCIES

(No. B/445) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the licensed recruiting agencies and/or individuals, he will, in each case, give a list thereof for the recruitment of workers to work -

- (a) in Mauritius, and
- (b) abroad.

Reply: I wish to apprise the House that there are presently thirteen (13) recruitment agencies/agents holding a valid Recruitment Licence involved in the recruitment of citizens of Mauritius for employment in Mauritius, six (6) are involved in the placement of non-citizens in employment in Mauritius and twelve (12) are involved in the recruitment of Mauritian nationals for employment abroad.

I am tabling the lists for the information of hon. Members.

PRB 2013 - ERRORS, OMISSIONS & ANOMALIES COMMISSION REPORT

(No. B/447) 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 Report of the Errors, Omissions & Anomalies Commission on the Pay Research Bureau Report 2013, he will state the -

- (a) total cost of implementation thereof, indicating the amount paid to the different salary groups;
- (b) expected impact thereof on the budget deficit and inflation rate for 2013, and

- (c) effect on wage differentials between the public and the private sectors for similar grades, indicating the policy of Government in relation thereto.

Reply: The Errors, Omissions and Anomalies Commission Report is now estimated to cost an average amount of Rs1.4 billion annually over the period 2013 to 2015 as follows -

- Rs1.0 billion in 2013;
- Rs1.4 billion in 2014, and
- Rs1.8 billion in 2015

The cost takes into account the fact that Government has taken the decision to pay salary arrears due from 1st January to 30th June 2013 in cash rather than providing special leave as recommended by the Report. As indicated by the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms in its Circular Note on the EOAC Report just released, those arrears are expected to be paid in July 2013.

The estimated amounts in salary increase and adjusted benefits to be paid in 2013 in the different salary groups are as follows: For those drawing -

Up to Rs15,000, a total amount of Rs345 m.

From Rs15,001 to Rs30,000, a total cost of Rs370 m.

From Rs30,001 to Rs45,000, a total amount of Rs210 m.

From 45,001 to 93,000 a sum of Rs70 m., and

For those above 93,000, Rs 5 m. will be required.

As regards part (b) of the question, the implementation of the EOAC Report as from January this year will contribute towards increasing the overall budget deficit by around 0.2 % of GDP. I am informed by the Statistics Mauritius that its effect on inflation would be negligible.

Concerning part (c) of the question, the private sector is vast, heterogeneous and most of them have a commercial objective as compared to the Public Sector which is mainly a service provider and homogeneous to a large extent. It is indeed difficult to make a reliable pay comparison with grades of equal value in the private sector. The rates of pay also in the private sector vary from industry to industry. They are largely dependent on costs of operation and financial conditions – i.e. ability to pay. Comparison of similar grades of workers in public sector and private sector is also tricky because the responsibilities and the tasks may be different.

In the private sector, wages are fixed by way of remuneration orders or agreed upon between workers and employers. Each year an additional Remuneration Act for payment of an additional remuneration to workers of the private sector is enacted by the National Assembly to compensate workers for the loss in purchasing power.

The hon. Member would be aware that for the lower income brackets we have been compensating workers more than the inflation rate. In addition the NRB makes recommendations to Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment on the minimum wage in some economic sectors taking into account amongst others the survival of the least economic firm. Private companies are requested to make an effort to pay more than the minimum compensation.

BLACK RIVER - CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS

(No. B/448) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the children's playgrounds in Black River, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Black River, information as to if the Welfare Department thereof has submitted a report on the equipment installed thereat and, if so, indicate if he will obtain and table copy thereof.

Reply: Last year, I had asked the Black River District Council that, as part of the regular maintenance of its assets, it should include a programme for the survey and maintenance of the children's playgrounds found in the district council area. The survey was accordingly carried out by its Welfare Department in August 2012. A copy of the report is being placed in the Library as requested by the hon. Member.

The repair works on all the equipment as recommended in the report are in progress except for those play equipment installed by Furnicon Ltd at Flic en Flac, Gros Cailloux, Cascavelle, Le Morne and Case Noyale children playgrounds. I am informed that there is a dispute with the supplier for non-compliance with the tender specifications. The Council is having resort to arbitration in this case.

HAMILTON COLLEGE – ALLEGED SEXUAL ABUSE

(No. B/450) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the alleged case of sexual abuse on a minor in which a teacher of the Hamilton College, in Mahebourg, is allegedly involved, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Private Secondary Schools Authority, information as to if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, the outcome thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Private Secondary Schools Authority (PSSA) that the Manager of Hamilton College (Girls), Mahebourg has, on 25 May 2013, reported an alleged case of sexual abuse on three minor students, involving Mr A.A., Music teacher, in a bungalow at Blue Bay.

The PSSA carried out an enquiry on the matter.

On 24 May 2013, the Child Development Unit office of Rose Belle was contacted by Hamilton College regarding a case of indecent act. On the same day, a site visit was conducted by the CDU officers accompanied by the Brigade Pour la Protection des Mineurs and met the Rector and the Manager of the School. The three minors and their responsible parties were convened at the CDU office of Rose-Belle on 25 May 2013. They were interviewed by the Woman Police Constable in post in the presence of the CDU officer. They were also seen by the Psychologist of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare.

On 28 May 2013, the PSSA made a request to my Ministry to extend psychological support to the students concerned, through the National Educational Counselling Service. Educational Psychologists thus called on the School on 30 May and also contacted the parents. Follow up and monitoring will be done by the Educational Social Worker posted to the Zone.

I am further informed that the Police have arrested Mr. A. A on 26 May 2013. On 27 May 2013, a provisional Charge of “causing a child to be sexually abused” was lodged against him before Grand Port District Court. He has been remanded to police cell.

I wish to inform the House that Mr. A. A had resigned on 20 May 2013 for personal reasons.

My Ministry and the Child Development Unit are providing full psychological support to all the three students as well as to their parents.

The case, being investigated by the Police and the CDU, both my Ministry and the PSSA are monitoring the situation very closely and have requested to be kept informed of the outcome thereof.

SPEED CAMERAS – SUPPLIERS - PRE-QUALIFICATION EXERCISE

(No. B/451) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the pre-qualification of suppliers for the supply, installation, commissioning and operation of speed enforcement cameras, he will state if the qualified suppliers thereof satisfied section III of the pre-qualification exercise.

Reply: I would like to inform the House that the exercise for the prequalification of bidders for the supply, installation, commissioning and operation of speed enforcement cameras was carried out by the Central Procurement Board.

The required information is, therefore, not available at my Ministry.

BEAU BASSIN & PETITE RIVIERE – NGOs – CSR FUNDS

(No. B/452) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Corporate Social Responsibility, he will give a list of the associations and clubs in Constituency No. 20 who are compliant thereto and presently benefitting therefrom.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ B/687 on 11 December 2012, where I informed the House that the National CSR Committee does not as such keep information on the basis of Constituency but on the basis of programmes funded island-wide.

However, for the information of the House, I am tabling a list of NGOs that are located in the region of Beau Bassin and vicinity that are accredited with the CSR and that have been classified on the basis of the region they are located.

As from this year, the National CSR Committee will publish, on an annual basis, on its website a statement of sector-wise distribution of the CSR fund for greater focus in the alleviation of poverty and enhancing transparency with regard to allocation of CSR funds.

COTTEAU RAFFIN - ISSACK LABONNE DRAIN

(No. A/152) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Issack Labonne drain, in Cotteau Raffin, he will state if he is aware of the bad state thereof and, if so, indicate if remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Black River that it is aware of the bad state of Issack Labonne drain at Cotteau Raffin, La Gaulette.

I am informed that drains along Issack Labonne have been constructed partly and could not be completed due to lack of funds.

I am informed that the extension of the drain will now be financed out of funds available in this fiscal year under the Local Infrastructure Fund and works order will be issued shortly, in this respect.

PETITE RIVIÈRE NOIRE – BUS SHELTERS

(No. A/153) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to Petite Rivière Noire, he will state if consideration will be given for the installation of bus shelters on the route going south therefrom, since there is none thereat and, if so, indicate when and if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the Road Development Authority that there is a total of thirty- four bus stops out of which thirteen are already accommodated with bus shelters along the Black River-Savanne Road from Petite Rivière Noire towards the South which is a classified road.

I am further informed that a survey will soon be carried out by the Road Development Authority to look into the provision of shelters including the locations referred to in Petite Rivière Noire. Furthermore, the collaboration of the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, National Transport Authority and National Development Unit will be solicited in this respect and implementation will depend on availability of required land and funds.

HARRIS STREET, PORT LOUIS - SPORTS COMPLEX

(No. A/154) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the sports complex at the Harris Street, in Port Louis, he will state –

- (a) who will be responsible for the administration and maintenance thereof, and
- (b) the criteria laid down for the use thereof.

Reply: Works at the sports complex at the Harris Street, Port Louis, are ongoing. On completion thereof and handing over of the site to my Ministry, the management of the sports complex will be entrusted to the Mauritius Sports Council.

As regards part (b) of the question, the same criteria as those applicable to other sports complexes managed by the Mauritius Sports Council will be applied.

ALBION – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. A/155) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the football ground in Albion, he will –

- (a) report progress on the implementation of the lighting project therefor, indicating the -
 - (i) date works started;
 - (ii) expected date of commissioning thereof;
 - (iii) name of the contractor therefor, and
 - (iv) contract value thereof and
- (b) state if consideration will be given for the -
 - (i) turfing thereof;
 - (ii) construction of terraces thereat;
 - (iii) construction of toilets for the players, and
 - (iv) provision for an irrigation network thereat.

Reply: The contract for the lighting of the football ground at Albion is awarded to Kabelec Engineering Ltd for the sum of Rs1,971,456.

Works started on site in December 2012 and the commissioning is expected by end of June 2013.

As regards part (b) of the question, no request has been received thereon.

CANOT VILLAGE – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. A/156) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) 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 a football ground at the Canot Village, he will state if a plot of land has been earmarked therefor and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the extent thereof, and

- (b) if provision will be made for the -
 - (i) fencing thereof, and
 - (ii) lighting facilities thereat.

Reply: I am informed that a plot of land of an extent of 3A00 has been vested in the Ministry of Youth and Sports for the construction of a football ground at Canot Village.

The construction of the football ground will be considered together with fencing and lighting facilities once all necessary clearances have been obtained, including funding.

MOTORWAY – SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - LIGHTING

(No. A/157) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the motorway running from the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport to Grand Bay, he will state the length thereof where there are black spots with absence of lighting infrastructure, indicating the remedial measures taken, if any, in relation thereto to ensure road safety and security.

Reply (Minister of Local Government): I am informed that the length of black spots along the motorway running from the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport to Grand Bay is as follows –

- (i) previously there was black out along the motorway from Plaine Magnien roundabout to Midlands due to loss of underground cables, overhead cables have been provided along this stretch and the street lighting infrastructure has now been energised;
- (ii) the stretch of the motorway from Dowlutt Roundabout, Phoenix to Wootun Roundabout both towards the airport and towards Port Louis over a total length of 5.6 kms has not been provided with street lanterns;
- (iii) approximately 1 km from Pellegrin to Oxenham falling under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, and
- (iv) the stretch of the motorway starting near Cocoterie Roundabout up to Pamplemousses Roundabout over a total length of 8 kms.

I am informed that the Road Development Authority is responsible for the provision of street lighting along the motorways whereas these are maintained by Local Authorities.

HOTEL PROJECTS - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. A/158) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the hotel projects, he will state the number thereof recently approved, indicating where matters stand as to the implementation thereof, in each case.

Reply: Six projects have been approved by my Ministry since August 2011 to date and the status of their implementation has been laid in the Library.

PRIEST PEAK HEALTH TRACK - UPGRADING

(No. A/159) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to the Priest Peak Health Track, at Cité Martial, in Port Louis, he will state if he has received representations complaining of the bad state thereof and, if so, indicate if urgent remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

Reply: The Priest Peak Health Track was set up by the then Ministry of Environment and NDU some time in 2005 at a cost of Rs 8.2m. Since then, this site has been subject to repeated acts of vandalism. Despite repairs and upgrading works carried out by the Ministry in 2006, further acts of vandalism were noted. The site was therefore closed in January 2007.

The Ministry received representations from the '*Comité Quartier La Paix*' in November 2009 and another complaint from a nearby inhabitant of the region in April 2011 regarding the bad state of the Priest Peak Health Track and illegal dumping at the site.

In view of the high costs involved for the repair works and the great likelihood of the recurrence of further acts of vandalism after the repairs, new infrastructural works have not been carried out on the site.

However, as a remedial measure, all damaged structures were removed from the site and in May 2011, the Municipality of Port Louis was requested to cut the grass and bushes along the borders of the road and to take appropriate action with regard to illegal dumping at the site.

ROCHE BOIS – CANAL COCHON & LATANIERS RIVER

(No. A/160) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to Roche Bois, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Development Unit, information as to if consideration will be given for the urgent -

- (a) replacement of the bridge over the Canal Cochon as the present one is flooded during heavy rainfalls, and
- (b) removal of wastes under the bridge of the Lataniers River, at the Abattoir Road and the dredging thereof, from the level of the upper part of the Bernardin de Saint Pierre Street to the bridge at the M1 Motorway, following the torrential rainfalls of 13

February 2013 and the flash floods of 30 March 2013 and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: Works order has already been issued for the reconstruction of bridge over Canal Cochon, near Roche Bois Transfer Station. As there is need to displace major services and networks of Mauritius Telecom, Central Water Authority and Wastewater Management Authority, contacts have already been established with the relevant Authorities. Works are expected to start by the end of June 2013.

As regards part (b) of the question, the dredging and removal of wastes under the bridge of Lataniers River at Abattoir Road from the level of the upper part of Bernardin de Saint Pierre Street to the bridge at M1 Motorway, the matter is under consideration and necessary action will be taken accordingly.