



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION

TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2013

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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, Attorney General
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
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Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment

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 (Temporary Transfer to RRA)
<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. 20 of 2013

Sitting of 22 October 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)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HON. P. BERENGER – LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION - RESUMPTION OF SEAT

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, hon. Bérenger is resuming today his seat as Leader of the Opposition. On behalf of hon. Members and, in my own name, I would like to welcome back the Leader of the Opposition and wish him well.

(Applause)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps I am not the person who should be saying it, but I do welcome the hon. Leader of the Opposition to come and take his seat among us. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank you and the hon. Prime Minister for your kind words. I had hoped that hon. Mrs Juggoo would wear a sari mauve on the occasion of my coming...

(Interruptions)

...but never mind! Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

E-PARLIAMENT - HON. MEMBERS SITTING APPLICATION PROJECT - IMPLEMENTATION

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I am pleased to inform the House that the National Assembly has successfully implemented the hon. Members Sitting Application Project which allows the hon. Members access to the parliamentary documents through an ICT Application while using a Digital Tablet. The application is fully operational since Friday 18 October instant.

Hon. Members, henceforth, you will be communicated with copy of the Order Paper and of the other parliamentary documents related to the business to be dealt with, or, that has been dealt with, at the Sittings of the National Assembly, through this Application.

However, the Secretariat will concurrently run a hard copy service for the hon. Members, for such time as may be necessary, on request, to allow for a smooth transition to a Paperless Parliament.

The hon. Members may avail themselves of a 24/7 Support Service that has been put in place with regard to the Application.

I hope that this e-Parliament initiative meets the objective of my Office to support you deliver on your parliamentary duties more effectively.

I thank you.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Office of the President

The Annual Report 2012-2013 of the Ombudsperson for Children's Office.

B. Prime Minister's Office –

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of –
 - (i) The Supplementary Appropriation (2012) Bill (No. XX of 2013);
and
 - (ii) The Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute Bill
(No. XXI of 2013).
- (b) The Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2012) of 2013.

- (c) The Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (Collection of Licence Fees) (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 187 of 2013).
- (d) The National Identity Card Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 216 of 2013).
- (e) The National Identity Card Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 237 of 2013).
- (f) The Dangerous Drugs (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 242 of 2013).

C. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities –

The Annual Report 2011 of the Central Water Authority.

D. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

- (a) The Digest of Industrial Statistics 2011.
- (b) The Annual Report 2012 of the Financial Reporting Council.
- (c) The Annual Report of the Accountant General and the Accounts of the Republic of Mauritius for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2012 (In Original).
- (d) Mauritius in Figures 2012 (In Original).
- (e) The Companies (Prescribed Certificates) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 181 of 2013).
- (f) The Investment Promotion (Film Rebate Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 184 of 2013).

- (g) The Value Added Tax (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 192 of 2013).
- (h) The Excise (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 193 of 2013).
- (i) The Excise (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 2) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 194 of 2013).
- (j) The Customs (Movement Certificate EUR 1) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 196 of 2013).
- (k) The Securities (Collective Investment Schemes and Closed-end Funds) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 197 of 2013).
- (l) The Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (Gabonese Republic) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 205 of 2013).
- (m) The Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (Gabonese Republic) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 206 of 2013).
- (n) The Protected Cell Companies (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 207 of 2013).
- (o) The Finance and Audit (Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Development Fund) (Revocation) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 208 of 2013).
- (p) The Digest of Productivity and Competitiveness Statistics 2012.
- (q) The National Accounts of Mauritius 2012.
- (r) The Annual Report 2011 of the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (In Original).

- (s) The Excise (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 210 of 2013).
- (t) The Accountant General's Report and Accounts of the Permanent Resident Fund for the year ended 31 December 2012 (In Original).
- (u) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 217 of 2013).
- (v) The Customs Tariff (Amendment of Schedule) (No. 3) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 238 of 2013).
- (w) The Securities (Collective Investment Schemes and Closed-end Funds) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 240 of 2013).
- (x) The Public Procurement (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 241 of 2013).
- (y) Digest of Statistics on Rodrigues 2012.
- (z) The Digest of Labour Statistics 2012 (In Original).

E. Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping –

- (a) The Annual Report and Corporate Governance Report of the Bus Industry Employees Welfare Fund for the year 2012 (In Original).
- (b) The Motorways and Main Roads (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 186 of 2013).
- (c) The Road Traffic (Bus Fares) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 198 of 2013).

- (d) The Road Traffic (Bus Fares) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 213 of 2013).
- (e) The Road Traffic (Use of High Visibility Clothing) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 239 of 2013).

F. Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reforms Institutions–

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons for the year ended 31 December 2012 (In Original).

G. Ministry of Education and Human Resources –

- (a) The Annual Report 2009 – 2010 of the Mauritius Examination Syndicate (In Original).
- (b) The Annual Report July 2009 to December 2010 of the Rabindranath Tagore Institute.
- (c) The Annual Report for the period July 2009 to December 2010 of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute.
- (d) The Annual Report 2011 of the Mauritius Institute of Education (In Original).
- (e) The Annual Reports of the Human Resource Development Council for the eighteen months period 2009-2010 and for the year 2011.
- (f) The Education (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 182 of 2013).

H. Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security, Attorney General –

- (a) The Annual Reports and Financial Statements of the Food and Agricultural Research Council including Agricultural Research and Extension Unit for the period July 2009 to December 2010 and January to December 2011.
- (b) The Reports of Activities and Financial Statements of the Food and Agricultural Research Council including Agricultural Research and Extension Unit for the periods July 1997 to June 2005 and July 2005 to June 2009.
- (c) The Annual Report 2012 of the Tea Board.
- (d) The Annual Report 2011 of the Mauritius Meat Authority (In Original).
- (e) The Annual Report of the Vallée D'Osterlog Endemic Garden Foundation for period January to December 2011. (In Original)
- (f) The Annual Report 2011 of the Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool Corporation (In Original).
- (g) Equal Opportunities (Practice and Procedure of Tribunal) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 202 of 2013).

I. Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development –

The Environment Protection (Applications for PER Approval and EIA Licence) (Processing Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 212 of 2013).

J Ministry of Fisheries –

The Fisheries and Marine Resource (Extension of Net Fishing Season) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 226 of 2013).

K. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands –

- (a) The Local Government (Remuneration of Councillors) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 204 of 2013).
- (b) The City Council of Port Louis (Central Market) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 227 of 2013).
- (c) The Ibrahim Abdoollah Market/Fair Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 228 of 2013).
- (d) The Jinnah Market/Fair Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 229 of 2013).
- (e) The Auction Sale Site Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 230 of 2013).
- (f) The City Council of Port Louis (Abercrombie Market) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 231 of 2013).
- (g) The City Council of Port Louis (Ruisseau du Pouce Open Market/Fair) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 232 of 2013).
- (h) The City Council of Port Louis (Pont de Paris Open Market) Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 233 of 2013).
- (i) The Pointes aux Sables Market/Fair Regulations 2011 (Government Notice No. 234 of 2013).
- (j) The District Council of Pamplemousses – Renaming of Road - Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 235 of 2013).
- (k) The Local Government (Remuneration of Councillors) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 243 of 2013).

L. Ministry of Arts and Culture –

- (a) The Annual Reports 2009/2010 and 2011 of the National Library (In Original).
- (b) The Annual Report of the Mauritius Council of Registered Librarian for the period July 2009 to December 2010. (In Original).

M. Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment –

- (a) The Cleaning Enterprises (Remuneration) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No.191 of 2013).
- (b) The Non-Citizens (Work Permits) (Fees) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 195 of 2013).
- (c) The Employment (Non-Citizens) (Restriction) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 200 of 2013).
- (d) The Non-Citizens (Work Permits) (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 203 of 2013).

N. Ministry of Tourism and Leisure –

The Annual Report 2008/2009 of the Tourism Authority.

O. Ministry of Health and Quality of Life –

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care for the year ended 31 December 2011 (In Original).
- (b) The Occupational Safety and Health (Work at Height) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No.190 of 2013).

- (c) The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 201 of 2013).
- (d) The Medical Council (Exemption from Examination) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 218 of 2013).
- (e) The Medical Council (Exemption of Non-Citizens from Examinations) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 219 of 2013).
- (f) The Medical Council (Registration of Registered Medical Practitioners) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 220 of 2013).
- (g) The Dental Council (Exemption from Examination) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 221 of 2013).
- (h) The Dental Council (Exemption of Non-Citizens from Examinations) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 222 of 2013).
- (i) The Dental Council (Examination Fee) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 223 of 2013).
- (j) The Medical Council (Medical Institutions) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 225 of 2013).

P. Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Consumer Protection –

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 183 of 2013).
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 14) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 185 of 2013).

- (c) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 15) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 199 of 2013).
- (d) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 16) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 209 of 2013).
- (e) The Jewellery (Dealer's Registration and Transactions) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 211 of 2013).
- (f) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 17) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 214 of 2013).
- (g) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 18) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 215 of 2013).
- (h) The Consumer Protection (Control of Sale of Imported Live Animals for Home Slaughter) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 224 of 2013).

Q. Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms –

- (a) The Civil Establishment Order 2013.
- (b) The Civil Establishment (Rodrigues Regional Assembly) Order 2013.
- (c) The Civil Establishment Order 2013 (Government Notice No. 188 of 2013).

- (d) The Civil Establishment (Rodrigues Regional Assembly) Order 2013 (Government Notice No. 189 of 2013).

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

JUDICIARY - CHIEF JUSTICE - APPOINTMENT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Judiciary, he will state if –

- (a) the President of the Republic has consulted him on the appointment of a new Chief Justice on the office becoming vacant following the retirement of the incumbent, indicating when the said office will become vacant;
- (b) he has discussed the current appointment of an Acting Chief Justice and Senior Puisne Judge with the President of the Republic or the Chief Justice, and
- (c) he has recently advised the President of the Republic regarding the approval of requests for Judges of the Supreme Court to undertake any other work.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is fortunate to have a Constitution that provides for separation of powers of the Judiciary, the Executive and the Legislature. The President of the Republic is required by his oath to execute the Office of the President to the best of his ability to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law. Likewise, our Judges are required by their oath of office to serve Mauritius and the Constitution “without fear or favour, or affection or ill will”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, of late, it has been noted – I should say - with grave concern that a number of persons have been making public statements and engaging in acts and conducts likely to be perceived as undermining the independence of our institutions including the Judiciary. We have witnessed that conduct in relation to certain high-profile cases dealt with by the Supreme Court.

In regard to part (a) of the question, section 77 (1) of the Constitution provides that the Chief Justice shall be appointed by the President after consultation with the Prime Minister.

Furthermore, section 64(5)(a) of the Constitution provides that the question whether such consultation has in fact taken place, even if required by the Constitution, shall not be called in question in any Court of Law.

The substantive Chief Justice is still in office, and is expected to remain in office until his retirement on 31 December 2013 at which point in time the office will become vacant. I am expecting such consultation to take place prior to the appointment of a Chief Justice in a substantive capacity.

Regarding part (b) of the question, section 77(5) of the Constitution provides as follows, and I quote -

“Where the office of Chief Justice is vacant or the person holding that office is for any reason unable to perform the functions of the office, those functions shall be discharged – and I stress this point - by such one of the other Judges of the Supreme Court as may be designated in that behalf by the President acting in accordance with the advice of the person holding the office of Chief Justice:

Provided that if the office of Chief Justice is vacant or if the person holding that office is on leave of absence, pending retirement, or if the President, acting in his own deliberate judgment, considers that it is impracticable to obtain the advice of that person owing to that person’s absence or illness, the President shall act after consultation with the Prime Minister.”

In regard, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the appointment of an acting Senior Puisne Judge, section 77(6) of the Constitution provides as follows and I quote -

“When the office of the Senior Puisne Judge is vacant or the person holding that office is acting as Chief Justice or is for any reason unable to perform the functions of that office, such one of the Judges of the Supreme Court as the President, acting in accordance with the advice of the Chief Justice, may appoint shall act in the office of Senior Puisne Judge.”

It is pertinent, Mr Speaker, Sir, to refer to certain appointments in the Judiciary in the past in which seniority in the Judiciary was not adhered to, because I see many people making

comments, as if it is the first time. There have been cases where seniority has not been adhered to and presumably not found to be a determining factor. No doubt, this must have been on the strength of section 77(5), which I just quoted, and 77(6) of the Constitution which provide that appointment as Acting Chief Justice or Acting Senior Puisne Judge shall be made from, and I emphasise, “*such one of the Judges of the Supreme Court as may be designated by the President acting on the advice of the Chief Justice*”. Nowhere is it specified in the Constitution that the Senior Puisne Judge will automatically act as Chief Justice in the absence of the latter or that the next Judge in line will automatically act as Senior Puisne Judge when the office of Senior Puisne Judge is vacant. And there are cases, Mr Speaker, Sir.

- (a) in the seventies, on the demise of former Chief Justice Rivalland, the then Justice Garrioch was appointed Acting Chief Justice instead of the then Justice Latour Adrien who was senior to him as far as the Courts are concerned;
- (b) again, Mr Speaker, Sir, in 1995, when the then Chief Justice Forget was to retire, Justice Sik Yuen was appointed Senior Puisne Judge instead of Justice Pillay who was senior to him.

In addition, this led to a long debate between the President and me. I would rather not go into the details, but, if need be, I will.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should also like to point out that in February 2012, during the absence of the Chief Justice from 19 February to 03 March, when the former President, Sir Anerood Jugnauth was in office, Senior Puisne Judge Matadeen was appointed to act as Chief Justice, but Mrs Justice Peeroo, who is junior to Justice Balancy on the Bench, was appointed to act as Senior Puisne Judge from 19 February to 26 February and Justice Lam Shang Leen who is also junior to Justice Balancy on the Bench – I say on the Bench because when they were called to the Bar the seniority is not the same and he was appointed then to act as Senior Puisne Judge from 27 February to 03 March. So, I gave those examples because these are examples where this has been done. In fact, in the case of Justice Balancy it has happened in February 2012.

Now, the question of my discussion regarding appointment of Acting Chief Justice and Senior Puisne Judge does not arise as this is not required by the Constitution. As I explained, the Constitution is very clear on this.

As regards part (c) of the question, section 7(3) of the Courts Act provides that no Judge shall with or without remuneration, undertake any other work without the approval of the President. Also, section 64(1) of the Constitution provides that in the exercise of his function under the Constitution or any other law, the President shall act in accordance with the advice of Cabinet or a Minister acting under the authority of Cabinet, except where the Constitution empowers the President to act in his own deliberate judgment or in accordance with the advice of any other person or authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, notwithstanding the provisions of section 7(3) of the Courts Act and section 64(1) of the Constitution, the practice in line, it seems, with the view held by Supreme Court Judges, has been that such approval is tendered by the President without seeking the advice of the Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will appreciate that Mauritius has always been recognised as a vibrant economy with the rule of law and the independence of the Judiciary, and the separation of powers being the fundamental tenets of our Constitution.

We should not act in any manner that may be perceived as undermining the independence and the credibility of the Judiciary or of any particular Judge. I would invite all those concerned to refrain from any such conduct in view of the deleterious effect it may have on our social fabric and the business environment of our country.

Thank you.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, if I can start with a point of clarification. The hon. Prime Minister has informed us that the present Chief Justice will be retiring on 31 December. I would wish to clarify he is not, therefore, on leave of absence pending retirement?

The Prime Minister: No, he is not. He has gone abroad, but he will be retiring officially on 31 December.

Mr Bérenger: Being given the situation that has been created in the Judiciary, will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me, that in the case of the appointment of the next Chief Justice, it is vital that seniority should prevail in this case, where it is the President who appoints after consultation with the hon. Prime Minister and that, therefore, Senior Puisne Judge Matadeen, should be appointed as Chief Justice.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just quoted what the Constitution says –

“The post of Chief Justice won’t become vacant until the 31 December.”

I think I will go according to the Constitution and the President will have consultation with me, I am sure.

Mr Bérenger: Already 15 years ago, Lord Mackay, made recommendations and one recommendation which he made was that –

“The Chief Justice should be appointed by the President acting in his own deliberate judgement.”

This expression ‘in his own deliberate judgement’ is not in the Constitution at present. Therefore that –

“The Chief Justice should be appointed by the President acting in his own deliberate judgement after such consultation as he thinks fit.”

That is, not only after consultation with the Prime Minister and, in many cases, with the Leader of Opposition, but with any other person as he thinks fit. Is the hon. Prime Minister prepared to bring amendments to the Constitution to that effect?

The Prime Minister: I will just remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I appointed Lord Mackay precisely to look at the whole of the judiciary, an exercise which had not been done even when we were still a colony, Mr Speaker, Sir. But he made some very good recommendations, and one of these recommendations is this. This is something that I think we should consider as it is in his recommendations and that I suppose - when we bring – there should be consultation on some changes in the Constitution which I would be discussing certainly with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. We could look at this as well, at the same time.

Mr Bérenger: Later on, I will come back to another proposal by Lord Mackay which concerns the post of Chief Justice. But on my second point, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has made reference to two cases where there were problems like that when new Chief Justice was appointed, the case of Latour Adrien and Garrioch, Sik Yuen and Pillay. Will he agree with me that in the first case there was no objection raised because, in fact, Mr Latour Adrien had only a few months left, therefore, that is, his *confrere*, hon. Garrioch was elegant and

understood perfectly the situation whereas in the second case which involved Mr Sik Yuen and Mr Pillay, it caused a lot of problems and had to be righted later on?

The Prime Minister: In the first case, I would rather not go into the details. But from my recollection there were some problems in the alliance of the Government of the time that it was not right and all these things, but I would rather not go into it as the hon. Leader of the Opposition said it was a few months so we should not - let matters settle there. As for the second case, I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, I became Prime Minister in December 1995 and I was shocked and did not agree with the President when the consultation was held – it was Mr Cassam Uteem who was President - that he wanted to go ahead and name Mr Sik Yuen as Chief Justice. I don't know whether the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows the details, but I did not agree with him. I thought a wrong had been done "in a sense" because perhaps we should try to remedy because there was a case there, but I am told that the Prime Minister who was before me was adamant that Mr Justice Pillay should not be made Chief Justice. I said, but the Government has changed, I think we should try to correct what appears to be a mistake, but the then President - perhaps, I should not go into the details - even said it would be impossible for him, that he would have to resign if I insist on this and we would not agree. I pleaded with him that I don't think he should follow that course, but that if he were to take it on board that there has been a new Prime Minister and that things have changed it is only then that this error was corrected. It was not corrected as some are saying that as if it was corrected. It was corrected after a long debate, after I was told that the former Prime Minister had deliberately and very determinedly said it should not be Mr Pillay who should be Chief Justice. That is why I corrected. I think Justice Pillay is aware of this and there are documents in the State House I believe, that there are things that I have seen but I should not, I think, make reference because of the nature of the discussions I had with the then President. So, it has happened in the past and again as I said even for the Senior Puisne Judge it has happened in the past. So, I wanted to stress that to the hon. Leader of the Opposition in case, maybe, he does not know the full picture as far as this is concerned.

Mr Bérenger: Well, I take it, listening to the hon. Prime Minister that what he is saying is, in fact, good reason to be very careful not to respect seniority when you reach the top of the Judiciary. This is the main point which I take. Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Prime Minister, if I heard him correctly, he made passing reference to the conversation which he had with the President on the present actingship of the Chief Justice and Senior Puisne Judge. Being given the

mood in the Judiciary, after *l'affaire de l'arbitrage privé par les juges*, after *l'affaire des secrétaires de juges*, now, with these two actingships there is a very delicate situation which has been created. Will not the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that in this case, Justice Balancy who has not only been acting as Senior Puisne Judge on numerous occasions, but even as Chief Justice on three occasions, should have been appointed as acting Puisne Judge this time? Again, the last time he was appointed acting Chief Justice was only a few weeks ago and has he discussed that with the present Chief Justice himself?

The Prime Minister: No, I did not discuss it with the present Chief Justice, Mr Speaker, Sir, because I did not want to get into any area where I am not meant to be involved. That is something which the Chief Justice advised the President and I left it as that. But I must say and I want to thank former Chief Justice Forget, I see Barristers Desire Basset and Anil Gayan who, in the press, have explained very clearly that the Chief Justice - look at what both Mr Basset and Forget said in fact. Former Chief Justice Forget said –

« C'est un choix qui appartient au Chef Juge dont il est le mieux placé pour faire son choix. Il est mieux placé, il connaît ses hommes, il connaît les personnes avec qui il travaille. Il est certainement le mieux placé pour faire un choix pour l'avenir du pays et pour le judiciaire ».

And then he goes on to say that –

« Il a sûrement ses raisons de faire ce qu'il a fait, on ne peut pas remettre en question son choix. » and, *comme si* question that. I see even Mr Basset who also said the same thing more or less, that he must have his reasons for him to have decided this and we should not question this. And that is why I stated it even Mr Gayan also said more or less the same thing. So, Mr Justice Forget was the former Chief Justice, so we have to take into account that they are saying the same thing that I am saying that this has happened in the past, there must be reasons why this has happened. I did not want to know the reasons, I did not want to dwell into the reasons, but this is something that has happened, there must be reasons for it, I cannot say at this point.

Mr Bérenger: My third point, Mr Speaker, Sir, can, at least, the hon. Prime Minister tell us whether recently authority has been granted by the President for Judges to act upon

remuneration as *arbitres*, whether there have been such cases as we know. And he referred to that paragraph of the Courts Acts, section 7 (3) which says that –

“Except with the approval of the President no Judge shall, with or without remuneration, undertake any other work or hold any office”.

Can I ask whether he has discussed with the President? Has the President authorised Judges to sit on *arbitrage* recently?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this was a topic that was discussed quite extensively in the press and in the media and all these things and my understanding is that the President has been told by the Senior Judges of the Supreme Court that it is not for the Executive or the President to come and tell the Judges what they can or they cannot do and that they should...

(Interruptions)

No, but they said it is their decision, they have to decide. They have taken into account the criticisms that have been stated. I believe there has been one case which was pending - as far as I remember, from memory I am saying - that was allowed to go through. I am not aware whether there have been other cases but that has been the stand of the Judiciary.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Prime Minister would agree with me that no one, including Judges, can be above the law. The law is absolutely clear that no Judge, except with the approval of the President, can undertake any other work especially remuneration by the millions of rupees for *arbitrage privé*. Has he discussed that with the President whatever so and so in the Supreme Court says?

The Prime Minister: Yes, as I said, I did because it was topical at the time and I did discuss it. And not only that, I also had the opportunity to discuss with the former Justice of South Africa who gave an interview, I think, in “Le Mauricien” if I am not mistaken, on the same subject. But my understanding is that the Judges feel that it is not for us to tell them what they can do as far as the Judiciary is concerned, the Executive should not get involved in that and that has been left as that at the moment.

Mr Bérenger: I note that the hon. Prime Minister talks in the plural: Judges. I am very, very surprised and I think we are entitled to know which Judges feel that the President - in spite

of what the law says - is not the one to decide on a case by case basis. I don't know if the hon. Prime Minister will agree with me, but this business of *arbitrage privé* is at the bottom, at the root of what has been happening over a recent past to our Judiciary. *Ça a pourri notre judiciaire*, Mr Speaker, Sir, and he has brought us to this case of the *secrétaires des juges*. So, therefore, can I ask him, will he agree that there is need either to change the law so that although it is up to the President under the law, but to change the law if required to stop this practice or, at least, to introduce legislation along the lines of Section 93 of the UK Arbitration Act of 1996 where there are all sorts of precautions before a Judge can spend his time which he is supposed to be at the service of the Judiciary 100% of his time, all sorts of precautions are taken. Therefore, will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that either we must stop this completely or amend the law to introduce, as in the UK, the required precautionary measures?

The Prime Minister: I did say the Supreme Court Judges and I checked; it is the Supreme Court Judges who are of the view that the Executive should not get involved in that, but that is something that was very topical. As I said, I spoke to I think he was a very Senior Justice from South Africa who also made the same point. I think he gave an interview in *Le Mauricien*, this is something perhaps that we shall have to discuss and look at very carefully without giving the impression that we are going on somebody else's turf, but I think this is something we should do. There is another problem with that, Mr Speaker, Sir. I should perhaps point out that very often in arbitration; the parties themselves decide who they want to have as arbitrators. That is another issue that we will have to look at the same time.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the time will come when the substantive appointment will have to be made as regards the Chief Justice since the Chief Justice will retire on 31 of this year. Now, as the hon. Prime Minister has told us, the Constitution provides that the President will have to consult him. Since the hon. Prime Minister has himself taken so much pride of having corrected a wrong in 1995, so can we take it from him therefore that when the consultation by the President will be made with the hon. Prime Minister, he will react in the same way; that is, that seniority will prevail?

The Prime Minister: I cannot say it in the way he has said it. We must know what are the reasons why this has been done, this has been done twice. It has been done in the past. There must be a reason why they say consultation with the Prime Minister and all this, but I will

certainly - I am known for that, Mr Speaker, Sir - maybe go a bit further in this and see what are the reasons and there must be some reasons as former Chief Justice Forget says, as Mr Basset says, as Mr Gayan says, and perhaps we should look at it very closely. But, I want to give an assurance to the hon. Member that I will always act in the fairest possible manner.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned the Mackay Report. In that report, Lord Mackay also made the recommendation to change the way the Senior Puisne Judge is appointed and also, the composition of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, in fact to reduce the influence of the Chief Justice. So, is that one of the things which the hon. Prime Minister will consider in bringing any possible amendment to the Constitution?

The Prime Minister: We are very lucky to have had a person as Lord Mackay, former Lord Chancellor, to actually do that for free, I must say, he did not take any fees, and I take very seriously his recommendations. So, I will go into that direction, in that sense.

Mr Jugnauth: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Prime Minister has just said that in 1995, the example he has given that a great wrong was done based on the fact that somebody who is higher in hierarchy or joined the service earlier, he should not be penalised. Now, I heard again the hon. Prime Minister supporting the opinions that have been expressed by some barristers that the Chief Justice should know better than anyone else and he should decide whom to appoint as SPJ. So may I know which principle, in fact, the hon. Prime Minister is supporting? Is it that *hiérarchiquement parlant celui a qui été nommé juge doit être promu ou sinon est-ce que c'est seulement le chef juge*, in his own judgement, should appoint somebody to act as SPJ?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps I should clarify that I did not say a great wrong has been done. I said if there has been something that is wrong, we have to correct it. However, in that case of the refusal to appoint Justice Pillay as Chief Justice, there are two reasons for it from what I understand. One was, there was a case, I think there was the Commission of Enquiry on Drugs, and then the then Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth decided he would sack 14 Senior Police Officers. They went to court to say that their rights have been trampled upon and it was Justice Pillay at the time who gave the verdict, reinstating them; so, against what the then Prime Minister had decided. He had then said that this is something that he would not forget and that is

something else. It's not a wrong, it's a policy decision taken because a Judge had taken a decision to that effect and it is not the first time, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think the hon. Member - perhaps, I don't know whether you were in Mauritius at the time when the Senior Judge, Justice Ahnee, was criticised here in the House which forced his resignation, a Sitting Judge and you should see the comments that were made then in the press. I quote "Week end" - I am sure they would like me to quote them -

«En usant de son pouvoir le Premier ministre a aussi privé le judiciaire du plein exercice du sien qui était justement de déterminer si la Sri Lankaise avait le droit de demeurer au pays ou non. Il s'avère de plus en plus que le représentant du parquet n'était même pas au courant ce vendredi-là, que la Sri Lankaise n'était déjà plus sur notre sol et c'est une situation très grave (...)»

And, they talk of *outrage à la Cour* and there are many, many articles. So, this is not the same thing and there were letters in the "London Times" supporting what Justice Ahnee did, but Justice Ahnee, dignified as he is, decided if the Prime Minister has attacked him in Parliament he should really resign and he resigned in spite of the pleas of many people including myself, as Leader of the Opposition and others, his friends, he decided - no, he had to resign on that basis.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has made reference to the case of Mr Forget who had given an opinion on the matter and Mr Gayan who had commented on the same issue in "l'Express". Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has taken cognizance of the opinion that has been given in "Mauritius Times" to the effect that on this issue of appointment in the Judiciary seniority should be strictly respected when the Editor of "Mauritius Times" in the issue of last Friday opined that, in fact, justice should be done to Mr Balancy and seniority be respected?

The Prime Minister: I think we should be careful. That's why I said some opinions have been expressed without knowing the full facts. We should look at what the Constitution says, what are the powers, who are responsible; this has happened in the past. There must be reasons as former Chief Justice Forget is saying and I also mentioned Mr Basset; they said he has made a choice according to the Constitution, it is a right for him to make the choice he makes, there must be some reasons why he has decided that this should be so and therefore I don't think that

reading an article - I think the hon. Member is saying the “Mauritius Times” - one is of the view, one is not, we should stick to what the Constitution says. It cannot be that - everybody has an opinion, of course, but the opinion has to be one which is informed and here, in this case, the Constitution is clear.

Mr Speaker: Last question to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Bérenger: I am a bit surprised that the hon. Prime Minister remembers what the former Prime Minister has said, hitting at a Judge, but he seems to forget what he said, hitting at Judge Balancy only recently in the National Assembly. Can I ask my last question? We have gone to Lord Mackay several times here, different Members, and it is clear that Lord Mackay had well thought out and come to the conclusion that there is need to limit the influenced powers of the Chief Justice - not the present Chief Justice, any past and future. Therefore, can I go back to what my colleague has just said, will the hon. Prime Minister agree that what Lord Mackay suggested that there should be fundamental change on the composition of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, so that it will be composed of the Chief Justice, the Senior Puisne Judge, the Solicitor-General, a Barrister that needs a 15-year standing nominated by the Bar Council and one other person appointed by the President again, acting in his own deliberate judgment after such consultation as he thinks necessary? Doesn't the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that this is urgently required?

The Prime Minister: First of all, let me answer to that criticism that I made. I was perfectly entitled to make it. It was not a decision of a Judge...

(Interruptions)

Listen, you ignorant pig! Listen to what I am saying!

(Interruptions)

It was not a judgment. I did not criticise any judgment like the former, former Prime Minister did.

(Interruptions)

What I criticised - he had no business of making comments on a Bill. That is what I said.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I want some order, please!

The Prime Minister: I said that I am perfectly entitled to make the comments I made.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

The Prime Minister: ...to put the Judge in his place that he should not make comments on a law that is being debated in the House. That was not a decision of a Judge like the former Prime Minister did - a decision of the Supreme Court Judge who had then to resign because he criticised the decision. I mentioned what the comments in the press were. As for the second part of the question, I tend to agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that is something that we have to look at, I suppose together. We should have consultations.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister! The Table has been advised that the PQ No. B/780 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Information and Communication Technology.

PQ No. B/784 addressed to the hon. Prime Minister and which was to be replied by the hon. Minister of Information and Communication Technology, and PQ Nos. B/783 and B/785 have been withdrawn.

In keeping with practice, PQ No. B/780 will be replied at the end of Questions addressed to the other hon. Members, time permitting.

Mr Bérenger: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just heard you said that PQ No. B/780 which was addressed to the hon. Prime Minister relating to the new Mauritius National Identity Card has been referred to the hon. Minister, but is it not a fact that the whole project has been withdrawn from the hon. Minister to be attached to the Prime Minister's Office, and now when we address the question to the hon. Prime Minister, it is sent back to the hon. Minister. Is that in order?

The Prime Minister: Can I clarify, Mr Speaker, Sir, just to help? The file hasn't been taken away from the hon. Minister. He has the ministerial responsibility for it, but my Office oversees to make sure that everything is okay, that is precisely what is happening.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Dr. Sorefan!

MAURITIUS DUTY FREE PARADISE – SECURITY SERVICES – TENDERS

(No. B/774) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth 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 procurement of security services at the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the company, information as to if tenders were launched therefore, in 2011 and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) names of the bidders, indicating that of the successful bidder;
- (b) respective bid value thereof, and
- (c) date of award of the contract therefore.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd (MDFP), as any company is governed by the Companies Act, and its Constitution, has its own internal procurement procedures. The management of the company is vested in its Directors and its Management. It would, therefore, not be appropriate to give details about procurement and tendering issues in the company as these fall under the responsibility of senior management and the Board of Directors.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, as we are dealing with the security at the airport, will the hon. Prime Minister check with the Commissioner of Police whether the Private Security Service Act is adhered to *à la lettre* by private security companies?

The Prime Minister: Whether they adhered *à la lettre* to what?

Dr. Sorefan: Private Security Service Act.

The Prime Minister: I presume if that was not the case the Commissioner of Police would have drawn my attention, but I can ask him again.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask one point? At least, can the hon. Prime Minister tell us if the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd. is still a subsidiary of Airports of Mauritius Ltd. or has it become in the meantime a subsidiary of ATOL Ltd?

The Prime Minister: What I understand is that it might have become a subsidiary of ATOL, but I have to check because there have been some changes with the expansion of the Airport, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! Do you have a question?

Mr Jugnauth: May I know the reason why the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Co. Ltd. was taken from the portfolio of the Ministry of Finance by the hon. Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I just remembered, Mr Speaker, Sir, the last question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition; I think it is still with the AML, not ATOL. There have been some changes in the structure, but I think it is still with the AML. I am sorry I didn't quite catch the question.

Mr Jugnauth: Why was the MDFP taken from the portfolio of Finance to that of Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: What I know, I think, we have followed what has been the case in the past and there has been some restructuring at the Airport, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the expansion of the Airport with the new partner and perhaps this is what pertains to it, but I will have to look into the matter.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

MBC - TELEVISION LICENCE FEE - REVENUE COLLECTED

(No. B/775) 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 recent increase of the Television Licence Fee, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to the –
- (b) revenue collected in relation thereto, as at to date and
- (c) actions, if any, initiated to ensure that the additional revenue collected be judiciously used, and

- (d) state if he has received any complaint from the *Association des Consommateurs de l'Ile Maurice* in relation thereto, and, if so, where matters stand.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (Collection of Licence Fees Act) was enacted in 1984 and it provides that every person who is liable to pay an electricity bill for domestic consumption shall pay the appropriate television licence fee unless he does not possess a television set or he makes a declaration to the effect that he is not in possession of any television set.

Since the coming into effect of the Act, television licence fees have been revised on several occasions. As a matter of fact, the television licence fee for domestic consumers was increased five years later, that is, in November 1989, from Rs15 to Rs75 monthly, that is, a 400% increase on a monthly basis.

And, again in February 2002, the television licence fee for domestic consumers was further increased from Rs75 to Rs100 monthly – that is, a 33% increase monthly.

These increases were not matched by any improvement in the quality of the television programmes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the MBC that, after 2002, the Corporation has had to meet the costs arising from the implementation of the three Pay Research Bureau Reports, that is, in 2003, 2008 and 2013.

In addition, over the last ten years, there has been substantial increase in the cost of goods and services, such as electricity, fuel, spare parts, transmission fees, among others, it would be a long list to go through it, and these go into the services of radio and television. It is also relevant to point out that the number of television channels in mainland Mauritius has increased from three in 2002 to seventeen to date, including many channels reflecting the linguistic and cultural varieties of our country. It is a major change – I think I mentioned it - from 3 to 17. Furthermore, the MBC will shortly convert one of the existing channels, I understand, into a continuous news channel.

In Rodrigues, the number of television channels has increased from one in 2002 to four as at to date. Since November 2009, the MBC also broadcasts one FM Radio Channel and one Digital Television Channel in Agaléga.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by the Director-General of the MBC that, in 2007, the Corporation initiated a major digitalisation project and this exercise was completed in 2011 with the migration of its services from the broadcasting station at Forest Side to the New Headquarters at Moka. The radio and television services broadcast at the MBC Station in Rodrigues have also been considerably expanded and improved to provide a better quality service and an enhanced programming schedule.

The digitalisation project in Rodrigues was completed in December 2011. A full-fledged and fully-equipped television studio has been set up in December 2012 in Rodrigues with the result that MBC Rodrigues is now completely autonomous.

Mr Speaker, Sir, economic realities have made it imperative for the television licence fee to be increased apart from the fact that the channels have been increased. We have all these projects that I have mentioned.

I should like to point out that the increase in television licence fee, that is, from Rs100 to Rs150 monthly, effective as from 01 August of this year, concerns only domestic consumers who consume more than 396 kilowatt hours of electricity annually in mainland Mauritius.

In other words, this means that 21,859 domestic households in Mauritius who consume less than 396 kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, they haven't been affected; they will continue to pay a licence fee of Rs20 monthly. I think I should point this out.

The television licence fee again for Rodrigues which is Rs25 monthly, this again 10,949 households have not been affected by this increase. They will still pay the same as before.

In regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Director-General of the MBC that domestic consumers are billed for their electricity in arrears and there is a time lag between electricity consumption and the issue of corresponding bills.

The increase in the television licence fee from August 2013 was, therefore, invoiced in the electricity bill of September 2013.

In terms of the arrangements between the MBC and the CEB, the Corporation will start collecting the television licence fee for the month of August 2013 in the course of this month.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, it is relevant to highlight that, since the year 2000, the MBC's budget has always registered a deficit. For example, for

Financial Year 2001/2002, the MBC had a net deficit of Rs132 m. Although the television licence fee was increased in 2002, the Corporation continued to post a deficit for subsequent financial years.

I am informed by the Director-General of the Corporation that over the last years, the Corporation has been pursuing its restructuring programme with a view to improving its financial situation. The Corporation will continue to exercise strict control over administrative and other operating expenses; work processes will be reviewed and utilisation of manpower will be rationalised.

I have personally, Mr Speaker, Sir, taken the initiative to request the Office of the Public Sector Governance of my Office, that is, the PMO, to monitor, on a quarterly basis, the financial situation of the MBC. The Office of Public Sector Governance has proposed a number of measures for the MBC to further improve its financial situation. It might be too long to go through the whole list, but I could perhaps say a few -

- (i) the development of clear strategies to enable the Corporation to improve its operations;
- (ii) exploration of new revenue generating avenues;
- (iii) stringent control on receivable balances on an on-going basis, and
- (iv) adoption of new strategies to boost up revenues, reduce costs and enhance productivity and efficiency.

The Director-General of the MBC has already initiated action with a view to implementing the recommendations made by the Office of Public Sector Governance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have impressed upon the Director-General of the Corporation the imperative need to ensure that the additional revenue to be generated as a result of the increase in the television licence fee be utilised on a priority basis to service loans raised for implementation of capital projects in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agaléga, namely the construction of the new MBC Headquarters and the digitalisation of the television channels.

As for part (b) of the question, I have in fact received a letter dated 08 October 2013 from the General Secretary of the *Association des Consommateurs de l'Ile Maurice*, in which the

Association has, *inter alia*, made a request to freeze the increase in the television licence fee pending the tabling of the Annual Reports of the Corporation before the Assembly.

I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, late yesterday I received a second letter going into a bit more details on that. I think it talks about the kilowatt-hours and all those things.

For reasons I have just enumerated, the request of the *Association des Consommateurs de l'Île Maurice* cannot be entertained.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the Corporation that the Accounts of the MBC for financial years 2011 and 2012 are being finalised by the National Audit Office. These Reports together with the Accounts for financial year 2009/2010 will be tabled before the National Assembly when they are ready.

May I remind the hon. Member that the Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the MBC for financial years 2000/2001 to 2004/2005 were laid before the National Assembly in May 2008 after the new Government had completed the procedures to that effect.

Mr Bhagwan: The hon. Prime Minister has informed us about the improvements, but the hon. Prime Minister has not informed the population of the daily propaganda of the MBC/TV and the abuse made with the public funds by the Director General and his *mafia* team. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the financial statement of the MBC/TV does not comply with the International Financial Reports Standard as required by the Financial Reporting Act? So, the Director General who pretends to be a super competent person, here, we have a case where the financial accounts of the MBC, public money, which are being wasted - millions by the *petits copains* - are not in accordance with the Financial Reporting Act. This is in the report of the Director of Audit.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, he has not departed from what was the previous practice and as far as I understand...

(Interruptions)

It was a previous practice and also that it is in accordance to the relevant law. This is my understanding.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that public money is being involved, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that contracts are being given to *petits copains* using the equipment of

the MBC/TV? At the last time, even here in Parliament, I gave the names of these companies. Has the hon. Prime Minister ordered an independent enquiry to look into the cases where films are made for parastatal bodies? I can even inform the hon. Prime Minister films that are made for the opening of a new airport using the equipment of the MBC/TV where funds have been given to these *petits copains* with the approval of the Director General.

The Prime Minister: The filming of the airport, the MBC naturally will have had to film the new airport and show it, but this is not the case. In fact, I asked the public governance to look into all those matters. We have not come up with anything. Perhaps you could send the information you have to that office.

Mr François: Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been great progress by MBC in Rodrigues. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister when will Rodrigues receive additional TV channels such as Sports 11 and others and will he state if the licence fee will increase or remain unchanged, if so?

The Prime Minister: What has been changed has already been changed; there is not going to be any increase from what I understand. The only problem is with - when I was in Rodrigues I discussed this - the satellites. They need to be able to receive the images. I understand that the MBC is actually trying to look into that so that you can get that channel.

Mr Roopun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we heard the hon. Prime Minister stating that the accounts for 2012 have not yet been prepared and not even submitted, but I wanted to know from the hon. Prime Minister on what basis did the hon. Prime Minister accept that there was need for the increase. Is there any independent report, any audit carried out before Government decides and, in fact, approves such a major increase in the licences?

The Prime Minister: You just have to look at the cash flow, you will understand. You don't have to have any kind of report, just the cash flow.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Prime Minister has made reference to the efforts to redress the financial situation and made reference to the OPSG. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that in the recent report of the Director of Audit, the MBC was one of the statutory bodies, which had been

targeted by the Director of Audit, which the Director of Audit took to task for being indebted and refusing or unable to pay and to honour its financial commitments towards Government?

The Prime Minister: I suppose you are referring to the films or whatever. I think I answered a question in Parliament. There is a process of negotiation because the MBC doesn't agree with the fees. So, I think they are trying to work it out.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why the MBC is wasting public money by recruiting security officers recently when you have got the presence of the Special Mobile Force, you have got the presence of the Police Officers, you have got security door lock code in every door there, you have got the presence of the CCTV cameras installed everywhere at the MBC?

The Prime Minister: The Police and the SMF are there outside. They don't go inside to look at every room of what is happening. We have had cases in the past of larceny, of loss...

(Interruptions)

Exactly! That is why the cameras have been installed, but is the hon. Member saying there should be no security at all?

(Interruptions)

Very good! Very good!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Issack!

Mr Issack: Does the MBC have any new channels in the pipeline and other new projects for the future?

The Prime Minister: There is already increase of assets from three to seventeen channels, which is a major increase on the number of channels, but from what I understand they have a project to have continuous news on one of those channels, I suppose.

BRITISH AUTHORITIES - MR M. L. S. – EXTRADITION PROCEDURES

(No. B/776) 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 Mr M. L. S., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the recent inquiry carried out in relation thereto, indicating if extradition procedures have been initiated against him with the British Authorities and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the Private Notice Question on 16 July 2013, wherein I related the circumstances which led to the arrest of six persons, following a declaration made at the CCID by one Mr P. A. K. F. K in connection with an alleged case of conspiracy to influence a Court judgment in a case relating to betting activities on foreign football matches.

One of the accused persons, Mrs B. B., incriminated her employer Mr M. L. S, a Mauritian national who is currently residing in London. The Commissioner of Police has, on 11 July of this year, instructed the Passport and Immigration Office to arrest Mr M. L. S. upon his arrival in Mauritius. However, Mr M. L. S. is still abroad. There is, I understand, from the Commissioner of Police - because he has made the request abroad - an objection for him to leave the United Kingdom. His passport has been impounded by the British authorities. He cannot travel on any travel document and he has to report once weekly to a Police Station.

I am further advised that on 26 July 2013, Police, in the course of consultations and contacts with concerned Authorities in London, was informed that Mr P. A. K. F. K. had reported a case of alleged bribery against Mr M. L. S. to the City of London Police Overseas Anti Corruption Unit. The matter is being enquired into by the relevant authorities in the UK. On 01 August 2013, the City of London Police Overseas Anti Corruption Unit informed the Mauritian authorities, through INTERPOL Mauritius, that Mr M. L. S. had been arrested in London on 31 July 2013. He was released on conditional bail on 01 August 2013. The City of London Police are still pursuing their enquiry.

On 08 August 2013, the Mauritian Police sought the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions on the course of action to be taken to enable the arrest of Mr M. L. S. for the purpose of the enquiry here. I understand that on 29 August 2013, the Director of Public Prosecutions expressed the wish to have an update on the case in which Mr M. L. S. is involved in the UK. The Commissioner of Police then immediately sought information from the

concerned authorities. Part of the information has been received. As I said, his passport has been impounded, he cannot travel abroad and these are the conditions of bail, he has to come to a Police Station once a week, but the other information is still being awaited.

Upon receipt of that relevant information, the Director of Public Prosecutions will be consulted anew, and a decision will then be taken regarding the need for extradition procedures to be initiated against him.

I think from what I understand the enquiry has to be finished in London, probably, the Court case as well.

Mr Bhagwan: Would the Prime Minister give assurance to the population that we are not heading towards a repetition of the case of Mr Teeren Appasamy who is still wandering in London and here we all know that Rs800 m have been stolen?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member is quite right and that is why I am having discussions with the Serious Fraud Office in London. They sent somebody here. I met other people in London. We really need to look at this because too often these kinds of things happen. I totally agree with the hon. Member.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Prime Minister whether Government or the competent authority has ordered an inquiry and audit of the activities of SMS Pariaz which is directly linked with Mr M. L. S. and his political connections and the way he has been given a permit and the way his SMS Pariaz is operating against the regulations of the GRA – *les machines à faire de l'argent*?

The Prime Minister: I can assure the hon. Member that all this is being looked and inquired into.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, therefore, we have no indication of what the Police hold against this Mr M. L. S. in London? What is the charge? What they are after him for?

The Prime Minister: I could give the details. From what I understand, it is following the complaints of this gentleman here to the City of London that he has been arrested. But I think I did mention that he put a charge of bribery against him. But there might be other things. As the

police inquire, they might have had other things; I could inquire into it and tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Bhagwan: We all know now what Mr M. L. S. is engaged in and if the hon. Prime Minister is agreeable, to have him back to Mauritius, send him as a first client to Melrose jail! Can I know from the Prime Minister whether he will give instructions to members of his party Government not to go and *donne coupe* on the Champ de Mars where there are races that are being *patronnées* by SMS Pariaz?

The Prime Minister: The problem is that there was the Mauritius Turf Club which invited them. They are the ones who were promoting on that day, but I think it would be judicious not to do this. It is difficult to know sometimes. I am often invited, but I don't go, I must say. I stopped going for a long, long time, but perhaps we have to look at this very carefully, ask the details who is promoting what before going and giving cups at the Mauritius Turf Club.

ARSENAL – WORK SITE - FATAL ACCIDENT

(No. B/777) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the fatal accident which occurred on a work site at Arsenal, on Monday 05 August 2013, which caused the death of one Mr G. R. V. who resided in Floréal, 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.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on Monday 05 August 2013 at about 10.35 hrs, the Terre Rouge Police Station received a message from the SSRN Police Post that one, Mr G. R. V., aged 51 and residing at Floreal, lost his life during an accident which occurred at the site of work at Royal Road, Arsenal.

Three Police officers proceeded to the spot of the accident at Arsenal. They cordoned the site and placed a sentry there.

The death of Mr G. R. V. was certified by the Medical Health Officer of the SSRN Hospital. The Police Medical Officer, who subsequently carried out the autopsy, certified the cause of death as “shock due to multiple injuries”.

Police started an inquiry into the matter and five employees of the Construction Company, who were present on the site of the accident, were brought to Terre Rouge Police Station where they gave their statements.

On the same day, Scene of Crime Officers, the Police Photographer and the Draughtsman attended the case.

Police inquiry into the case is still progressing.

I am informed that the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment has also carried out an inquiry in accordance with Section 5 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2005.

According to report from that Ministry, Mr G. R.V. was working at a site inside a trench 3 metres deep, when suddenly part of the backfilled earth material got detached from the side of the trench and fell on him.

The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment has completed its inquiry and has on 18 October 2013 referred the case to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his answer. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House if communication between the Police Station of Terre Rouge and the widow of Mr G. R.V. can be established to keep the family of the victim informed of developments in the investigation as stipulated in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act?

The Prime Minister: We have not pushed it through in Parliament yet, but this is one of the issues which, I think, one hon. Member from the other side, hon. Mrs Labelle, raised. We keep telling the Police they should tell the parents or the families of the victims what is happening to the Court case. They keep in the complete dark, that is why we put in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, but I will see to it.

L'AMICALE DE PORT LOUIS- ARSON CASE – INQUIRY

(No. B/778) **Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the case of arson of the gaming house, known as l'Amicale de Port Louis, in May 1999, which caused the death of several persons, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a new police inquiry is being carried out thereinto and, if not, why not.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that no new Police enquiry is being carried out into the case of arson of the gaming house known as l'Amicale de Port Louis.

I am further informed that on 22 July 2013, one Mr M. M. made a declaration at the Central CID and requested the opening of an enquiry into the case. The documents related to the case produced by Mr M. M. are being looked at by the Police. After a thorough examination of the documents, the Police will be submitting the report to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice on the appropriate course of action.

On 03 August 2013 the Criminal Appeal Act was amended to provide for the review of the proceedings related to an acquittal or a conviction, and the retrial of a person who has been acquitted or convicted of an offence, in specified circumstances should fresh and compelling evidence come to light.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I always said that one innocent person in prison is one too many. It is now open to a convicted person to make an application for review and retrial before the Court of Criminal Appeal, or to make an application to the Human Rights Division of the National Human Rights Commission which may refer the matter to the Court of Criminal Appeal. Where the Court is satisfied that there is fresh and compelling evidence in relation to an offence, it can quash the conviction and make an order for retrial.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister just mentioned the Human Rights Division. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the Vice-Chairperson and the members of that Division who have to be appointed upon his advice under the law have not been appointed yet

and, if so, when would the hon. Prime Minister decide to appoint the missing members so that the Division can operate?

The Prime Minister: We had amended the law, as you know, because we are putting different Divisions under the umbrella of the National Human Rights Chairperson. We wanted to wait until all these new laws have been through ...

(Interruptions)

No, because we have new changes which we are bringing. There are some people who are not agreeable to working with other people, but I can tell you it is in the pipeline. I would think very shortly, it would be filled.

Mr Uteem: According to the new law, we need to have fresh and compelling evidence to ask for a new trial. Will the hon. Prime Minister agree that now there is a declaration before the Commissioner of Police, they should start an enquiry to find out these new fresh and compelling evidences that can then be brought before the Human Rights Division?

The Prime Minister: But again, as I said, this will have to go through the process. I think it is a good thing that there is a process. That is what they are doing and they will be submitting their report to the DPP.

DRIVING LICENCE - PENALTY POINTS SYSTEM

(No. B/779) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Penalty Points System, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to how same is to be implemented in respect of the drivers who are not in possession of a Mauritian driving licence.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in accordance with Section 40 (3) of the Road Traffic Act 1962 a person who is the holder of a valid international driving permit or any driving licence or permit issued outside Mauritius is permitted to drive in Mauritius.

The penalty points system in accordance with the Road Traffic Act is applicable only to holders of Mauritian driving licence, and there is no express statutory provision in the Act in relation to a person holding an international driving licence or permit.

However, it is envisaged that holders of driving licences issued abroad by a foreign country and valid in Mauritius will be reported with a view to proceedings being taken against them before a Court in respect of the road traffic offences committed by them as is in the case of some other countries.

We are also looking at the whole gamut of complaints that we had about people trying to evade paying the penalty – getting the points and paying at least the fees. So, all this is being looked into.

Dr. S. Boolell: Being given, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there are Mauritians using Mauritian driving licences in Europe to avoid the Penalty Points System and in Mauritius using returning residents, visiting traffickers, Columbian guests and everything they are all using foreign licences in Mauritius so as to avoid the Penalty Points System. Has the hon. Prime Minister been informed whether the Police have a list of every single driver in this country, anybody coming in whether they submit the information concerning their driving licence?

The Prime Minister: I believe it will create a lot of administrative problems that is why it is not - I am sure, you've driven outside Mauritius, I don't think you went and said: I have a Mauritian driving licence or whatever. I don't think this is the practice in other countries, but what we are doing is we are relooking at this. I will give you an example. In Mauritius, at the moment, somebody comes from a country abroad can drive on that licence for three years. I think we should change this to one year, as it is in some other countries. After one year, they have to decide whether they want to get a Mauritian licence or they cannot drive otherwise in Mauritius. These are the kind of things we are looking at.

Dr. S. Boolell: Being given that there is an equality before the law concerning the Mauritian driver and the returning resident or visitor, being given that the road traffic accidents have not decreased statistically in the past year and also being given that the Penalty Points System carries a double fine, that of the points and that of the fine, would the hon. Prime Minister kindly revisit the Penalty Points System and show some solidarity towards Mauritian drivers?

The Prime Minister: When you speak of solidarity with Mauritian drivers, don't forget I am also a driver in Mauritius. But this happens in other countries as well, the same problem happens in other countries. The people who drive with an international licence cannot be traced or they do not pay the fine, but we are looking at cooperation between some countries and also changing things here. If a tourist comes here on an international driving licence, hires a car, drives for one week and then returns the car, by the time the whole procedure is done, he has already gone and that is a factor of life.

**MR J. M. H. – ALLEGEDLY ACCOMPANIED BY *TUEURS A GAGE* –
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

(No. B/783) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third 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 one Mr J. M. H., he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if he was in Mauritius, in April 2013, allegedly accompanied by his *tueurs à gage*, and if so, indicate if international cooperation was sought and obtained in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL IDENTITY CARD PROJECT - CONSULTATIONS

(No. B/784) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third 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 new Mauritius National Identity Card Project, he will state if he will consider the freezing thereof, pending the holding of consultations with all the stakeholders and the reaching of a consensus in relation thereto.

(Withdrawn)

CWA – WATER TANK VEHICLE – SWIMMING POOL

(No. B/785) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether he will state if he has received a letter on Tuesday 18 August 2013 informing him that the water tank vehicle bearing number 6311 DC 07 of the Central Water Authority has recently filled a swimming pool found in a residence, situated at Bethanie Lane, Balfour and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Time is up! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee!

NATIONAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR COUNCIL – CHAIRPERSON

(No. B/787) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the National Women Entrepreneur Council, she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the –

- (a) working experience of Mrs V. A. A., Chairperson thereof, and
- (b) number of women entrepreneurs who have made use of the incubators found at Phoenix and Triolet respectively, since July 2011 to date.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that Mrs V. A. A has more than 15 years of working experience at national and international levels within the field of sales and marketing. She is also an entrepreneur.

Her Curriculum Vitae is being tabled.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that 12 and 10 women entrepreneurs have made use of the incubators at Phoenix and Triolet respectively, since July 2011 to date.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say whether these incubators were set up to assist new women entrepreneurs to start their business and, if so, why has she changed the criteria for taking women who had businesses for more than three years?

Mrs Martin: First of all, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me correct a misconception. I do not change criteria at the level of the National Women Entrepreneurs Council, but the Board does. In fact, the hon. Member is right. At the beginning, the purpose of incubators was designated to house budding women entrepreneurs, the ones who start up, but since I have been informed that there has not been that good a response and that is the reason why the Board has decided to change the different criteria as regards the eligibility so that more women may benefit from this facility.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I understand then that these incubators are a total failure? The hon. Minister has just said that there are only 10 women in Phoenix, 12 in Triolet and that even if these incubators are *totalemment en panne*, no full-time employee has been recruited to devise and implement new policies for women entrepreneurs and, up to now only an assistant secretary who is based in Port Louis and doing most of the time the administrative duties of the women entrepreneurs is responsible for the management of these incubators.

Mrs Martin: I would not agree with the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir, because in fact, the capacity of the different incubators in Triolet and Phoenix varies. I am informed that there are 14 business incubators at Phoenix and 15 at Triolet. As regards the question that I have answered, there are 12 and 10 women entrepreneurs who have made use of those incubators, both at Triolet and Phoenix since July 2011 to date. However, I must also point out that the women entrepreneurs use these incubators for a period of time which can vary between one to one and a half years.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The hon. Minister has just said that the Chairperson has about 15 years of experience in the business. She has been appointed some eight or nine months back. Can the hon. Minister say whether she has come up with new ideas for women entrepreneurs and, if so, will she give an indication to the House of these new ideas?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that since the new Chairperson has been appointed, the main thing that she has done has been to relook into the activities of the National Women Entrepreneur Council. As regards to that, one of the measures which she has put in place

with the support of the Board members is a programme called Women Talk Business which is a programme whereby the Business Development Officers organise in several areas a comprehensive programme to regroup at least a hundred women at a time to inform them of the different activities of the National Women Entrepreneur Council in order to be able to enlist more women in the entrepreneur business.

As a result, the number of women entrepreneurs has increased from, I think – I am speaking from memory, so the hon. Member must bear with me – some 3,500 women to more than 4,000 today.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can I understand from the Minister then that there is no strategic plan as yet for women entrepreneurs?

Mrs Martin: On the contrary, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a defined strategy for women entrepreneurs and next year we are going to go full force into those strategies. One of them is what is called the Social Entrepreneurship whereby we are trying to enlist the support of renowned women entrepreneurs at the local level to be able to mentor and support other women entrepreneurs so that they will be trained in different batches as well as be able to diversify and enhance their skills.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Yes, a last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Minister keeps postponing, now she is saying next year and as yet, I do not think we have seen any strategic plan. If there is, will she lay one on the Table of the Assembly?

Mrs Martin: I do not have one with me, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I can certainly ask the Board to provide one. But, I must also again correct a misconception of the hon. Member because this year, aside from the Women Talk Business Forum that has been organised, there have been more fairs than last year which have been organised and which give the women entrepreneurs outlets in order to make their products known, sell and market their goods. As well there have been different training sessions in various fields whereby many women entrepreneurs have benefited.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee!

NATReSA – ACTION PLAN

(No. B/788) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the NATReSA, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if -

- (a) a restructuring thereof is being envisaged, and
- (b) an action plan has been worked out for the substance abusers.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in August 2011 that is, when I assumed office, on taking cognizance of the situation at NATReSA, I set up a Committee to look into the restructuring of the Organisation so as to enable it to provide an effective service for the treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers in accordance with its objectives under the NATReSA Act.

I am informed that the restructuring exercise has started and is ongoing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the reply is in the affirmative. In fact, a Strategic Plan for the prevention of substance abuse, treatment and rehabilitation of substance abusers in Mauritius for the period 2014-2016 has been prepared jointly by my Ministry, the NATReSA and other stakeholders/NGOs.

The Plan which aims at reducing and enhancing accessibility to drug related treatment and rehabilitation comprises five Strategic Objectives targeting the following –

- (a) reinforcing the institution and legal framework of NATReSA and effectively respond to the challenge of licit and illicit drug consumption in Mauritius;
- (b) strengthening of prevention campaigns to address the issue of substance abuse for different sectors of the population;
- (c) adopting a holistic approach for treatment, rehabilitation and psychosocial management of drug users, including methadone beneficiaries;
- (d) developing a research centre and strengthening networking at national and international level, and
- (e) setting up of a sound and effective Monitoring and Evaluation system to improve data collection for ongoing evaluation of programmes and interventions.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that during my visit to Geneva in May this year to attend the World Health Assembly, I had a meeting with Dr. Vladimir Poznyack, WHO Coordinator of the Management of Substance Abuse at the World Health Organisation to discuss the issue of substance abuse in Mauritius. The World Health Organisation has agreed to provide technical support for the setting up of a comprehensive Substance Abuse Unit in Mauritius. Subsequently, the Strategic Plan of NATReSA regarding substance abuse will be updated.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The Minister has just said that a restructuring exercise has started. Can he say exactly when? Because in a situation where the number of drug addicts is increasing and the presence of field staff is badly required, is he aware that out of a total number of 26 members of personnel of NATReSA, 15 posts are vacant?

Mr Bundhoo: Because I am fully aware of it, that is why when I assumed office....

(Interruptions)

I ordered for an audit of the institution. Can I also assure the hon. Member I have already said to her, it is ongoing and we will continue with the restructuring.

Mr Jhugroo: Since the introduction of the Methadone therapy, can the hon. Minister inform the House how many drug addicts have been cured?

Mr Bundhoo: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, lots of the drug addicts who are on Methadone are now leading a normal life. On top of that, using Methadone substitution has helped Mauritius tremendously with regard to reducing the number of people who are positively identified with HIV Aids and that was the main objective. Furthermore, that is why we have a strategic objective to continue the implementation of the policy, as the hon. Member rightly said, in order to get them out of drug and the dependency of even Methadone ultimately.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister say that as soon as he became Minister of Health he appointed a Committee to look at the restructuring of NATReSA. Later on he told us that the restructuring has already started and a bit later again he said that he had ordered an audit of NATReSA. Can I know from him: who chaired that Committee for the restructuring? Who were the Members? Whether a report was produced? And, if yes, whether it will be tabled? And since

he ordered an audit, whether an audit report has been prepared and received and, if yes, whether that second report will be laid in the Assembly?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact it is Mrs Allagapen, the Permanent Assistant Secretary of my Ministry who chaired the restructuring of NATReSA and I am pleased to submit a copy of this very efficient report prepared by this very efficient lady.

Mr Bhagwan: Since the hon. Minister has made mention of Methadone, can he, at least, give us a brief because the problem is very urgent about the moving of the Methadone Centre from Brown Sequard to another place in Beau Bassin. Can we have the latest information?

Mr Bundhoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I had a few conversations previously with the hon. Member who has showed great concern and I can assure him that I have already spoken with hon. Mrs Bappoo and she is agreeable to release this building which is under her control and refurbishment will be done in order to shift where it is at the moment to the new location as the hon. Member has very humbly suggested and agreed.

Mr Bhagwan: When?

Mr Bundhoo: Next year.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister consider introducing a new drug of substitution as opposed to Methadone and Subutex bought illegally or will we have to wait for a national drug policy to come out before he does that?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that this suggestion has come forward a few times but there are, I would say, contradictory observations with regard to other substances other than Methadone. We have to look at it carefully before we come up with another substitution other than Methadone.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Minister has just said that for those who are on Methadone - according to him - there seems to be some progress. May we be communicated with statistics with the number of people who are in terms of time frame and those who are, in fact, getting out of being on drugs?

Mr Bundhoo: I have to thank hon. Jugnauth for putting this question. In fact, on the pre-budgetary discussions with hon. Minister Duval, he asked me the same questions. In fact, he is coming in Budget proposal with one of the major proposals with regard to rehabilitation of

those who are on Methadone. I will try to make a collection of these data in the different centres and lay on the Table of Assembly as soon as possible a documentation with regard to those who have successfully got out of the Methadone therapy. But, nonetheless, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must inform the House that everywhere in the world the rate of success of getting out of Methadone completely has been very, very slow, even developed countries like Switzerland.

Mr Jugnauth: Now that the hon. Minister is going to collect the figures from different centres, may I know on what he is basing himself to say that there is progress?

Mr Bundhoo: From the information that I gathered on the field and from the information given to me from NATReSA.

Mr Jhugroo: Can we know from the hon. Minister whether there is a proper follow-up regarding those people who are under treatment of Methadone and whether they have got a *carnet de santé*?

Mr Bundhoo: This is part of the new strategic formulated by NATReSa and the Ministry.

Mrs Labelle: The hon. Minister has been talking about the success of Methadone. Has he considered reviewing the way Methadone is being distributed? Mr Speaker, Sir, I put this question because I often witnessed how Methadone is being distributed. I can say that these people do not receive any psychological support and they are not even being said a '*bonjour*'. They are just being given this Methadone as you give something to a dog. I have been watching it every day because it is in the precincts of Rose Hill, next to where I live and I usually go there at that time to look at the way it is being distributed and I am very touched because these people are not receiving any support.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we have to put, as we say in French, '*le point sur le i.*' When the Methadone distribution was introduced in Mauritius under the Prime Minister's Office and under the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Ramgoolam, it was done on a specific purpose, because we were having at that time an increase in the number of people who were on needle drugs and were transferring the HIV from one to the other. So, the very purpose of introducing the Methadone substitution therapy was to reduce what is termed as a concentric effect with regard to HIV. That we have achieved successfully and nobody is going to dispute that.

But, the second stage where I am totally in agreement with hon. Mrs Labelle - in fact, hon. Uteem, hon. Hossen, hon. Mrs Bappoo and some other Members who have put the question to me - that it is time now that we restructure the way and the manner in which the Methadone is distributed and more particularly with regard to rehabilitation of those who are already on the Methadone substitution therapy.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir the hon. Minister just said that soon as he assumed office he had set up a committee. I wish to draw attention *que cela fait deux ans déjà* and after two years, out of a staff of 26, there are 15 posts which are still vacant. The second point is, is the hon. Minister aware and can he explain why in the 2012 Budget - we are nearing the end of the financial year - an amount of Rs21 m. was earmarked for NATReSA and, up to now, the Rs21 m. is still with the Ministry and not a single cent has been spent to fight drug abuse?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me explain to the hon. Member why it took so much time. When she assumed office, she appointed ...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I want some order! Please, order! Allow the hon. Minister to answer!

Mr Bundhoo: When the hon. Member assumed office, she appointed a committee which was being chaired by the then Ag. PS, Mr Dabideen. The committee submitted its report – the supposed report – but it was never agreed upon by the NATReSA. In March 2011, almost a year and three months after she has assumed office, NATReSA worked out a five year Draft Strategic Plan 2011/2015 and the Board did not approve same, and she was Minister of Health at that time!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say silence!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: What the hon. Minister has just said is all to my credit because when I was there - and he just said that I have set up the objectives - I have worked out the re-

structure. There was a dispute between the General Manager and the Chairman, the latter is still there *et qui mettait déjà des bâtons dans la roue...*

(Interruptions)

He has just explained why the 2011/2015 ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I am on my feet! Hon. Member, I have allowed you to explain and you should have done so very briefly because this is Question time.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the only thing that goes to the credit of the hon. Member is the sale of the Medpoint Clinic.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Hanoomanjee: I take objection. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not agree because the DPP has ruled out. Is the hon. Minister saying that he does not agree with what the DPP has said? Let him say!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I think this is a proper time to break. But, before doing so...

(Interruptions)

Mrs Hanoomanjee: He has to withdraw!

Mr Speaker: Please, I want some silence. The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/796, B/797, B/798, B/799, B/825, B/826 and B/827 have been withdrawn. So, this is a proper time to break. We will resume in one and a half hours.

(Interruptions)

Silence!

At 1.05 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.37 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Before I proceed with this question, I would like to declare my interest in the contents of this question as one of the bidders has lodged a case against me in the Supreme Court. Mr Speaker, Sir, having said that, PQ No. B/789.

SPEED CAMERAS - SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION

(No. B/789) 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, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Procurement Board -

- (a) copy of the -
 - (i) Joint Venture Partner Information Form signed between Proguard Ltd. and Truvelo Manufacturers (Pty) Ltd., together with the financial statements thereof for the past three years, prior to the award, and
 - (ii) summary of the bid evaluation report, and table same, and
- (b) information as to the reasons why TMT Services & Supplies (Pty) Ltd., South Africa, was eliminated.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the launching of the bids, bid evaluation and approval of the award of the contract were done by the Central Procurement Board which is a body corporate separate and distinct from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

I am informed that the exercise has been undertaken on the basis of a fair, transparent and accountable process, in strict accordance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act 2006.

Insofar as the documents being sought after by the hon. Member are concerned, I wish to inform the House that the Public Procurement Act contains specific “non-disclosure” provisions to protect confidential or proprietary commercial information which otherwise, may cause undue prejudice to parties concerned. Nonetheless, I wish to reiterate that the whole procurement exercise was conducted by the Central Procurement Board, which is the authoritative body for matters pertaining to public procurement of goods, works and services.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give a reply to part (b), please?

Mr Speaker: Sorry, I could not hear!

Dr. Sorefan: Part (b) has not been answered.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as to the reasons why, I have received a letter from the Central Procurement Board, an answer where it has mentioned –

“I am directed to inform you that bids have been evaluated and the Central Procurement Board has approved the award of contract for procurement of automatic speed enforcement cameras to Proguard Ltd for the correct sum of Rs149,705,314 exclusive of VAT.

Please note that the validity of the bids will expire on 05 October 2012. You are requested to proceed in accordance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act 2006 and to revert to this Office after the expiry of the relevant period from notification or earlier in case of challenge. A copy of the notification letter should be forwarded to this Office.”

That is all I have received from the Central Procurement Board.

Mr Speaker: You have a question!

Mr Jugnauth: Since the monitoring of the speed cameras has been reassigned to the Police, can the hon. Minister say whether the contract value has been or is intended to be reviewed?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I had already announced to the House earlier that a Committee was set up in my Ministry which is chaired by the PAS of my Ministry and they have reviewed it, but if the hon. Member will come with a substantive question, I will give the exact reply as to how much has been effected.

NATIONAL HERITAGE TRUST FUND – DIRECTOR
- DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

(No. B/790) **Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** 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 from the Trust Fund, information as to if the Board thereof has taken any decision with regard to the recommendation of the Director of Public Prosecutions that disciplinary proceedings be initiated in relation to the allegations which have been levelled against her.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ B/654, I mentioned that the National Heritage Fund (NHF) Board was consulting its Legal Adviser.

I am now informed that the NHF has obtained the advice of its Legal Adviser to the effect that the Director be given the opportunity to provide explanation in relation to the allegations made, which opportunity should have been given but was not in the first instance.

I am further informed that the Board will take action as appropriate.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that this is a case of embezzlement of public fund, would the hon. Minister refer this case to the Central CID and, if not, the reason thereof?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is for the Board to take any decision regarding this case and as we are all aware, this case has gone through ICAC, the CID and every parties concerned. The DPP gave his advice. Now, we have got the final advice and the Board will definitely take the action deemed necessary.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister what action has been taken by the National Heritage Trust Fund Board to recover the *per diem* paid which amounts to 3,896 Pound Sterling, the cost of the course which amounts to 2,925 Pound Sterling and the cost of the air ticket for a course which the lady has never attended in the University of Birmingham in England?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a lot of confusion regarding the *per diem* and the figures that are being mentioned. I understand that the lady made it very clear publicly, through a programme on radio, how the expenses were incurred and how she vehemently denied so many of those allegations that were levelled against her. We have proceeded for a long time

through this case. Now, the case is with the Board, the Board will decide what action is deemed necessary.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is putting a lot of emphasis that the case is with the Board now. It is not now. Since his reply in April, the same answer was given and the hon. Minister also mentioned that the case was referred to the Police. May I ask the hon. Minister which case the Police was instructed to investigate? Is it the case just mentioned by hon. Jhugroo? Is it the case of 3,420 Pound Sterling paid for a course in Delhi which was cancelled prior to the date of departure of the lady? Is it the case of Rs100,000 taken under a project as coordinator and supervisory fees when it was not budgeted? Is it, Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to Rs35,000 taken to pay informers in Rodrigues but only Rs4,000 was paid? Which case?

Mr Speaker: Sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, she is putting too many questions at the same time.

Mrs Labelle: No, because I am just wondering which case. Yes, of course, I am not going to mention all these cases because there are a dozen of them, but has the hon. Minister tried to seek information which case the Police investigated into?

Mr Speaker: That is another question again.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I indicated in my earlier replies that everything pertaining to the supposedly malpractices concerning the lady were submitted to the Police. Everything, which means all the cases have been considered.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the Board has paid a *per diem* of about 3,400 Pound Sterling to that lady to attend a course which was cancelled?

Mr Choonee: I replied earlier that we have a lot of confusion regarding the *per diem* paid. Actually, she mentioned and the Board has taken note of that, it was through the approval of the Board, of course, that she did travel. And the confusion is that there are two courses she has been mentioning, one course is to attend to a workshop and the other one is a course for distance learning.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister confirm about the confusion? Being given that we are dealing with public money and we have got a Board, I think that the Board can give the exact figures to the hon. Minister so as not to be in a confusion in the National Assembly.

Mr Choonee: The confusion is not with me or with the Assembly, the confusion is with the perception that some hon. Members have in the Opposition.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask from the hon. Minister whether he is confirming that there are no cases against the lady, absolutely no cases after Police investigation?

Mr Choonee: No. I have never confirmed this. I have never said this. It is for the Board to decide now what are...

(Interruptions)

Following the legal advice, the Board takes the responsibility.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House and the country that there are attempts to shield that person because of her political connections? Everybody knows in Mauritius, only the hon. Member. Even the hon. Member is given directives to protect that lady.

(Interruptions)

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, no comment!

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, when I replied to the Parliamentary Question B/654 earlier, I had a similar supplementary question from the same hon. Member and he again mention about shielding. However, let me put it clear that my reply has always been that there is no shielding, there is nothing like that that will happen. Nobody is beyond the law.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

I do not want cross talking, please. Stop it!

(Interruptions)

I say stop it!

Mr Jhugroo: Being a responsible Minister, will he ask the Board to refer this case to the Central CID?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I am not empowered as Minister. It is for the Board to decide.

Mr Speaker: Okay. Hon. Mrs Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is referring to perception by Members. We are referring to the documents published by the Director of Audit and which report was asked by his Ministry. It is in these documents that we are taking the information and it is not a question of confusion. May I ask the hon. Minister whether the Board is still under the Chairmanship of Mr Fokeer to whom Rs90,000 were paid as supervision fees under the ICH project while no supervision fee was budgeted and no evidence of the Board approval could be traced out by the auditors? Is it the same person who has been chairing the Board since the time this case is being on?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not the same person chairing the Board.

Mr Jugnauth: If, as the hon. Minister is saying no one is being shielded, is he willing to table a copy of the legal advice that was received?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is confidential.

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Minister aware that there is a very damning internal audit report against that lady and is he prepared to table a copy of that report in the National Assembly?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member knows about all that he should be having it. I don't have it.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Jhugroo!

SCHOOL BUSES – ALLOCATION

(No. B/791) **Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land

Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the school buses, he will state the actions taken, if any, to review the allocation thereof, in the light of the problems being encountered by the school children to attend and come back from school, taking into consideration the security aspect and the number of school children.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the present student population travelling by bus is approximately 153,300 and includes some 14,100 pupils from primary schools, 113,525 students from secondary and pre-vocational institutions and 25,670 students from post secondary and tertiary institutions.

1,020 dedicated school trips, i.e., 433 in the morning and 587 in the afternoon as compared with 991 in 2012 are performed daily by stage carriage buses for the conveyance of students throughout the island. Apart from these dedicated buses, many students also travel by regular buses. I am tabling a breakdown of the dedicated school services by bus operators for 2012 and 2013.

Until recently, school buses, 4 students were allowed to occupy a seat for 3 and 3 students were allowed to sit on a seat for 2. Accordingly, a 60-65 seater bus was authorised to carry between 85 and 90 students, that is, some 25 students in excess.

Following complaints received regarding overcrowded buses and transport problems encountered by students, Government decided to review the allocation of school buses, taking into consideration the security and the increase in the number of students. Thus, the carrying capacity of school buses and the maximum number of students a school bus is now allowed to carry has been brought down to 75 as from 31 May 2013. This decision has inevitably resulted into a demand for more school buses. In this context, the National Transport Authority has almost completed procedure for the granting of additional licences to existing bus companies and co-operatives, as a matter of priority.

It is noteworthy that bus operators are reluctant to provide any additional dedicated school services, especially when such services require buses to run outside their normal itinerary. They claim that additional compensation should be paid for any new school service. Nevertheless, additional services have been provided in 2013 to several institutions.

Mr Speaker Sir, the NTA is presently conducting an island wide survey to gauge the situation and to license additional buses along routes where the demand is felt. The transport situation will be closely monitored and necessary adjustments made so that no hardship is caused to students. Negotiations are also being held between the NTA and the bus operators to establish the need or otherwise for additional dedicated school services in 2014.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House how many school van or buses - as you may call it – have been registered with the NTA up-to-date and the number of school children who travelled by these school vans or buses on a daily basis?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the question does not relate to school vans. I would request the hon. Member to come with a question that regards vans, that is, vans under contract which are entitled to carry the school students. We have got different regulations that regulate those types of vans. Here, the question is exactly on the school, that is, dedicated buses and the buses which are carrying students throughout the day.

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Obeegadoo!

Mr Obeegadoo: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister just told us that the maximum capacity of buses had been reduced to 75. Is that the equivalent of the normal capacity for the general public or is it still more? Now, if it is still more, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister tell us from a safety perspective how can it be justified that a bus which has a normal capacity of x should carry more students?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have got a problem, being given that the school children are travelling in those buses. For the average public, it is around 65 plus 4 standing, it comes to 69 and for the students, it is about 75. We have already revised it. I can assure the hon. Member that we will try to bring it down as soon as buses are made available because we are trying to make all types of efforts to see to it that additional buses are provided as from January.

Mr Jhugroo: Just a point of clarification from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister...

Mr Speaker: Put your question, no clarification, please!

Mr Jhugroo: The school vans, according to NTA, are called school bus. For this reason, I wanted to ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, being given that free transport is being provided to

all school children of this country, can he confirm whether the school children who travel by these small school buses do benefit from this scheme?

Mr Bachoo: I maintain that we have got different regulations for school vans and whatever money is provided by Government passes to the buses. We use the word exact 'buses'. We are not paying vans or taxis for that.

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I heard the hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioning that he is aware that currently school buses are taking on more students than they are legally entitled to. Being given that in the case of the Sorèze accident, the conductor is being prosecuted for having admitted people, in a standing position, more than what was allowed. Doesn't the hon. Vice-Prime Minister find it shocking that despite the fact that he personally knows that this is being practised in school buses, he takes no action to prevent school buses from carrying more students than they are entitled to?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have never said 'illegal'. I have said we have brought it down. According to the regulations, the number of students that could have been carried goes up to 85 to 90, but we have administratively brought it down from 85 and 90 to 75 and when buses are made available, we can still go down. Legally they can carry up to 85, but we are carrying only 75 students and that too I can give assurance to the House that we are trying to do our best to bring it down because the number of students who are travelling and the amount of buses which are available makes the whole difference. This is the problem. That is why I have mentioned that we have reduced the number of students, though legally they could have gone up to 85 to 90, we have come down to 75 and we are still trying to find the possibility to bring it to 70.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister what type of insurance that NTA is engaged with insurance company, whether the insurance company is agreeable for a bus of 60 to 65 seats to carry about 75 seats?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, NTA is not responsible for insurance companies. Buses belong to different bus companies and cooperatives and all of them having properly insured to

carry 85 to 90 students, but we are authorising them to carry only 75 students. So, they are properly insured; there is no doubt about it.

Mr Bodha: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister from the figures he has given, I think, there are more than 500 buses are involved everyday; can we have an idea of the age of the buses and whether all those buses have a Fitness Certificate from the National Transport Authority?

Mr Bachoo: All buses, in fact, do have the certificate from the National Transport Authority and, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware that most of the buses are below 18 years. There were a few cases for CNT that there were buses which were above, but there were specific conditions according to the Ministry that they had to undergo fitness test and all. I don't have any problem in submitting to the House a copy of how many buses are there which are beyond 16 years of age and I can also say that we have already ordered 65 new buses which we are going to receive as from March. Once we receive those buses, it means the age can come down below 16 years.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister give an assurance to the House that as from now on school buses will carry more than 70 students as just mentioned by him and not packed like '*boîte sardine*'?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned 75. We have brought down 85, 90 to 75 and the buses will not be authorised to carry beyond 75. This is what I have mentioned.

Mr Bhagwan: May I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister how the NTA carries out inspections on the different routes which are being offered for school students to see that these instructions are being abided by the bus companies?

Mr Bachoo: There are about above 40 inspectors of NTA and they inspect throughout the country. They conduct regular checks and now being given that even the bus operators know that the penalty is very high, nobody wants to take the risk and, in fact, there has been a request from the part of the authorities that we have to increase the number of buses. That is why I have mentioned that we are trying to increase the number of licences by 32 to 40.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Obeegadoo!

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, some time back in answer to a PNQ from the hon. Leader of the Opposition, it transpired that buses that are too old to be plying normal routes are given this task of carrying students or buses which are otherwise unfit for service. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, today, in the House give a solemn guarantee that this is no longer the practice?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, all those buses have been removed completely. Those special dedicated school buses which NTC was utilising have already been removed.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Regarding security, can the hon. vice-Prime Minister inform the House under what condition the young schoolgirl fell from a school bus at Phoenix last week? Can we know the reasons thereof?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is difficult for me to say. If there had been an accident, I am not aware of the exact details.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Li Kwong Wing!

BUDGET 2013 – MEASURES - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. B/792) **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 2013, he will state the -

- (a) percentage of the measures announced in the last budget which have been implemented as at to date, and
- (b) latest estimated growth rate as compared to the budget forecast, indicating the causes of the shortfall, if any, and the impact thereof on the low income groups and small businesses.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, some 224 measures were announced in 2013 Budget to respond to the different challenges facing the country at the national as well as international level. As at date, 80% of the budget measures have already been implemented.

As far as the economy is concerned, the key priorities of Government have been to –

- (1) intensify the diversification of exports markets ;
- (2) find new sources of FDI, and
- (3) support emerging sectors of the economy.

This has become important so as to reduce our dependence on traditional markets and to limit risks arising from regional crises.

As regards part (b) of the question, the growth rate for 2012 has recently been uplifted to 3.4%.

For this year, a growth rate of 4% was originally estimated. The latest forecast from Statistics Mauritius is 3.2%.

This performance is mainly due to the slowdown in the world economy. In fact, the IMF now estimates that the world economy will grow by 2.9% this year, down from the 3.6% forecast at the time of the presentation of the 2013 Budget. The Euro Area, by far our main market, is now projected to be in recession in 2013 compared to a growth of 0.2% projected in October 2012.

Mauritius, like many exporting countries, has this year continued to face a crisis of demand for its goods and services.

In fact, our economy has held up well against the persistent global turbulence. The initiatives taken by this Government have contributed significantly at cushioning the negative impact of the crisis on growth and at improving the resilience of our economy. No less a person than Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the IMF, has commended Mauritius for showing, in her own words “remarkable resilience”.

In fact, we have been able to increase significantly the share of our exports towards new markets in Asia and Africa within a limited timeframe. Indeed, exports of goods to Africa rose by 21% over 2011, and exports to Asia have also similarly increased by 46%.

Moreover, tourist arrivals from China have risen this year by almost 100%, due mainly to the financial incentives given for direct flights by Air Mauritius and stronger marketing by the MTPA.

Similarly FDI inflows from China accounted for 14% of total inflows in 2012 as compared to only 0.7% in 2011.

These examples indicate clearly the success of our market diversification initiatives.

In fact, we have been creating jobs throughout the crisis. This year, we are expecting a net increase in employment of around 8,000 as compared to the initial projection of 7,000.

Had it not been for the higher increase in the labour force in recent years, we would have done much better in containing the rise in unemployment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our own assessment is that our policies in 2012 and 2013 have contributed around 0.5 to 1.0 percentage points to growth. The House will also note that many measures begin to bite in the medium and longer term.

In the same vein, thanks to the recent measures taken to reform our economy, Mauritius has now become the most competitive economy in Africa, according to the respected World Economic Forum.

As regards the implications of the lower growth on the low income group and small businesses, I would like to inform the House that the impact has been mitigated by the intensive social programmes and the support provided to SMEs through the last two budgets in particular.

In this respect, I am tabling a list of the measures announced and implemented in support of the poor as well as a list of the measures to support SMEs. I would just like to single out the Rs2.3 billion lent to 1,787 SMEs under the SME Financing Scheme, and the successful Rs200,000 grant for export promotion to some 460 SMEs, as well as the Rs750 conditional cash transfer per child, for poor children attending schools, which, as at July 2013, have benefitted some 6,240 children per month.

The Government is very proud of its record in helping small businesses and the poor.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned that the rate of growth that is estimated is below the original estimates. Can he inform us what was the greatest obstacle to achieving this growth? Is it because the four conditions that he mentioned in his Budget Speech, that is, increase in tourism, full implementation of budget measures, depreciation of the rupee and slow inflation? Are any of these four factors being met to achieve

estimated growth or, if not, what is the main obstacle to the achievement of that estimated growth?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no recollection of mentioning depreciation of the rupee as far as the objectives of last year's budget. Nevertheless, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is quite obvious that what Mauritius faces, like many other countries, Greece in particular, many other middle income countries are facing a crisis of demand. If you take demand for our tourism services, they are under stress in Europe. They are falling in Europe, but thanks God increasing elsewhere. If you take demand for textiles, Mr Speaker, Sir, same thing, we are facing a lot of demand problems in Europe and America, but we are able to sell to Africa and Asia. Even, Mr Speaker, Sir, our Call Centre Services are under stress, because there is a downturn in France in particular and this is causing pressure on demand for our Call Centre Services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if you talk to the guys in the fish industry, they will tell you that even for cans of processed fish, there have been difficulty to sell those because of the economic conditions on some markets. So, it is definitely, Mr Speaker, Sir, a crisis of demand where demand is suppressed, but, at the same time, we have been able to avoid the economic catastrophe and we are proud, Mr Speaker, Sir, to be achieving this year 3.2%. I think we might go to 3.3% thanks to the pickup in tourism, but we are very proud in these circumstances to have achieved that and this is recognised worldwide.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: With regard to the crisis of demand, can we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister what he has been doing to compensate for that slack in demand in the private sector by his stimulus measures through the National Residence Fund to boost growth?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Residence Fund is a subject in itself. It is there, it has supported employment throughout this difficult period but more than that, we have recently set up the land in foreign exchange, which has landed up to Rs800 m. at this stage, Mr Speaker, Sir, in a few months, mainly to the export processing sector.

As far as the crisis in demand is concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, here we come to the eventual overvaluation of the rupee. Had we allowed this to continue, Mr Speaker, Sir, which, at one point in time, was calculated at 15% by the IMF itself, then we could have been unnecessary dumped in demand in favour of other economies which have not had this overvaluation. This is the whole question.

Mr Speaker: Any more question?

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Yes, Mr Speaker Sir. With regard to the fall out of this drop in the growth rate, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House, the number of small and medium enterprises that had to close down during the year and if he can give us some figures about the liquidation of these SMEs and what is being done to smoothen the impact of that crisis on these SMEs?

Mr Duval: Firstly, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have growth. We have real growth. We don't have recession in Mauritius. Growth means more activities, a richer economy and we have real growth of 3.2 % or maybe 3.3%. This is real growth. So, we cannot talk about a crisis in Mauritius itself. There are issues here and there, we know, SMEs also have some issues, particularly in the shoe sector. We are aware of that, but generally speaking there has been growth and there has been an enormous amount done by this Government to support SMEs. I don't have figures to show whether there has been any fall. I would assume, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there has continually been an increase in the number of SMEs in Mauritius and that they will continue to prosper despite the economic conditions.

Mr Bérenger: One question. I just heard the hon. Minister say that the IMF had evaluated that our rupee was overvalued by 15% and from what I gathered he is happy that this is behind us. Can I know from figures available by how much the Mauritian rupee has gone down over the years since the last Budget?

Mr Duval: We have the figures Mr Speaker, Sir, but if you look at the actual rate of the Euro for instance. Now it is forty one something, it has fallen dramatically at the time, the IMF had – it's black on white in their report which is some time ago; about a year/a year and a half ago - reported on the value of the rupee. They also reported after the subsequent report that a lot of this had been corrected. Some of this had been corrected and, at the moment, Mr Speaker, Sir, we think that we can live with this slight overvaluation that exists. There has been during the year better congruence between monetary and fiscal policies, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Is the Minister ready to table copy of the report where it makes mention of all the debates about exchange rates and the overvaluation or undervaluation of the rupee?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, unless I am mistaken IMF reports are public information. They asked us for permission to publish; we gave them permission. You will find it on the website, but if you have an issue for sure, I'll give it to you.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Li Kwong Wing!

BUS FARES - INCREASE

(No. B/793) Mr H. 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 bus fares, he will state the reasons for the increase thereof, indicating if his Ministry has estimated the cost thereof on the –

- (a) budget;
- (b) private sector, and
- (c) financial situation of the National Transport Corporation and of the private bus operators.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to inform the House that, following a request from the various trade unions representing the different categories of employees of the bus industry and negotiations between the unions, the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations and my Ministry, Government agreed to a 19% increase in the basic wages of employees to be spread as follows:

- (a) 15% as from 01 August 2013;
- (b) 2% as from 01 August 2014, and
- (c) 2% as from 01 August 2015;

The 15% increase represents an additional cost of Rs69 m for National Transport Corporation and the four private bus companies namely: UBS, TBS, Rose Hill Transport and Mauritian Bus Transport for the period August to December 2013 and Rs95 m for the period January to July 2014; hence a total of Rs164 m annually. For individual operators, the amount will be Rs24 m. and Rs33 m. respectively. In order to recover the additional cost in their

operation, the bus operators have no other sources of revenue other than an increase in the tariff of bus fares.

Thus an increase of Rs2. in the bus fares across all categories of passengers was granted to enable the operators to mitigate the extent of the extra expenditure in the wage bill.

I am informed that this increase has yielded roughly 7% increase in revenue. However, in figure terms, the extra revenue accrued as a result of the increase hardly suffices to meet the increase in the wage bill. It has also been noted that whenever there is an increase in bus fares, there is a decrease in the number of passengers. This is the normal tendency and the number picks up eventually.

The additional cost to be disbursed by Government represents an additional Rs10 m. monthly in respect of the free travel scheme and an additional R3 m. for refund of bus fares to public officers.

It is too early to evaluate the impact of the increase in the tariff of bus fares on the revenue of the operators, but from information gathered, the 12% increase in bus fares has resulted in around 7% increase in revenue. The exact incidence of the increase in bus fares on the financial situation of NTC and other bus companies is currently being worked out.

I am tabling copies of scheduled bus fares and other documents together with the respective percentage increase.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Can the Minister inform the House whether this increase in bus fares had to be postponed at one stage? Although it was prescribed to be in effect on the 01 of August, it had to be postponed for two weeks to be implemented and can the Minister inform the House whether any financial study had been carried out on the need for that increase and also whether the accounts of the NTC had been tabled before that increase was decided.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there was no question of postponing the increase and, secondly, since long we know the NTC has been undergoing very tough times; not only the NTC but the other bus companies also. That is why I said I am going to table whatever information is made available to me that all those bus companies were passing through tough times and rough times. And if we had not taken the right decision at the right time, the situation would have been very bad for the bus companies.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, prior to the increase in bus fares, the hon. Minister would remember that the NTC took the decision to allow bus operators to run on certain routes. Can the hon. Minister tell this House what was the last revenue with regard to the NTC when this decision was taken?

Mr Bachoo: I don't have the figures in mind, but, in fact, the situation was not so good. As we have been able to repair many buses; we have injected too much money in the procurement of spare parts, now we have got about 425 buses which are running on the NTC lines and the other buses, which are being supplemented, are being removed from those lines.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister tell us how many private operators are still running along these NTC routes as at now?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there must be only a few. UBS has already backed out and Rose Hill transport had a few buses running on our lines and I don't think there are other buses also which are continuing.

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Minister tell us whether, excepting the NTC, there had been any request from other bus transport companies for an increase in bus fares, if yes, which ones?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, all the bus companies had been complaining since long not only the bus companies but even the buses which are under the cooperative societies. All of them had been complaining, had been sending letters and NTA had been monitoring the situation. They had been complaining all the time. I don't know what information the press got that they were not complaining. There were letters which were sent to us, representations were made and it was only as a result of that we had taken the decision.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister just mentioned that there have been complaints to the NTA. Is the Minister aware that the private bus operators publicly were against the increase and yet they were allocated the increase?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there had been one article in the paper, a statement made by one of the bus operators, but it was only one statement made in a corner, but, the following morning, the representatives of bus companies, all of them, claimed that, in fact, they needed the support and we have got all the information, figures available at the NTA that the bus companies needed support. We have to renew the fleet of buses and, at the same time, we have to improve

the services in the bus industry. It is already long overdue and therefore, we cannot keep on milking the cow without feeding the cow. Everything will get destroyed. We are bound to provide good buses according to international norms and this is what exactly we are trying to do.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the Minister has linked the vast increase to the increase in the wages whereas he is surely aware that there have been several bus fare increases since 2005 without there being any corresponding wage increase, and, on the other hand, the point made by hon. Sorefan just now, the bus owners have explained clearly that as long as there are illegal operators ready to take all the passengers that will not be able to afford a higher bus fare, the bus fare increase will not benefit them, but, on the contrary, may do harm.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as illegal operations are concerned, the hon. Member was himself Minister. He knows the difficulties that we get in controlling it and, however, this question of monitoring the illegal operators belongs to the Police. The Police have to look into it. I know there are plenty of illegal operations going on, but there was an article which appeared in the paper a few days ago that we have got over 2,000 contraventions which were established by the NTA and the Police against the illegal operators. Secondly, when there was an increase in the wages, if we had not increased the bus fares, the bus companies would not have been able to make their both ends meet. It is clear on that. I again insist that there was a demand since long for an increase in the bus fares.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, since, in fact, there has not been any official demand for increase in bus fare by any private operators which have all declared that they were operating profitably in the meantime, is not this bus fare increase causing an additional penalty on travellers because they are already subsidising the cost of free bus transport through a tax on petroleum and now they are having to pay a higher bus fare for no reason...

(Interruptions)

except to bail out the NTC?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just circulated a note. For example, the NTC, from January to June, there was a deficit of Rs12.6 m., UBS has Rs4.8 m., TBS Rs13.5 m., Rose Hill Transport Rs13.7 m. So, this is clear. The deficit was there. There was an article in the paper which appeared, it stated that, in fact, there was a surplus in the company, but they have been

repeatedly requesting for an increase in the tariff and that's why I have circulated the list of the amount of the deficit, the difficulties these people were encountering.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that bus owners have received an increase in bus fare, would the hon. Vice-Prime Minister tell us whether this will impact on the amount of subsidy which the Government gives to bus operators for free transport to students and people above 60?

Mr Bachoo: Of course, definitely there will be an increase. Not only that, there has been a request on the part of the bus companies that we have to increase the subsidy because the number of students and the travelling old people, pensioners and the handicapped, the percentage has already increased. We are working on that as well.

NEF – CONCRETE CUM CIS HOUSES SCHEME

(No. B/794) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Concrete Cum CIS Houses Scheme, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Empowerment Foundation, information as to the –

- (a) number of houses built, indicating the location thereof in each case since the implementation thereof, and
- (b) names of the suppliers from which the building materials thereof were purchased for 2011 and 2012 respectively, indicating in each case, the contract value thereof.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker Sir, I wish to inform the House that as part of my Ministry's strategy for empowering vulnerable families, a new Scheme, known as, the Concrete-Cum-CIS Scheme, was introduced in April 2011 by the National Empowerment Foundation under its Social Housing and Community Empowerment Programme.

This Scheme is targeted towards families whose household income does not exceed Rs6,200 a month (excluding social aid) and who own a plot of private or leased land or have obtained authorisation from their parents or grandparents for the construction of a start-up housing unit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed by the National Empowerment Foundation that a total of 298 Concrete Cum CIS housing units have been constructed since the start of the Scheme .

With your permission, I am tabling the number of housing units constructed on a districtwise basis.

I wish to inform the House that the project for the construction of CCIS housing units in 2011 and 2012 was undertaken in collaboration with CSR Companies in almost all cases.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that in line with the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the CSR companies, the latter contributes 55% of the cost of the project and the remaining 45% is funded by the Foundation.

However, as I have already stated in my previous interventions in the House, the responsibility for the selection of building contractors rests entirely with the CSR companies which have their own established rules and procurement procedures. The National Empowerment Foundation, on its part, has the responsibility of providing the list of prospective beneficiaries and for the disbursement of its financial contribution to the Companies.

I am informed that the Foundation contributed a total amount of Rs14,796,040.20 towards the cost of these housing units for the years 2011 and 2012.

I am further informed that National Empowerment Foundation has constructed only 9 housing units from its own funds without any contribution from the CSR Companies.

I am tabling the names of the suppliers from whom the building materials were purchased and in respect of these 9 housing units, the total amount paid to these suppliers.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister how these families were identified and whether those who were registered first had priority for this scheme?

Mr Dayal: What is the second part of your question?

Mrs Labelle: How these families were identified and whether those who were first on the database of NEF had priority to benefit from the scheme?

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, usually, we have field workers and case workers on the ground and, secondly, we have got officers on Wednesdays in the CAB office and then we have

a desk at the National Empowerment Foundation. Usually, it is demand driven and those who make the demand are considered after a need assessment is carried out.

Mrs Labelle: Must I take it, Mr Speaker, Sir, that those, who are on the database of NEF as vulnerable families, did not make request and it is only when field workers went there that we know that they need a house?

Mr Dayal: No, no, those who are in the database also.

Mrs Labelle: Is the hon. Minister aware of the number of families who were on the database, who have benefitted and since when they were on the database?

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned that 298 have already benefitted and there are 280 new beneficiaries whose contracts have already been allocated, will be benefitting.

Mrs Labelle: I fear I have not received an answer to my question. Mr Speaker, Sir, while going through the NEF Newsletters, I have seen different projects that have been implemented in different regions and - I am taking for this year - I have seen that out of 6 projects, 5 projects were CCIS, Concrete Cum CIS Houses and only one project at Roche Bois with CIS only. May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a particular reason why we still have a project with CIS?

Mr Dayal: We still have CIS projects, because these beneficiaries do not have land, they are landless, that's why.

HOSPITALS (REGIONAL) – INCINERATORS

(No. B/795) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the regional hospitals, he will state if the incinerators found thereat are in working conditions and, if not, indicate in each case –

- (a) the reasons therefor, and
- (b) since when.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that incinerators at three regional hospitals namely, Dr. A.G. Jeetoo, Flacq and Jawaharlal Nehru Hospitals are in working conditions, whereas, that of Victoria hospital is out of use as the chimney is under repairs and that of SSRN Hospital is presently also out of order.

I am informed that following an inspection of the incinerator at Victoria Hospital carried out on 24 June 2013 by the Mechanical Engineer of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, it was found that the upper sections of the chimney were heavily corroded and required replacement.

Following a tender exercise, a contract was awarded to Neetoo Industries on 20 August 2013. Works are expected to be completed by mid-November.

As regards the incinerator at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, the refractory cement of the door and the internal frame of the incinerator have disintegrated. The maintenance contractor inspected the incinerator on 10 October 2013 and submitted a report thereon on 14 October 2013. On 17 October 2013, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping was requested to submit the scope of works for the repairs of the incinerator. The report is expected shortly.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am informed that the incinerators at Victoria and SSRN Hospitals are out of use since 21 September 2013 and 08 October 2013 respectively. The clinical waste at SSRN Hospital is being incinerated at the Poudre d'Or Hospital, and that of Victoria Hospital is being incinerated at the J. Nehru Hospital and Brown Sequad Mental Health Care Centre.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have heard the hon. Minister stating that the incinerator at Victoria Hospital is not in working condition since September, because my information is that it's long that this incinerator regularly breaks down. So, I don't know whether the hon. Minister is aware that this incinerator regularly breaks down since two or three years.

Mr Bundhoo: In fact, the incinerator has had several breakdowns, but the last one since it has not been in operation was in September as I have said earlier.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that since the incinerator regularly breaks down and the last time was in September, the waste is being sent to BSH only once per week and it is just being packed there for the whole week?

Mr Bundhoo: The waste, in fact, is being sent to BSH regularly. I do agree that some of the waste is being packed there but all necessary measures have been taken for its incineration.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there have been complaints in the vicinity of the incinerators of, at least, two other regional hospitals concerning leakage of fumes into that area?

Mr Bundhoo: I must say one thing, several hon. Members of the House including hon. Uteem, hon. Hossen, hon. Mrs Labelle, hon. Ms Deerpalsing have made complaints and we have made a ...

(Interruptions)

I have to say one thing and I am going to be quite honest about this. Most of the incinerators have outlived their lives. This is why we have had a committee to review the whole system with regard to incineration of medical waste in the hospital. In this perspective, we have restructured the separation of the waste and reduced it by almost 25% to 30%.

On my last visit to Reunion Island, the technicians of the Ministry and other Engineers accompanied me to have a look of what is happening there. I must say that in Reunion Island they have a central one which is very effective. Then we set up a committee under the chairmanship of the Project Manager of Dr. Jeetoo Hospital with officers from the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Local Government and Outer Islands and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping. This Ministry has made a few recommendations following which I had a meeting with the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whereby he has agreed to allocate money to invite an international consultant to advise Mauritius on the fastest track in order to set up a central incineration or whatever methods with regard to incinerations of medical and health waste for Mauritius.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that the incinerator in Victoria Hospital is being repaired and in the meantime the waste is being sent elsewhere. Hon. Mrs Labelle is right that this incinerator is often out of order. But, there is also a problem when it works, as the hon. Minister said, that inhabitants in the vicinity are very much *incommodés* with the fumes and there have been several complaints. So, may I ask the hon. Minister that even when it is repaired - I do not know how it is going to be repaired but - it is repaired in such a way that the toxic fumes that are emanated from there do not affect good quality of air in the vicinity?

Mr Bundhoo: I can assure the hon. Member and the House at large that everything will be done to minimise the side effects and I pray that as soon as possible we are able to review the whole system for all the regional hospitals.

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

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether hospital toxic waste and syringes and other offending gas producing implements are disposed of in the hospital incinerators?

Mr Bundhoo: Some are being burnt, especially the syringes. This is why we are of the opinion that the Inter-Sectorial Committee has advised for an international consultant to be brought to Mauritius to look at the whole system. I must also say something, I do not know why but for some reasons we had incinerators at each and every regional hospital including the one at Poudre D'Or hospital. I think we have to review the whole thing. Maybe the solution is to do what Reunion Island is doing and that probably will address also the issue raised by hon. Dr. S. Boolell.

FOOD SECURITY FUND – PROJECTS

(No. B/796) **Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle)** asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney General whether, in regard to the Food Security Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of projects initiated and funded thereunder, since 2010 to date, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) amount of funds disbursed;
- (b) number of projects initiated in collaboration with the Small Planters Welfare Fund, and
- (c) present status thereof.

(Withdrawn)

NATIONAL TRANSPORT CORPORATION - LITIGATIONS

(No. B/797) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the National Transport Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of litigations to which the Corporation is a party, since 2005 to date, indicating in each case –

- (a) the number of *mise en demeure* that have been served thereon, and
- (b) where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

LAW PRACTITIONERS VOCATIONAL COURSES 2013 – ENROLMENT

(No. B/798) Mr P. Roopun (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney General whether, in regard to the Law Practitioners Vocational Courses for 2013, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council of Legal Education, information as to –

- (a) the number of students enrolled therefor;
- (b) the subjects taught, indicating in each case, the number of hours of courses, and
- (c) if the Council is in presence of any complaint in connection therewith.

(Withdrawn)

MITD – MRS Y. M. – RECRUITMENT

(No. B/799) Mr P. Roopun (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to Mrs Y. M., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Institute of Technology and Development, information as to if the Committee set up to inquire into the circumstances which led to her recruitment on the basis of a faked certificate while disregarding her previous conviction has completed the inquiry carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate the findings thereof.

(Withdrawn)

ARTS AND CULTURE - WHITE PAPER

(No. B/800) 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 if a committee has been set up to work thereon and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/424, I mentioned that I would seek public views on the proposed White Paper.

To ensure that inputs from artists and other related stakeholders are incorporated, it was proposed to have consultations in a one-day workshop where all stakeholders would freely express their views and proposals with a view to having a new orientation for the arts and culture sector.

In this respect, a wide publicity campaign was launched on 30 May and 19 June 2013 in newspapers and radios as well as through direct invitation to artists and associations registered in the different art forms for the workshop.

Various draft papers, such as –

- (i) Mauritius The First Artistic & Cultural Island City of the World;
- (ii) Culture & Creative Industries in Mauritius Vision 2025;
- (iii) Achievements of my Ministry for the period January 2010 to January 2013, and
- (iv) The draft UNESCO Report on Governance of the Cultural Sector was circulated to participants prior to the workshop.

The workshop which was held on Saturday 27 July 2013 at the Conservatoire National Francois Mitterrand was attended by some 250 artists and other related stakeholders.

Eight discussion panels were set as follows with a moderator emanating from specific fields –

- (a) Drama;
- (b) Literature/language;
- (c) Cinema;

- (d) Music;
- (e) Dance;
- (f) Fine arts;
- (g) Copyright, and
- (h) Creative industry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the end of the workshop, each panel submitted its recommendations and elected its representative to form part in a follow-up Committee which was held on Monday 12 August 2013 at my Ministry.

The recommendations of the various committees are presently being compiled and finalised into a White Paper for submission to Government.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether the cultural desk *Culture et Avenir* falling under the ambit of the hon. Prime Minister has had an interest in the drafting of the White Paper and has it been involved in the committee and, if not, why not?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, the *cellule Culture et Avenir* unit of the Prime Minister's Office has been involved and they were there for the workshop.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Can I know what representations were made?

Mr Choonee: I cannot give details of who gave what representation but, the whole of the work has been done in a very scientific manner and all stakeholders have been considered.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is on record in this House that ever since 2011, three years ago, the Minister has been announcing a White Paper to be made public in 2011 and for the public to comment on this Paper and eventually appropriate legislation brought. I would like to ask the Minister point blank, Mr Speaker, Sir, what is so special about that White Paper that three years later it has still not been produced? What is so secret or what has Cabinet found so objectionable in his proposal?

Mr Choonee: Mr Speaker, Sir, this matter has not reached Cabinet yet, but the interest shown by all stakeholders, as I said...

(Interruptions)

I mentioned that, at least, four drafts have been submitted. This is the interest being shown by artists and we have to respect them. They came to us, they wanted to give their views and as I said, Mauritius First Artistic and Cultural Island City of the World is already a White Paper, it is already a version. The second one, Culture and Creative Industries in Mauritius Vision 2025 is again a version, but they are all there. The participants have got it, it is on the website of the Ministry and everything is there.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Barbier!

Mr Barbier: One of the panel which the hon. Minister mentioned has been worked upon, it is the panel for copyright. Since the hon. Minister has promised that the new Copyright Bill will soon come before the Parliament - supposedly before the end of this year - may I know whether the findings of this panel have been taken into consideration to be introduced in the new Copyright Bill? When will this Copyright Bill finally come before the House? Before the end of this year?

Mr Choonee: All the findings of the Workshop have been taken into consideration and the Copyright Bill will be there soon. The Bill will be ready *avant l'année*. I am submitting the proposal to Cabinet first and we will have it before to Parliament.

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

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether he has presented the White Paper to the hon. Minister of Finance, to consider the funding of their own in the new Budget?

Mr Choonee: Well, I have not presented the White Paper to the hon. Minister of Finance, but we have had many consultations and all our requests are being considered.

Mr Bhagwan: According to my record, Mr Speaker, Sir, I asked that question in June 2012. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether this White Paper or whatever Paper he has been stating over the years, he has had again consultation with the Special Adviser from the Prime Minister's Office on culture, Mr Gordon Gentil, on that issue and whether he has received the green light of that particular section of the Prime Minister's Office to go ahead?

Mr Choonee: I just replied, Mr Speaker, Sir. They were party to the Workshop.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Mrs Radegonde-Haines! Will the hon. Minister be answering PQ B/806 together?

Mrs Bappoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

CHILD ALLOWANCE – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(No. B/801) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the Child Allowance of Rs 750 for families earning an income of less than Rs 6,200, she will state the –

- (a) other eligibility criteria therefor;
- (b) steps taken to identify the families eligible therefor, and
- (c) number of families;
 - (i) qualified therefor, regionwise, and
 - (ii) having been issued with a disallowance notice, if any, indicating the reasons therefor, in each case.

Mrs Bappoo: With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I will reply to P.Q. No. B/801 and P.Q. No. B/806 together.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that in reply to PQ B/72, I provided the relevant details of all the criteria and the different processes involved in the identification of the families eligible for the payment of the child allowance of Rs750. Accordingly, I shall refer the hon. Member to that reply.

But, with regard to the number of families who have qualified for child allowance the information is as follows -

- (a) Mauritius
3,206 households in respect of 4,612 children, and
- (b) Rodrigues
1,134 households in respect of 1,712 children.

that is, a total of 6,324 children have been found eligible for the scheme and the total amount paid as at 10 October 2013 is Rs20,025,000, that is, for period January to July 2013.

As regards the geographic distribution of the beneficiaries, with your permission, Mr Speaker Sir, I am tabling the required information in respect of 40 local offices around the island, including those of Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I informed the House in my PQ B/72, the priority set by my Ministry was to effect the first payment of the child allowance by the end of May 2013 and to ensure that the eligible families should not be impacted by any further hardship. On the other hand, in view of the fact that my Ministry was embarking in a completely new project, several teething problems had to be resolved simultaneously namely -

- (i) the determination of the appropriate software in consultation with State Informatics Ltd and this process is still on;
- (ii) the difficulty in obtaining records of attendance of the concerned children from -
 - (a) 648 Pre-primary Schools;
 - (b) 101 Prevocational schools;
 - (c) 291 Primary schools;
 - (d) 165 Secondary schools;
 - (e) 16 Special Needs School;
 - (f) 7 Tertiary institutions, and
 - (g) 19 Vocational schools.
- (iii) addressing issue of limited human resources at my Ministry including a declaration of industrial dispute by the Union and subsequent agreement reached in 26 June 2013 with regard to the provision of additional staff, and also
- (iv) visiting each eligible household with a view to confirming the information provided by the applicant as required for registration under the Social Register of Mauritius, that is, the SRM project.

I am, therefore, pleased, Mr Speaker, Sir, to inform the House that despite all these above mentioned problems, we kept our word and effected the first payment for the month, of January and February at the end of May.

My Ministry is now focusing on the disallowance notices and in this respect a first batch of 2,286 such notices have already been issued to the applicants whose salaries exceeded Rs6,200 as declared by the household, at the time of application. A second batch of disallowance notice will be issued shortly after further scrutiny of the remaining non eligible cases for the purposes of registration under the SRM programme. And finally, a third batch of disallowance notice will be issued after visiting individual households in order to confirm the information provided by the household at time of their registration.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that there is a list of names of applicants for the Child Allowance that has been collected on the last registration day and these applicants have not yet been visited or called in for registration, and if yes, what measures are being taken?

Mrs Bappoo: I have just explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, about the lengthy procedures about the various processes to define the eligibility of the families. This is on. I am still confident on the ongoing programme that has been set up for the verifying of the various questions that were put through the questionnaire, this will be done, and if the child is eligible for the allowance, of course, after the attendance confirmation from the Ministry of Education, the child will be paid the Rs750 allowance.

Ms Anquetil: Can the hon. Minister state if the submission of the attendance return by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and the Ministry of Tertiary Education is done correctly and in due time?

Mrs Bappoo: I have said at the very beginning that there have been problems at the level of the Ministry of Education in submitting the attendance lists. Problems have been more difficult in the pre-primary schools where there are many private ones and it is not easy to get the exact address and to verify the attendance, but it is on and I am sure that we are going to have the final lists from the Ministry of Education.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister talk about the disallowance notice and the reason she mentioned for sending this notice was because these families exceeded the Rs6,200 at the time of application. Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister telling us that there are no other eligibility criteria such as pocket of poverty index, type of

household, demographic and other characteristics of the members in determining those applicants who will be considered as eligible or not?

Mrs Bappoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is why I am referring to the previous PQ where all the eligibility processes were given. For example, the eligibility process which is the Proxy Means Test. It involves also the visiting of the families and, of course, the Proxy Means Test which takes into account the composition of the household, for example, the number of members in the family, the gender of head of the family, the age, the type of houses, the number of rooms. There are various issues that are being testified and examined because the PMT itself is used to assess the living standard of the household. It is not only the income. The Means Test is the income, but the Proxy Means Test is going to the family and it is more observable and we have to verify how that family is living. That is why there are these various variables which are being taken care of and also, for example, as was mentioned last time in the last PQ, the gender head of the household. This is also a very important issue.

Ms Anquetil: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the development of appropriate software for the processing of applications by the State Informatics Ltd. is completed?

Mrs Bappoo: I have just said that it was a big teething problem. We have done partly, but still it has not yet been completed and we have been informed by the State Informatics Division that it might be fully completed by the end of December. Actually, we are just trying to do everything on a semi-manual basis because we want to give the Rs750 to those children who are eligible.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the 2012 Household Survey, which has established revised thresholds as regards to poverty and absolute poverty in general, doesn't the hon. Minister find it urgent to review that ceiling of Rs6,200 that qualifies for the Child Allowance?

Mrs Bappoo: It is not a matter of my Ministry only. It is something that we are discussing with the Ministry of Finance. The Rs6,200 were mentioned in the last budget and that's why we have been working on that criteria. Now, to take in view the new statistics coming from the Statistic of Mauritius, this is an issue to be taken together with the Ministry of Finance.

Mr François: Being given the non-acceptance of many applicants benefitting from Social Aid, and Unemployment Hardship Relief Fund which is less than Rs6,200, will the hon. Minister state whether these beneficiaries can opt for this Child Allowance of Rs750 and why they have not benefit from this scheme?

Mrs Bappoo: They can all benefit. Those who are on Social Aid, they were all invited for the new scheme of Rs750, but it is for these families to decide. Many have responded, but many have preferred to stay on their Social Aid Allowance. So, the child, whether the family is on the Social Aid, will qualify for Child Allowance or even on the new scheme; either way the child is going to benefit the Child Allowance. But, it is for the family to choose. We have explained that they can move and be shifted to the new scheme, but many prefer to stay on the Social Aid.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Minister will agree that it is no coincidence that on this very first day of Parliament, two MPs from different sides of the House should have put this question. I am sure the hon. Minister will agree that this testifies to very dramatic situations on the ground in different Constituencies. For instance, in my Constituency, somebody in a NEF house at Dubreuil, with four children and in irregular employment, has not been able to benefit from this allowance although he applied months ago. So, if the hon. Minister agrees that there is a serious delay, will she see to it that quite apart from what she has just mentioned, now that these cases which need to be addressed immediately so that children can attend schools, for instance, be so addressed?

Mrs Bappoo: Yes that is what we are doing, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are so many difficulties from the time of registration, going through the eligibility processes and going finally to the Ministry of Education and get the final eligibility list of children to be paid. My concern is to see that children who are qualified and are eligible to that Rs750, the sooner the families and the children get their allowance and I'll be happy too, but there are problems at the same time also. As I have said, more than 2,000 families who are much over Rs6,200 and they come and apply. We have to go through these questionnaires, scrutinised everything to see whether they are eligible. If there is any specific case that any hon. Member wants to give me, he or she can do so and I will try to check, but my concern is that those who are eligible, he or she should get their Rs750 allowance.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a reply to PQ B/697, the hon. Minister of Social Integration gave us a figure of some 12,000 families earning less than Rs6,200. May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a working collaboration between the two Ministries since an exercise was done and families were identified? Have we used these data or part of these data to accelerate the procedure to reach these families?

Mrs Bappoo: Yes, I am concerned also, Mr Speaker, Sir, by the figures, statistics enrolled at the Ministry of Social Integration. But, at the time, we invited applications, whether these people are at the level of the Ministry of Social Integration or at any other Ministry, they have to abide to the registration policy and come at the Ministry of Social Security. There are forty local offices around the island to make the registration. It is from there that the different processes will start. They have to go through the registration process.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Minister talked about the forty Social Security Officers around our local social security offices. Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister in a position to inform the House that, in fact, the Social Security Officers are being compelled to work odd hours and to follow a training course while implementing the Social Register of Mauritius? I also would wish to know the number of officers attached to each local social office and if they have successfully followed a training course before the implementation thereof.

Mrs Bappoo: This is true. To start that programme, we had to train our own officers with the special unit of the SRM on how to carry the different eligibility processes. They have got their training. We have done it. That is why all the forty local offices and all the staff working in these offices are being monitored by the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioners. Even then there was a dispute; they had to work after working normal hours. We need to disburse overtime to pay the officers because people are queuing. They have to be registered for the new scheme and we have to process their requests and their demands.

Ms Deerpalsing M. le president, est-ce que je pourrai demander à Madame la ministre où on en est avec l'implémentation du *Social Register*? Parce que si je ne me trompe pas c'était cela la raison d'être du *Social Register*, c'est pour pouvoir harmoniser justement tous ces bénéfiques des différents ministères et même avec l'Education pour les critères. Si je comprends bien, est-ce que le *Social Register* n'est pas encore prêt?

Mrs Bappoo: Le registre social n'est pas complété encore. On a eu déjà quatre projets à travers le registre social de Maurice : projet de crèches, projet de *housing*, de *roof slab* et aussi projet de R 750. Tous ces projets doivent passer à travers le registre social.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our staff has been trained because we want to produce this social register. So, in a way, it has been partly produced through the social programmes, but it needs to cover all the social safety net of the country.

Mr Speaker: Next question! Hon. Ameer Meea!

PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLE (TAXI) LICENCE - ISSUE

(No. B/802) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First 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 Public Service Vehicle (Taxi) Licence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, the list of the persons who have been issued therewith, since July 2005 to date, indicating in each case, the -

- (a) base of operation, and
- (b) date of issue thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the list is currently being compiled and will be tabled in due course. It is too long.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that the list should be compiled because surely it must be a very lengthy list due to the numerous licences that have been delivered since 2005 up to now, especially in Constituency No. 9. So, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister what timeframe are we looking at so that we can get the list?

Mr Bachoo: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the list is being compiled and by next week or let's say by the end of this week - but I can assure the hon. Member the list of Flacq is too short.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

PAS GÉOMÉTRIQUES - LEASE

(No. B/803) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the lease of *Pas Géométriques* for industrial, agricultural and residential purposes, since July 2005 to date, he will, in each case, give the list thereof, indicating the -

- (a) names of the beneficiaries;
- (b) extent thereof;
- (c) rent payable;
- (d) duration thereof, and
- (e) date of signature of the lease agreement.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me in the first instance to refer to previous replies of Parliamentary Questions made on the same subject -

- (a) PQ B/728 of June 2007 whereby information on Industrial, *Campement* and Commercial site leases on *Pas Géométriques* since 01 July 2005 to 22 September 2008 was placed in the Library of the National Assembly on 18 December, 2008.
- (b) PQ A/78 of May 2012 whereby information on leases on *Pas Géométriques* for residential and industrial purposes since 2005 was placed in the Library on 23 October 2012.
- (c) PQ B/364 of June 2012 whereby information on allocation of State land on *Pas Géométriques* since January 2010 to 22 June 2012 was placed in the Library on 19 July 2012.

The information together with relevant details as requested now is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as the exercise is completed.

However, I wish to indicate that there is need to carry out a fresh exercise, as additional details have to be retrieved in respect of all leases since 2005. This exercise is therefore time-consuming and cumbersome. But my Ministry will endeavour to have it deposited as soon as possible.

Mr Ameer Meea: M. le président, les *Pas Géométriques* font l'objet de nombreuses convoitises de la part des opérateurs économiques mais plus récemment de la part des hommes religieux et autres socioculturels. De ce fait, je compte demander au ministre quelle stratégie compte adopter son ministère devant une telle situation pour une utilisation et une distribution plus équitable et transparente des *Pas Géométriques*?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry, you know, for every demand that there is, there is a panel of experts which will look at it and review each and every case on its merits and what is the economic value and added value to tourism and also, to the revenue of the land which are being, you know, leased to various companies, individuals or else.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say how many owners of lease for residential purposes have made applications to his Ministry to change their lease from residential purposes to industrial purposes?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously this requires a detailed study and I am not in a position offhand to give you the numbers of those people who have changed from residential to industrial, but there are many.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Minister what is the policy with regard to his Ministry concerning the portions of *Pas Géométriques* which were being given to operators by the Beach Authority; whether the Ministry has delegated powers to the Beach Authority to allow operators to operate on *Pas Géométriques* since 2005?

Dr. Kasenally: The answer is no. The Ministry of Housing and Lands and the Minister through the State Land Act is the only one empowered to issue these leases after consultations with his colleagues in the Cabinet and approval of Cabinet.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister table a copy of all socio-cultural associations and religious persons who have benefitted from *Pas Géométriques* since July 2010?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, we do not categorise people like this. What I will give is everything as I have mentioned and he will have to find out what it is all about.

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: May I know from the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has directed the Beach Authority not to proceed illegally in allowing people to operate on State lands recently and whether such directives are being adhered to by the Beach Authority?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Beach Authority does not fall under my purview. However, if there is any message to pass to them, it is through my colleague, the hon. Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands under whose jurisdiction it operates, and I can tell you that the hon. Minister has been cooperating fully in administering whatever instructions he will be giving to the Beach Authority.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nagalingum!

CWA - WATER CUTS

(No. B/804) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply for domestic use, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to if water cuts will be applied and, if so, indicate the regions earmarked therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to PQ Nos. B/804 and B/819 which are related.

Potable water is supplied from three sources namely ground water (55%), surface reservoir (30%) and river abstractions (15%).

During this winter, the rainfall recorded has been the lowest since 1985 to around 30% of normal and presently, the surface and ground water levels have declined significantly.

As at 21 October 2013, the storage levels in the main reservoirs have decreased by about 18% as compared to the average for the same period of the year. In addition, the water levels in aquifers have prematurely declined and have already reached December dry season levels.

To address the prevailing water supply situation, the CWA is implementing a contingency plan to manage the available resources until the next rainy season expected next December/January, as follows -

- (i) Mobilisation of additional water resources through the operation of stand-by boreholes;
- (ii) abstractions and treatment of river water to supplement water resources in some regions;
- (iii) reduced hours of supply islandwide, and
- (iv) providing water tanker services in affected areas especially in the regions of high elevations.

The hours of supply vary in the six water supply zones depending on the availability of water resources. The impact on water supply is more seriously felt in the lower Plaines Wilhems region which depends up to 80% on ground water. Some regions are being supplied once daily for a certain number of hours.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I place on record the appreciation of the collaboration of the local MP's and '*Force Vives*' with the CWA on the agreed daily hours of supply to the residents of the most affected regions of lower Plaines Wilhems. The CWA will keep the public informed on any changes in the hours of supply in different localities whilst every effort is being made to enable an adequate water supply islandwide.

I take this opportunity to request those who are eligible under the Water Tank Grant Scheme to purchase a water tank. I am informed that since the introduction of this scheme in 2011, only 8,624 households have purchased water tanks out of 18,954 approved applications.

Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I am tabling detailed information as follows -

- (i) storage levels in the reservoirs;
- (ii) present yield of boreholes, and
- (iii) the hours of supply during this prevailing dry season.

The CWA will shortly make regulations to prohibit the use of hose pipes and sprinklers.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ A/234 in 2012, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister said and I quote -

“The CWA carry out valves operations daily and that CWA will install additional valves in the region of Rose Hill”

Can I know how many valves have been installed in Constituency No. 19?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I do not have this information at present, but I will certainly provide it. What I do know, however, is that these valve operations, as they are now - they have been for a long time - are destroying the system. The question of having intermittent daily supply, twice daily is really wrecking the system. So, I am grateful to the hon. Member of the Opposition for accepting that it is better to have one supply daily over 6 hours than have two over 4 hours. I am thankful for that, and I hope that other hon. Members in the House will follow this example.

Mr Nagalingum: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister give us the number of valve operators who are performing the duty of opening and closing the valves? Is he in a position to tell us how many valve operators do we have?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am not in a position to tell the hon. Member, but certainly we are going to employ more valve operators at present. About a 100 will be employed in the weeks to come. But of course, I may add, they will need to have training and supervision and this is very important. There is no point of having valve operators if they are not properly trained and supervised.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has mentioned the difficulties of water supplies in Quatre Bornes where the problem is even more with the wastewater digging everywhere and breaking the pipes of the CWA. I have asked this question before. Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to doubly ensure that these teams are working together and that one is not undermining what the others are doing in these times of difficulty in Quatre Bornes?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Member for this suggestion, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is a fact that over a length of time the main problem in Quatre Bornes has been breakages due to the wastewater works without the CWA being informed. We do have CWA inspectors, there are so many sites and it is up to the operators to inform them.

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioning lower Plaine Wilhems area which is an area being afflicted these days. But I am sure the hon. Deputy Prime Minister must know also that the western part of the island, all the villages on the west coast are also undergoing very difficult times during the dry season so much so that last year there were riots in the village of Le Morne and people had to be released on bail and had been prosecuted for taking part in riots because of the water situation. May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, since year in year out we have the same problem, as a long-term measure to address, at least, the situation in the western part of the island? Why don't these Ministries think in terms of converting La Ferme Reservoir into a domestic reservoir? This is an idea that has been suggested in the past. Can I appeal to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to look seriously into that problem so that La Ferme Reservoir which is used now for agricultural purposes be converted with the necessary the treatment plants so that the water of La Ferme Reservoir can be used for domestic purposes for all the villages from Bambous to Tamarin and to the western part of the island?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member. I could not agree more with what is being said. There is a plan not only to upgrade but to enlarge this reservoir. One of the difficulties is the quality of water that is going into that reservoir. We have to attend to that first, but, in the years to come, certainly this will be a source of water for the west coast.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Can I raise one issue which is a very tricky one, not like others. I heard the hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioned valves operators opening here and closing there. Can't the Ministry, the CWA work out a way forward which is not *un encouragement à manifester*. Things are going to get very difficult in the days ahead, very hard. What happens when we have demonstrations, *manifestations* and then *comme par miracle* water starts running? In some places, it is literally *un encouragement à manifester*. I don't know what is the solution but it can't go on like that. It is going to get very, very difficult. Can the Ministry, the CWA work out a timetable so that people know, at least, they will have water during a number of hours and not when they demonstrate, *comme par miracle*, water starts running and it is, I repeat, *un veritable encouragement à manifester*.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I take note of what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said, but the explanation is often not as what is said. I take an example where recently for two days, at least, there was no water in a certain area and apparently someone just turned the valve and water gushed out. This is not the correct version. The correct version is that there have been leakages that have to be detected in the system and once the leakages were detected, it took about 24 hours because it was not obvious where it was and it was repaired. But I again, reiterate my appreciation. I have asked the CWA to be near the population, to explain to them what is going on, to explain the difficulty when it arises. The Emergency cell of the CWA which is functioning very well, we are going to enlarge it and see that it is in all areas. But communication to me is a key to improving the system. But we get inefficient communication system, not only that we are informed, but that the CWA also reacts accordingly. I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for this.

Mr Soodhun: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister tell us the percentage of water loss due to the bad state of the distribution system?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Which system?

Mr Soodhun: The percentage of water loss.

The Deputy Prime Minister: We must be careful and I think several times we have discussed this. Non-revenue water and water leakage is not the same. We are finding a lot of commercial losses, and commercial losses are wrong metering, but also thefts. At a guess, if our water loss is about 50%, I would say about 35% is leakage and 15% or more are water thefts that is, commercial losses. So, we are attending this problem and for the information of the House, the Singaporean team has started working in Mare aux Vacoas upper region which was the site of water shortages two years ago and the preliminary results are encouraging. But if we look at certain key issues in priority, we can find if not the solution, but, at least, an improvement.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: I have two questions in one, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has rightly stated about the persons at the CWA attending for communication. I think there is too much burden on one particular Inspector who is very helpful and who attends to nearly all of us. I think the time has come for the CWA, at least, to share the responsibilities, to

find other competent persons to help. We are at the eve of Deepavali, Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister - we have had problems during the past for the Eid-UI-Adha festival and for *la fête de l'Assomption* - what the CWA is preparing on the eve of Deepavali for people all over the island to have water even once a day and also what emergency measures does the CWA intend to put forward as far the tanker service is concerned? From what I see, relying only on private tankers is not sufficient, there is lack of control and again the burden is on that particular inspector, whether it's time for the CWA, at least to buy additional water tankers?

The Deputy Prime Minister: There are two parts to the answers. The first one is spreading out the workload into the different regions. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are looking into the possibility of the six regions having an emergency cell with dedicated persons interested to find a solution. Secondly, we have at the moment about 17 water tankers in the CWA and about 50 from the private sector, we should improve on that.

Mr Bhagwan: For Divali you have not replied.

The Deputy Prime Minister: We are taking all measures now so as to provide a more generous water supply during Divali and I can assure the population that during Divali the hours will be increased and much more.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioned that he is asking for the collaboration of the old people, can I ask him what is the policy concerning the irrigation system whereas I, personally, have witnessed last Sunday in the afternoon - I had taken a picture at Mont Choisy Belle Vue Harel - that the irrigation system is still on in the afternoon and in the north of Grand' Baie and Péreybère no water is available. So, what is the decision? Are they are going to continue as this water is coming from La Nicolière reservoir?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I would like to inform the House that for a number of weeks recently, we stopped supplying water for irrigation from la Nicolière. We started again at much reduced rate. But how they use it is another matter that the Irrigation Authority has to answer.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, earlier this year in February and March we had flash floods and seven months later, we have water cuts. Does not the hon. Deputy Prime Minister see this as a *désaveu* of the inability of CWA and his Ministry to collect, store and distribute the meagre water supply in Mauritius.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously the person asking the question does not know the water problem.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Last question hon. Jhugroo! Put your question. Time is up.

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware that the tanker service has been used to fill swimming pools when other people have got no water for domestic purposes, and if so, would he conduct an enquiry and take necessary action?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question has been set and it will be answered by the hon. Prime Minister when it will be set again.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQs Nos. B/805 and B/807 have been withdrawn.

WORK SITES - FATAL ACCIDENTS - MEASURES

(No. B/805) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the workplace, he will state the number of reported cases of fatal accidents having taken place thereat over the past five years, indicating the

- (a) number of employers on whom fines have been imposed in relation thereto, and
- (b) measures his Ministry proposes to take to prevent the occurrence of fatal accidents thereat.

(Withdrawn)

CHILD ALLOWANCE - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/806) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the monthly Child Allowance of Rs 750 per child for the vulnerable families earning a monthly income of less than Rs 6200, she will state the -

- (a) number of beneficiaries thereof, and
- (b) amount of funds disbursed therefor, as at to date.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/801)

LAMAIRÉE - COMMUNITY CENTRE

(No. B/807) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the setting up of a community centre at Lamairée, she will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: Time is up. The Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/811, B/818, B/821, B/822, B/823, B/824, B/832 and B/833 have been withdrawn.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

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

- (a) The Supplementary Appropriation (2012) Bill (No. XX of 2013)
- (b) The Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute Bill (No. XXI of 2013)

At 4.23 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.17 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Second Reading

**THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION INSTITUTE BILL
(NO. XXI OF 2013)**

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute Bill (No. XXI of 2013) be read a second time.

As mentioned in the Explanatory Memorandum, the object of the Bill is to provide for the establishment of the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute, which I will henceforth refer to as FAREI. This Institute will take over the functions and powers of the Food and Agricultural Research Council (FARC) set up by Act 20 of 1997 and that of Agricultural Research and Extension Unit (AREU) set up under Section 5(1) (d) of the same enactment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the establishment of FAREI is one of the several reform measures that my Ministry has embarked in line with the measures enunciated in the Government Programme. A rationalization of the different institutions providing services to the agricultural community is a priority of Government and we have developed a road map for implementing this important measure.

I must underline that the aim of reform is to attain higher operational efficiency of the institutions, better service delivery, reduced operational costs and higher cost effectiveness. We

are maintaining, if not strengthening the services provided to all stakeholders in the sector along the whole value chain, but only in a more efficient and cost effective manner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that, in 2011, my Ministry came up with the merger of six service providing institutions and the setting up of one apex body, the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority. The MCIA is a reality today. All functions and activities of the former Service Providing Institutions in support of the planting community in the cane sector have been maintained and reinforced in the wake of the EU Common Agricultural Policy Reform, cess reduction, drastic cut in the export price of sugar and the competitive economic environment.

This year we set up the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office (NAPRO) which shall take over the functions and powers of the Tea Board and the Tobacco Board, and the regulatory functions and powers of the Mauritius Meat Authority; this in light of the economic and social realities of the respective sectors.

The House will also recall that we recently passed the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare Act with a view to overhaul the operations of the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

In the same spirit, this Bill provides for the establishment of the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) to take over the functions and powers of the Food and Agricultural Research Council, including its Agricultural Research and Extension Unit. This is done with a view to improving efficiency through substantial cost savings. Only one Directorate will be required under FAREI.

All stakeholders of non-sugar agriculture will continue to receive the services, but in a more efficient and cost effective manner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to appreciate the need and rationale for the establishment of FAREI, it is important to understand how FARC and AREU were set up and how they presently operate.

FARC was established under FARC Act 1997. The main functions of FARC were to coordinate, monitor and promote agricultural research, and ensure proper dissemination and practical application of the results by farmers.

In 1997, the former FARC Act 1985 was repealed and a new FARC Act was enacted and the scope of objects and powers was extended. Hence FARC was also entrusted the

responsibility to set research priorities, and establish such units for the purpose of conducting research, extension and other related activities.

The rationale for including these new functions is related to difficulties encountered during setting up and operationalisation of the Directorate of Agricultural Research and Extension (DARE) as it was then called.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it was recognized that unlike the sugar sector, research and extension in the non-sugar agriculture was lagging behind. Under a World Bank supported project, namely the Agricultural Services and Management Project, a full-fledged research and extension organization, namely DARE was created in 1991 with the aim of making research and extension operate with a more flexible structure and become more effective.

However, DARE, being under the direct control of the Ministry, had to operate with the previous parameters. It could not come under full operation because of the feeling of insecurity generated by the reorganization of the services. This was exacerbated by ill-defined conditions of staff transfer and stations which became union and industrial issues that were not well gauged earlier.

In order to enable DARE operate with a high degree of autonomy, DARE was renamed AREU and was detached from the Ministry and placed under FARC. To address the issue of insecurity of staff, it was important to make legal provisions to support the existence of AREU.

In light of the above in 1997, a new Bill was introduced and this was considered necessary as the changes related to the role and structure of FARC necessitated a high number of consequential amendments. The FARC Act 1985 was repealed and a new Act was passed in 1997 as I said earlier.

In 1997 again when AREU was attached to FARC, it was highlighted that four elements were integrated: implementation, adaptation, research prioritization and formulation. With the establishment of FAREI, all stages of research and extension for planning, implementation, coordination and evaluation will be under one establishment. This will no doubt reduce costs and increase efficiency.

In 2010, the FARC Act was amended to enable AREU to absorb the functions of the National Federation of Young Farmers.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, AREU is an operational unit with very important responsibilities and a substantial number of employees, including technicians and scientists. The staff strength of AREU is significantly very much higher than that of FARC. Presently both FARC and AREU operate with two directorates as AREU enjoys some autonomy as per the FARC Act. This leads to extra cost of operations. By having one single Directorate to look into all the issues related to research, such costs will be eliminated. Moreover, any saving in resources will be better utilised for strengthening of research activities. The, more so, that research on non-sugar crops has been transferred from MSIRI to AREU in the wake of the creation of the MCIA.

I strongly believe Mr Speaker, Sir, that with this important establishment, FAREI will be able to position itself as a Research & Development Centre of excellence in non-sugar agriculture and fulfil the expectations at the national, regional and international levels, at this particular time when food security is high in the agenda of all Governments.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is relevant, at this stage, to mention that we need a strong agricultural research and extension institute to face the emerging challenges related to food security and the expectations of our farming community. Research, extension and training are vital elements to boost up agricultural productivity and food self-sufficiency.

Mauritius, as a net food importing country, has no choice but to bear the consequences of escalating international prices, increasing freight charges, and exchange rate fluctuations. Everyone recognizes that the era of cheap food is over.

In Mauritius, agriculture is affected by several factors such as rising costs of production, reduction in arable land, poor climatic conditions and lack of interest in agriculture by the younger generation.

Government has taken several bold measures to address these issues including greater access to lands, the setting up of a special fund for food security and promotion of compost use. The Food Security Fund has been set up and different schemes have yielded positive results, thus encouraging my Ministry to carry on with its strategy. Several innovative projects have indeed seen the day in various fields such as hi-tech dairy farming, bio fertilizer production, use of biotechnology in modern farming, organic farming for export.

This is a testimony of the high importance that Government is giving to the agro-industry in Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is also worthy of mention that from 2007 to date, food production rose from 99507 tonnes to 116000 tonnes, representing an increase of 17%. We have attained self-sufficiency in potato.

- The area cultivated under food crop consequent to our land access programme rose from 6740 hectares to 7570 hectares, that is, an increase of 12%.
- The cattle herd size has increased by some 1700 additional heads of improved breed, representing an increase of 30%.
- The local fresh milk production has increased to 9.2 million litres representing an increase of 300%, Mr Speaker, Sir.
- The pig population has reached 24000 heads against 4000 heads after the outbreak of the African swine fever from an original population of 18000 heads before the outbreak.
- Meat production including poultry, beef, goat, pig and sheep has increased from 34000 tonnes in 2005 to 47000 tonnes, representing an overall increase of 37%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to sustain these efforts and we aim at all our farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices. Research and extension have a big contribution to make and the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) has a great challenge ahead. I am confident that FAREI will meet up with these challenges and perform even more successfully than AREU to be able to achieve in the same way that MCIA has done so far.

Salient Features of the Bill

Mr Speaker, Sir I would like, at this stage, to highlight and elaborate on some of the salient provisions of the present Bill.

Let me start with Clause 4 which establishes the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute with the following objectives -

- a) to introduce, develop and promote such novel technologies in the food and non-sugar agricultural sectors as may be approved by the Minister;
- b) to co-ordinate, promote and harmonise research activities in non-sugar agriculture, food production and forestry;

- c) to promote and encourage agricultural and agribusiness development through the setting-up of agricultural youth clubs and agricultural entrepreneur clubs, and
- d) to promote dissemination and practical application of the results of any research undertaken under this Act.

Clause 5: Functions

Under clause 5, the specific functions of the FAREI are enunciated to further its objects most effectively.

Clause 6: Powers of the Institute

Under clause 6, the powers of the Institute are listed to attain its objects and to discharge its functions most effectively such as setting up of advisory committees and the raising of funds amongst others.

Clause 7: The Board

Clause 7 provides for the establishment of the Board and its composition. The Institute shall be administered by a Board, which shall consist of a Chairperson and 8 other members. All major stakeholders of the non-sugar sector and a representative of the University of Mauritius are included.

Clause 10: Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer shall be appointed by the Board on a fixed term performance contract and on other terms and conditions, subject to the approval of the Minister, that are provided for under clause 10 of the Bill

Clause 15: Annual Report

Under clause 15 the Board shall prepare and submit an annual report in accordance with the Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act where the Director of Audit shall be the auditor.

Clause 20: Regulations

Clause 20 provides for the Minister to make such regulations as he considers necessary for the purposes of this Act.

Clause 23: Savings and Transitional Provisions

This Bill, through Clause 23, Mr Speaker, Sir, Savings and Transitional Provisions guarantees the transfer of any permanent and pensionable employee to the Institute on terms and conditions which shall be not less favourable than those of his previous employment and without losing his period of service. All the assets and funds of FARC shall vest in the Institute. In addition, where the Act does not make provision for any transition, the Minister may make such regulation as may be necessary for such transition.

Moreover, it provides for the Director-General of FARC to be the Chief Executive Officer of the Institute and his contract shall remain governed by its existing terms and conditions.

Conclusion

The establishment of FAREI is yet another milestone in the process of institutional reform. I wish to highlight that all the functions and activities of the Food and Agricultural Research Council, that is FARC and AREU, are being enhanced to be carried out in a more efficient and cost effective manner. Indeed, the mandate of AREU has recently been reviewed to include research in all food crops.

FAREI will henceforth be the sole agency and continue to deal with non-sugar research and extension whilst MCIA will focus only on sugar research and extension. Thus, there will be no place for any duplication.

I am also happy to inform the House that all employees on permanent and pensionable establishment will be absorbed in FAREI and no one will be made redundant with the passing of this Bill and the new Act.

However, in the future, the corporate staff will be further streamlined for higher cost-effectiveness and efficiency.

In the same line, I am pleased to inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that presently, with the technical assistance of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), my Ministry has already started the reform process of the Agricultural Services, including the Division of Veterinary Services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders in particular, the small farmers who have contributed to those sectors. I also wish to thank the staff of the Ministry and the State Law Office for the preparation of this Bill.

With the goodwill prevailing at the level of all parties and stakeholders, we are certain to succeed.

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

Dr. V. Bunwaree rose and seconded.

(5.25 p.m.)

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will say a few words on this Bill before the House today.

I will not repeat what has been said by the Minister before me. True it is, to understand the essence, the contents, the purport of this Bill, one has to go in the past, look retrospectively at what has taken place. I do not intend to go in a detailed way about the chronology of events. True it is, as the Minister said, it was, in fact, in 1985 that, for the first time, a Food and Agricultural Research Council Act saw the light of the day. The FARC was set up to harmonise research. Since as we know, Mr Speaker, Sir, research and extension in the field of agriculture are vital, are strategic activities, which, in fact, constitute the very bedrock of a successful agricultural diversification policy. Therefore, with time, it dawned upon the authorities, upon the Government at that time, that, in fact, a new law - updated law - should come up, and then, as the hon. Minister reminded us, it was in 1997 that the Food and Agricultural Research Council Act was introduced in an updated way and it is this piece of legislation, enacted in that year, which was relatively more comprehensive legislation which was more intended and designed to invest more autonomy to agricultural research in the non-sugar sector in crops and in livestock.

Therefore, this new Bill - FARC Bill - was introduced in 1997 and this new operational unit, the AREU, was set up under the FARC to enable, as I said just now, principally to enable the FARC to play a more meaningful role, a more ambitious role in the field of research for the non-sugar sector.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, when introducing the Bill in 1997, the then Acting Minister of Agriculture went even as far as to say that he hoped the AREU Unit will do for the non-sugar sector what the MSIRI had done for the sugar sector. Good, ambitious, positive works, perhaps also a tall order, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, at least, the research project became autonomous under one single administration and this research coordination body became operational. After 1997, after the Bill had been enacted, it was subject to another major amendment in 2010. I think the Minister referred to it, it pertained to the setting-up of agricultural Youth Clubs to revive the interests of our youngsters in agriculture and, in fact, in an indirect way to revamp the viability of the sector. So much for the history, so much for the past, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Let us come to the Bill itself, the Bill which is before the House. I think the Bill, today, gives us the opportunity. Although the Minister has just, in his opening speech, explained to us the reasons for the Bill, he has, in a nutshell, talked about the rationalisation of the services, better services, cutting costs, more cost effectiveness and so on. This is the purpose of this Bill. This is what the Minister is claiming. This is why FAREI has been set up today. But, as I was saying, I think today is an opportunity to probe and decide, Mr Speaker, Sir, what have been the results generated by FARC and AREU since these institutions have helped to formulate the present institution, the FAREI, which we are setting up today. In what way is this Bill different to that of the existing FARC and AREU Bills? Today is the opportunity to look at the results of these two institutions, especially, Mr Speaker, Sir, in terms of coordination and commercialisation of research in the non-sugar sector.

When we look at the Bill, Mr Speaker, Sir, especially at – and this is what I intend to do now - a few sections, I come to the first important section which is section 5 - “Functions of Institute”. Before that, by way of a general comment, I will ask the Minister one question. So, FAREI will be a body corporate, from what we understand. I want to ask the hon. Minister what type of institution would be FAREI? Would this be a Grade I institution? I understand that AREU and FARC are currently Grade B organisations. In this case, will the salary of the AREU and FARC staff be increased to match the Grade A corporate designation?

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, before I come to clause 5, I will comment on clause 4 which refers to the “Objects of Institute”. I see a few sections in that clause in the Bill referring to forestry. For example, clause 4 (b) says –

“Co-ordinate, promote and harmonise research activities in non-sugar agriculture, food production and forestry”.

As we know, AREU has specialised so far in vegetables, fruits, ornamentals, livestock research and development. Is AREU a competent authority in forestry? Will FAREI, the new institute, also be working on research and policy matters in forestry or are we duplicating, or should we avoid duplication and the inefficient use of resources? Would not it be better that the Forestry Services and the National Parks and Conservation Service do their own research in that sector? Therefore, the question I ask to the hon. Minister very humbly is: should forestry have been removed from the Act?

In Section 5, I come to the “Functions of Institute”, Mr Speaker, Sir. Generally, the point that I want to make on the “Functions of Institute” is the following: the Institute should not be limited only to coordinating the work of researchers as it is spelt out in clause 5 (d) –

“Co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate research programmes and projects of different institutions.”

The Institution should not be limited only to coordinating the work of researchers but it should be working in collaboration with the BOI for commercialisation of research findings of researchers.

I feel this is non-existent in the Bill, the issue of collaborating with the BOI for the commercialisation of research findings of researchers. According to clause 5, the Institute will, in 5 (a), “conduct research”, in 5 (d) “co-ordinate, monitor” and in 5 (e) “set up and manage research stations”. The point that I am making is the Institute can have either a role as conducting or co-ordinating or managing, but can it do all three at the same time, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Some of the missing functions I have noted in this clause about the “Functions of Institute”, Mr Speaker, Sir, are, for example, I think the opportunity should have been taken to invest the Institute with the function of looking at ways of collaborating, taking cross-border initiatives with surrounding countries on food crops, medicinal and spice crops as well as on a continental approach. I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Institute must have been encouraged or tasked with the promotion of partnership with the private sector in order to help and develop key niche areas. Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps the Institute must have also been tasked to train farmers on

the use and dangers of pesticides. I think this should have been added somewhere to ensure that the level of pesticides in our food crops is within the norms of the WHO at least since it is not the case at present. These are, according to me, the few features which should have been inserted in clause 5 “Functions of Institute”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in clause 5 (f), I see that the Institute shall “carry out, subject to the approval of the Minister”, and I see “subject to the approval of the Minister” many times in this Bill. Be it as it may, but in clause 5 (f) the Institute therefore will “carry out subject to the approval of the Minister, such other research and related activities”. I would ask the hon. Minister what are these “related activities” mentioned in this paragraph. Will not that be leading to some form of abuse, Mr Speaker, Sir? I would have liked that the hon. Minister enlightens the House on this question of 5 (f) what are these “related activities in non-sugar agriculture”. Why do we have the Minister to approve the research in related activities? Would not it have been better for the Board to do that?

Mr Speaker, Sir, I come to clause 6 - “Powers of Institute”. Again, in this section also I see “with the approval of the Minister, the Institute will raise such loan” and so on, but I come to one particular section which is section 6 (f) –

“The Institute will have powers as are necessary to attain its object (...).”

And the powers are listed, but one of these powers at section 6 (f) talks about “sell or exchange any property”. In my humble submission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think this sub clause 6 (f), that is, the institutional power to sell or exchange property, must be looked at very carefully. We know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the power to sell or exchange any property can lead to abuse, especially in this Ministry. We have seen what has happened to Palmar Experimental Station in the east, the Government Livestock Feed Ltd. We have seen what has happened in Richelieu where much land has been given away to some privileged people. The Belle Mare ex-Young Farmers Complex apparently is being given away.

Can I ask the hon. Minister whether by allowing the sale or the exchange of property Government assets will not be disposed of and given away too freely? Therefore, I think the hon. Minister, according to me, should look into this sub-clause very carefully and consider even the possibility of removing this section because there is no *garde-fou*. It seems that this clause is wild, is a free-for-all clause, that is, the Institute shall have powers, true it is, to attain its object

and to discharge its function; it will have its powers to sell or exchange any property. But when we look at what has happened in the past, I will ask the hon. Minister to revisit this sub-clause, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Clause 7, the Board, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Administration Institute -

“(1) The institute shall be administered by a Board (...).”

In this clause 7, I suggest, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there should be more balance in this Board. Six persons are being nominated by the hon. Minister. This will place the Board in a situation of always being under political pressure. We are dealing here today, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the creation of an important Institute, the FAREI, which will address the vital question of food security. So, in my humble suggestion, Mr Speaker, Sir, the composition of this Board should be also looked into so that the hon. Minister should not be able to have complete control of this Board. I’m not talking of the present Minister but any other Minister who will eventually succeed him.

In this Board, Mr Speaker, Sir, since export vegetables or exotic fruits such as pineapples and litchis have registered a rapid growth over the past few years and has considerably contributed in the development of our Agro-Industry, I am, therefore, suggesting that a representative from each industry association namely the GEPTA - *Groupement Exportateurs, Producteurs et Transformateurs Agricoles*, and the APEXOM - Association of Producers and Exporters of Mauritius should have formed part of this Board.

Further, Mr Speaker, Sir, I suggest also that the University of Mauritius should have had two representatives in this Board. The Fair Trade Co-operative Movement should have been represented, the *Mouvement Autosuffisance Alimentaire* should have been represented, Mr Speaker, Sir, and the Chief Agricultural Officer from the Agricultural Services of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security also perhaps should have been sitting on this Board. So, the Board should have perhaps been enlarged, as I said, to cater for representatives of the *Groupement Exportateurs, Producteurs et Transformateurs Agricoles*, the Association of Producers and Exporters of Mauritius, two members from the University of Mauritius, somebody from the Fair Trade Co-operative, somebody from the *Mouvement Autosuffisance Alimentaire* and perhaps the Chief Agricultural Officer from the Agricultural Services of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

Concerning the meeting of the Board, Mr Speaker, Sir, I see when we look closely at section 8, perhaps this is an oversight on the part of the Minister. Regarding section 8 - Meetings of Board, I humbly suggest that the Bill should have provided for the minimum number of times the Board should be meeting. Let us take the AREU Board. From what I understand, the Board of the AREU is not sitting for several months and this is unacceptable, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would have suggested that the law should have made specific provisions that the Board of the FAREI should meet at least on a monthly basis and there is no such provision in the Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I come to clause 10 of the Bill. Again, clause 10 (4) another instance which concerns the Chief Executive Officer, but Section 10(4)(a)(i) says that -

“(4)(a) The Board may, subject to such instructions as it may give, delegate to the Chief Executive Officer such of its powers and functions as may be necessary for the effective management of the day-to-day business and activities of the Institute, other than the power to -

(i) sell or exchange any property, or make any donation;(...)”

It is good, but I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this reference to sell or exchange any property must be purely and simply deleted from this clause 10. Although I understand properly that it is other than the power to sell, but it should have been got rid of, it should have been purely and simply repealed.

I come to the question of the appointment of employees. Mr Speaker, Sir, section 11 (1) says -

“(1) The Board may, subject to the approval of the Minister, (...).”

As I said earlier on, I see the formula subject to the approval of the Minister appearing very often in this Bill, but again in section 11 (1) -

“(1) The Board may, subject to the approval of the Minister, appoint such number of employees as may be necessary for the proper discharge of its functions under this Act on such terms and conditions as it may determine.”

The question I am asking is: was it necessary for the Board to seek the approval of the Minister for the appointment of such number of employees?

Mr Speaker, Sir, in section 12, again, we see that -

“(1) The Minister may give such directions of a general character to the Board, not inconsistent with this Act, as he considers necessary in the public interest, (...).”

May I here again, Mr Speaker, Sir, suggest that this is the classical formula that we found in all our Acts, but in this case, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am wondering whether we should not remove the words “in the public interest” and replace it by the words ‘for the food security of the Republic of Mauritius’.

‘The Minister can give directions of a general character to the Board not inconsistent with the Act, as he considers necessary in the interest of the food security of the Republic of Mauritius, and the Board shall comply with those directions.’

Regarding section 19 (1), Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning confidentiality, again I am really taken aback by this clause, because it provides that -

“(1) No member or employee shall, during or after his relationship with the Institute, use or disclose any matter which comes to his knowledge in the performance of his functions or use any material of the Institute, except for the purposes of administering this Act.”

I am just thinking about the question of whistleblowers, Mr Speaker, Sir, because this section compels everybody, all staff to be party to any possible wrongdoing of the Institution and this should be against the Constitution. I think this section, in fact, is forcing all staff, all members of the Institution, Mr Speaker, Sir, to be a party to any wrongdoing, because unlawful activities must be reported to competent authorities and, therefore, it concerns the whistle blowing, as I just said, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, there are cases when perhaps a member or an employee should be able to disclose any matter which comes to his knowledge and which should be reported.

Lastly, Mr Speaker, Sir, Section 23(f), these are the savings and transitional provisions. It concerns the employment of the employees and Section 23(f), Mr Speaker, Sir, reads as follows –

“No person employed on the permanent and pensionable establishment of FARC shall, on account of his transfer to the new Institute or any resulting change in his job title, be entitled to claim that his employment has been terminated or adversely affected in breach of any enactment.”

I think this is going a bit far, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will explain myself because we can think of a situation when an employee feels aggrieved and where he shall not be able to challenge, for example, let us suppose that an Assistant Director is transferred to the new institute, he gets the same salary, but he is no longer at top of the hierarchy and he has become the subordinate of his juniors. So, he will not be able to challenge this injustice because of Section 23(f) as it is worded today in this Bill. This is why, I think also, the Section 23(f) is a blanket clause which deprives and denies an employee today, although he is employed on a permanent and pensionable establishment of the FARC, after his transfer to the new institute, he will not be entitled to claim that his employment has been terminated in every circumstance. I have given a case, an example, where this can lead to injustice and an unfair situation where, for example, an Assistant Director being transferred to the new institute, although he gets the salary, but his juniors become on top of him and he will not be able, therefore, to challenge this injustice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Section 23(g)(i), this is another section, Mr Speaker, Sir, to set aside some of the staff of AREU, perhaps in favour of some juniors who are more privileged. Section 23 (g) (i) and (ii) read as follows –

- “(g) Any person employed on the permanent and pensionable establishment of FARC may, within 30 days of the commencement of this Act, instead of a transfer under paragraph (c), be offered the option to –
- (i) be redeployed, so far as it is practicable, to a Ministry, a Government department or a statutory corporation, where a vacancy in a similar position is available; or
 - (ii) retire on the ground of abolition of office (...)”

I find this surprising because I heard the hon. Minister saying that there will be no abolition of Office or nobody will lose their job, but the law is providing that there is possibility of abolition of Office from Clause 23 (g) -

- “(g) Any person employed on the permanent and pensionable establishment of FARC may, within 30 days of the commencement of this Act, instead of a transfer under paragraph (c), be offered the option to –
- (i) be redeployed, so far as it is practicable, to a Ministry, a Government department or a statutory corporation, where a vacancy in a similar position is available; or
 - (ii) retire on the ground of abolition of office and be paid his pension benefits in accordance with the Pensions Act, the Statutory Bodies Pension Funds Act or such other pension scheme as may be applicable to FARC.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps I did not hear correctly the hon. Minister when he was introducing the Bill, but I had the impression that I heard him saying that there will no loss of job or perhaps no abolition of office, but this Clause 23(g) comes and casts a doubt about what the hon. Minister has been saying. Perhaps he will explain in his summing up, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I think we should look also very closely at Section 23 (g) (i), especially (g) (ii) as I said, the term ‘abolition of office’ which is being used is an indication that some posts will be abolished. In my humble suggestion, this in no case should happen and I am asking the question to the hon. Minister: is this Clause, therefore, paving the way for a privileged class of people to be promoted and a few unfortunate employees to be caught rid of and by the abolition of the office?

Mr Speaker, Sir, barring these results which I have just underlined, may I conclude by saying that we welcome the FAREI, this new Bill. This Bill will be important, a serious institute whose avowed aim will be working for the nation’s food security and nothing more, but unfortunately there are some – if I may use the term – ‘pernicious clauses’ like buying and selling, the abolition of posts, the option to be redeployed in other Government departments are causes for concerns to us as they are tools that can be used, unfortunately to set aside some staff in favour of some more privileged employees. These are the concerns that I wanted to raise, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Finally, I was going to express the hope that the selection of the Chief Executive Officer at the head of the FAREI which will be at the hands of the hon. Minister; let us hope that this

will not be made on political grounds, but on meritocracy so that no frustration will be caused to all these officers with long experience who have worked for the AREU. This will, Mr Speaker, Sir, surely have a negative impact on this new budding organisation and the output of this organisation because as I just said the role of the FAREI is principally to ensure food security and efficiency in this country.

With these words, may I wish good luck to the FAREI and I have done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(5.58 p.m.)

The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Mr J. Seetaram): Mr Speaker, Sir, first and foremost I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister to bring forward this Bill to the House and, at the outset, I would wish to inform the House that such a Bill brings innovation in the non-sugar sector. I don't think we should divert from the main objective of this Bill. The main objective of this Bill is to make Mauritius food secure and this Bill brings about new technologies. It brings about a breath of innovation. It brings about application of new technologies in our non-sugar sector and also, it promotes more breeding towards a new era of entrepreneurs because it gives the opportunity of the planter or the farmer to become an entrepreneur. This objective of the Bill, itself, says, if I refer to Clause 4 (a)–

“introduce, develop and promote such novel technologies in the food and non-sugar agricultural sector as may be approved by the Minister”

And it goes to further, Clause 4 (c) -

“promote and encourage agricultural and agribusiness development through the setting up of agricultural youth clubs and agricultural entrepreneur clubs.”

So, basically the path is set to a new era. Whereas reference made by the hon. Member of the Opposition that there might be some privileged few who would benefit from this Bill, it is totally a subsidiary matter; it is totally outside as the main objective itself states clearly to develop food and non-sugar sector. The non-sugar sector itself is taking a new breath with this Bill.

Reference is also made to the Fair Trade Cooperative that it should be included in this Bill. With all due respect, the Fair Trade Cooperative is only linked with sugar and not non-sugar sector.

A representative of the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Federation (MAMCEF) is on the board, as it has been rightly stipulated in the Bill and the object of the Bill is very laudable. It provides for a new landscape like I said, and the vision of producing enough quantity and, more importantly, high quality of food and vegetables for the country. We all recall what was termed a few years back, that there is food crisis in the world and that it has reached a point that you might have money to spend, but you would not have food to eat. The duty of this Government is to make food security a reality and that is the main reason, the real reason, and substantial reason of this Bill.

Again, getting into agribusiness, Agro Process food remains the target and, as a responsible Government, we have to ensure that production and availability of enough food for the whole population is a must. This has been done in an efficient and sustainable manner in this Bill.

The creation of the Food and Agricultural Research Extension Institute will go a long way in attaining those targets. We have to remind ourselves that the annual food crop production of our country turns around 25% of the total food requirement. Mauritius has imperatively got to improve on its level of self-sufficiency in various commodities while creating on one hand new opportunities for farmers to become entrepreneurs, and further also for the co-operators community to increase their production, income and productivity while conserving on the other hand, the natural biodiversity and providing safe sufficient and nutritious food supplies.

Sir, we are targeting an increase in self-sufficiency level of selected products with the dual objective of increasing our annual food crop production and decreasing our importation bill. To this end, this Government has initiated concrete actions such as Food Security Fund to finance agricultural development and it has under the MSPA 2,000 *arpents* scheme devoted 1,000 *arpents* for agricultural production.

Moreover, it has introduced the Field Operations Regrouping and Irrigation Project (FORIP) in the non-sugar sector to accelerate mechanisation of farm activities purposely to bring new innovative techniques into the sector through grants, technical support for land preparation and installation of irrigation networks. So, all that just to set the path for new techniques, new innovation methods so that we can get a better result at the end of the day concerning food production and the main challenges for our agricultural sector that we are facing now, access to

new technologies that we have to give new impetus to the sector. We have to keep up with market exigencies. One of the examples that I have to mention here is that, in the last Budget, with regard to the fees of Rs25,000 for pre-market testing and certification, Government stated that they would bear the full cost of such expenses where those agricultural enterprises have a turnover of less than Rs10 m. So, these are market exigencies that we have to meet up. If you want to get into Agro Process product, if you want to get into agribusiness, you have to be sure that your product is a good product, of international norms and standards. Also that your product can be export ready, and if you wish to do that then you will be able to attain the international level, and then you would be able to have what we call very nutritious and good food security.

The real ambition here is to have a sustainable food production but, at the same time, to cut down on cost, because we do have high-cost inputs, mainly labour cost. We have high prices of feeds, logistics, agrochemicals, etc. that we have to bear in mind. Precisely this Bill comes about for a real need for technical support, for constant training. Why do we need constant training capacity-building? It is because we would need our planters, our farmers to be efficient.

Let's make our product become efficient; let efficacy be the word of the day. Let's do the right things efficiently, let's do all the things right. Both of them are targets that we need to meet. We need to attain adequate mechanisation, sufficient irrigation facilities and having also early planning of production as per market demand.

Again, getting into new markets, that is also a challenge. So, if you want to emerge, if you want to create a space in a new market, if you want to mark yourself as a percentage in that market, you would need to have a very sustainable product, a product of international norm, a product of nutritious value. So, we are embarking on new modern management practices.

Sir, we should also bear in mind what has happened recently. There has been a gradual erosion of the resource based at its land and labour in favour of more remunerative sectors such as manufacturing, tourism and financial services. Also we have had, I should say, less consideration for land and agricultural product. We have this target that we have to carry out, research and development so as to ensure sustainable agricultural practices based on resource conservation technologies and best management practices to optimise the use of natural resources, and also to improve on productivity of livestock, other feeds, farming, meat

production, crops as potatoes, onions, pulses, garlic, maize, mushrooms, local fruits and protect natural environment.

The Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute which has clearly defined objects, functions and responsibility will assist our non-sugarcane agricultural sector to overcome those challenges.

This Institute will also assist in overcoming our weaknesses related to coordination in information dissemination and will be service oriented to farmers, co-operators, agro entrepreneurs so as to better respond to the needs and requirements in the agricultural supply chain. Small holder farmers, Mr Speaker, Sir, and co-operators are being called upon to become agro entrepreneurs in Mauritius and they require sustained advisory and constant training support. To take advantage of such advisory, of such latest innovation techniques, it remains paramount for this non sugar sector to be alert of all the novelties in the non sugar agro based world and such services are being targeted by the Board. This will make our products, our production more competitive. The Institute will be an important one in promoting sustainable, intensive agricultural production providing technical and marketing advisory services; promoting value addition of primary farm products; promoting commodity change and agribusiness development.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are thus paving the way towards greater modernisation in the food security, in the food production, in the improvement of productivity and quality of our produce. Value addition to the primary agricultural products through agro processing will also be encouraged for the proposed Institute will assist in developing this new generation of agro entrepreneurs and will encourage value addition. At the same length, it will be important for this Institute to develop cooperatives as well as those methods; those modern techniques will be very beneficial to those very cooperative societies in the non sugar sector.

As the House must be aware, only the cooperative sector accounts for 75% of the national onion production; 70% of fresh green vegetables production and 40% of potato production. The proposed Institute will create an enabling target and the ambition of this Institute is to create an enabling environment that is conducive to agricultural development and equally for cooperative development. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, it provides for the representative of the Mauritius Agricultural Cooperative Federation which is a federal body and it represents more than 120 agricultural

marketing cooperative societies and this federation is part of the Board. I believe such federation would surely defend the rights and we are sure the interests of the planters' community in the country. Moreover, one of these objects relates to the setting up of an agricultural youth club and agricultural entrepreneur club. This could be done by using the cooperative model as well as existing cooperative network as it is internationally recognised that cooperatives are proven to be vehicles for agricultural development.

I would also have to mention that we have sectors like the dairy sector, vegetable cultivation, flower cultivation, livestock, poultry, hydroponic agro processing which total into 250 cooperatives with some 5000 operators operating in the agricultural fields as I mentioned and all these cooperatives with their members will have recourse to the proposed Institute. So the benefits the cooperative society will have together with the co-operators will be more effective services; all the agricultural services will be under one roof; no duplication of services; scope for more specialised services; tailor-made and wider range of training programmes and more research initiatives in the food and non sugar agricultural sectors. Also, Mr Speaker, Sir, it answers to our commitment for innovation and new challenges as this will assist to the consolidation of measures aiming at ensuring food security in Mauritius. Our non sugar agricultural sector, our co-operative sector will definitely benefit from the setting up of the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute which is an innovative landmark in the agricultural sector in Mauritius.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute is being set up to replace the existing Food and Agricultural Research Council known as FARC and under which a unit was set up known as AREU.

Let me say, at the very outset, that I have listened to the speech made by my colleague hon. Ganoo. There are several points which he has already addressed and on which I will try as

far as possible not to repeat but obviously there are some items which are mentioned and I will need to elaborate on these.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to say that FARC has completely failed to carry out the responsibilities assigned to it. When I am talking of FARC, I am talking of FARC as separate to AREU because the Minister has just said that FARC and AREU had two directorates; each had its own staff; each had its own budget. I am referring to FARC here. I should say that AREU has been able to carry out its activities, its research work, its extension work but FARC has failed. If I look at the FARC Act of 1997 and I look at the main responsibilities, the functions which were assigned to FARC at that time I see, first of all, to coordinate, monitor and promote research projects and programmes entrusted to the different units set up by it but, at the same time, of the different institutions engaged in agriculture, fisheries and food production. So, FARC was supposed to coordinate the research work of these different institutions. It was also meant to set research priorities in line with the needs of the agricultural sector and, at the same time, ensure as far as possible the proper dissemination and practical application of the results of any research.

As far as I can recall, institutions which carry out research work in agriculture, fisheries and food production are the MSIRI now it falls within the MCIA; AREU itself; the Mauritius Research Institute; the University of Mauritius, the agricultural services, the Albion Fisheries Centre amongst others. FARC has been a total failure in coordinating, monitoring and promoting the research programmes of these institutions.

When I am saying that it has been a total failure, I am not blaming the Minister of Agriculture for that. FARC has existed since 1997. We have been trying, with what it had, to ask FARC to carry out this coordination work, but nothing has been done. The only unit which fell under FARC was AREU, as I said, and it was AREU which was carrying out all the research work and disseminating it to all those concerned. The only task that has been performed by FARC itself as an institution which has a staff of about 17 persons, has a budget of its own, is headed by a Director-General. The only task that has been performed by FARC during the years 2000/2003 was the propagation of tissue culture banana plantlets and the development of a protocol before such propagation. This is all that FARC has done. So, FARC has, therefore, not been able to fulfil its core function. I believe -the Minister is right - it was high time to scrap it

and come up with another institution which will have the capacity and the manpower to carry out the objects and functions as defined in sections 4 and 5 of the Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when a new institution is being created, it goes without saying that it should be one which will perform and which will give results. For an institution to give results, it needs the manpower which is qualified and which has the experience required in the field. I will here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, refer to section 23 on savings and transitional provisions.

I declare my interest and inform this august Assembly what has happened even before the coming of this Bill to this House. The Director-General of FARC has been asked to cumulate the functions of Director of AREU as the latter was proceeding on pre-retirement leave. In fact, this post of Acting Director of AREU should automatically have come to somebody in the hierarchy who was next to the Director, I mean the Deputy Director. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the Government is talking of meritocracy, when the Government is talking of Equal Opportunities, *ce sont de vains mots*.

It happens that the Deputy-Director of AREU bears a certain name although that person does not have any political affiliation, although this person does not have any political allegiance and in spite of the fact that that person has spent about 20 years in the agricultural services, 18 years in AREU, in spite of the fact that he is very well qualified, in spite of the fact that he has acted as the Director of AREU several times, he has never been reprimanded for bad performance, he has not been appointed Director of AREU only because he bears a certain name. Where is meritocracy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? How will the staff of an organisation be motivated when they see such things happening?

The Minister may say that it is because of this Bill that this decision had been taken. But this decision has been taken early in August when this Bill had not yet come to this august Assembly. What is more frustrating is that the Deputy Director who was the most competent person to be appointed had nearly reached the end of his career, he would have worked for about 8 to 9 months more and then retire. *M. le président, c'est de la mesquinerie, c'est de la petitesse d'esprit*. It is clear now. When I look at section 23(k) of this Bill where it is clearly stipulated that the Director-General of FARC shall be deemed to be the Chief Executive officer. This is why the post of Director of AREU was confined to him and why *la méritocratie a été bafouée*,

simplement parce qu'un officier porte un certain nom. C'est honteux, c'est décourageant pour tous ceux qui aspirent à grimper les échelons et c'est tout simplement frustrant pour nous jeunes qui font beaucoup de sacrifices et qui retournent au pays diplôme en poche. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can you explain to these youngsters that meritocracy *est en train d'être bafoué dans ce pays?* How can you expect these people to come back to Mauritius and work? How can you expect that there is no brain drain in this country *quand il n'y a pas de méritocratie?* Moi, je vois c'est tout simplement honteux!

Having said this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I see at section 23(c) that employees of FARC will be transferred to the new institution, but may also be given the option to be redeployed or retire on grounds of abolition of office. The Minister has said that none of the employees will be made redundant. The same thing was done when all the sugar related institutions were centralised under the MCIA. What has happened is that some staff had been transferred, some staff who have been transferred, they've lost their privileges, in spite of the fact that they were told that they would be transferred under conditions which are not less favourable and they have had to go to Court. I just hope that here also officers will not have to go to Court to fight for their rights and privileges. Here also, no dialogue whatsoever has taken place between the staff and the Ministry and the employees do not even know what will be the organigram of this new institution and what will happen to them. All this is very demotivating. Before an institution comes into existence, it creates distrust between the management and the staff.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my colleague, hon. Ganoo has touched upon this. At section 3 subsection 2, it is stated that the institute shall be a body corporate and looking at the composition of the Board at section 7, I note that the majority of persons appointed fall under the direct control of the Minister, I believe that employees of the new institute will fall under the PRB, that is, their salaries and conditions of service will be determined by the PRB unless the Minister has in mind that it will be an independent corporate body like the MCIA. If the salaries of the employees are determined by the PRB, it would be fair that salaries of the Chairman and Members of the Board are also determined by the PRB. But, to my surprise, I see at section 7 subsection 3 -

“(3) Every member shall be paid by the Board such allowance as the Minister may determine.”

So, that makes me think that if ever the employees will fall under the PRB, the Chairman and Members of the Board will have other conditions, but I am asking the question: the Minister will determine the allowance on the basis of what? I hope that the Minister will shed some light on this in his summary.

Now I come to section 6 “Powers of Institute”. Section 6 (a) stipulates that with the approval of the Minister of Finance, the Institute may raise such loan to enable it to finance the setting up of greenhouses, hydroponic centres and other infrastructure. I agree that the idea is correct, but let us look at the practical side of it. The practical side of it raises some doubts in my mind. As at today, both AREU and FARC are totally dependent on Government funds. Together they have a total budget of around Rs200 m. but they generate revenue of only about Rs10 m. to Rs12 m. The new institution, I am given to understand will not run on a commercial basis as it is not a commercial enterprise. Raising of loans, we all know, is linked to the repayment capacity. Will the new institution raise loans, expecting the Government to pay those loans? If that is so, the hon. Minister needs to tell us how he proposes to rent out the greenhouses, the hydroponic centres and who will benefit. Will these infrastructures which involve Government funding benefit some privileged ones, as has been the case for land? What will happen if people rent and are not able to pay? We need to know since Government funds are involved.

I am aware that there is already a biotechnology loan scheme especially for funding the construction of greenhouses with a ceiling of Rs1 m. per person. Now that the Institute proposes to construct and rent, automatically people will not be interested to construct their own. The biotechnology scheme was good in the sense that the person taking the loan had to inject 20% of his own funds. It was in his own interest to make the thing work. I would like to know what does the hon. Minister propose to do with this loan. Will this scheme continue to exist or will it be scrapped?

My colleague, hon. Ganoo, has mentioned section 6 (f) which gives the power to the Institute to sell and exchange any property. The word “any” is well mentioned, “sell or exchange any property”. I have gone through the FARC Act of 1997 and I think this proviso was never there. So, in this new Bill, this is a new proviso “to sell or exchange any property.” Actually, all the assets belonging to AREU and FARC are State-owned. These properties will be transferred to the new Institute. Will this provision, which is in the Bill, allow the new Institute to sell or

exchange any of these Government properties? To which property is the Bill referring? *Lá franchement, M. le président, je sens qu'il y a anguille sous roche.*

Additionally, following the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Organisation Act (NAPRO) which was passed in this Assembly at the last session, all the assets of the Tea Board and the Tobacco Board had been taken over by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security. Does the Ministry propose to transfer these properties to the new Institution and then sell them? The hon. Minister needs, at all cost, to inform this House, otherwise, this may give rise to all sorts of speculations especially as the warehouse of Tobacco Board itself is huge, I am aware of it, it carries an extent of around 70,000 square feet and the warehouse of the Tobacco Board itself is worth millions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with such infrastructure already available, I believe it is a golden opportunity for the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security to come up with a biotechnology centre of excellence. As at today biotechnology research is being carried out piecemeal in different institutions such as the MSIRI which now falls under the MCIA. Biotechnical research is being carried out piecemeal by the University of Mauritius, the Agricultural Services and AREU. A centralised laboratory can bring up opportunities for development of crop and the livestock sector.

The future of agriculture lies in biotechnology. At the time the proposal was made - that was sometimes in 2003 - the biotechnology centre of excellence would have cost around Rs350 m. Today, its setting up will cost three times more but, it's worth it with the raw infrastructure which is already available. The setting up of such a centre will provide a host of opportunities for the private sector. The private sector can ask that centre of excellence to carry out research on its behalf against payment. Why not that centre of excellence for the region? Qualified youngsters are available, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the University of Mauritius provides courses at Masters Level in biotechnology. Therefore, a pool of qualified persons is already available and their competencies are not fully utilised today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me end on a positive note. I am not against this Bill, but all the grey areas which I have mentioned need some explanations. I have as well come up with a suggestion which I consider is a very valid one, that of setting up the biotechnology centre of excellence and I hope that with the setting up of this new institution, Government will come up

with a new mindset - I finish on this - where meritocracy will prevail, where we will encourage our youngsters to come back to Mauritius and get their due and not because they belong only to a certain family and they have a certain name that they are completely discarded.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(6.39 pm.)

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me first of all thank all hon. Members from both sides of the House for their valuable contributions to the present debate on the Bill which is setting up FAREI and bringing together the special unit which has been set up under the FARC Act which is AREU and also the Council which is operational at FARC level. I must mention here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the establishment of FAREI is setting the foundation of a model parastatal that enshrines the principles of efficiency, transparency and accountability. This will become clear and evident as I will highlight the salient features of the Bill as I did when I was explaining the salient features of the Bill in my speech earlier.

As I also said earlier, we are merging the functions of the Council and AREU under one establishment - one single establishment - and hence, there will be only one Directorate. So far as we know there is one Directorate for the Council and one separate Directorate for AREU.

We are also, at the same time, correcting an anomaly whereby, under one single Statutory Body, there was an independent unit that was operating autonomously except for the Board which was controlling as far as recruitment and promotion are concerned. Otherwise, from all angles they were operating in an autonomous manner which is quite distinct from all the existing parastatals that we have in our country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

We are also further enhancing the mandate of AREU to be the sole agency responsible for research and extension in non-sugar agriculture. This could be also one of the reasons why the word 'forestry' has been mentioned in one of the sections. I will come to it a bit later and explain a bit in detail why forestry has been included in the Bill. We have reduced and modified the membership of the Board and thus included members with broader expertise and competence to deal with the whole value chain rather than putting a sort of stress on mere research. We have introduced a novelty with respect to the appointment of a CEO who will serve on a fixed term

contract, performance based contract. He will have no option either to perform or to go or to quit.

Conscious of the confidentiality and intellectual property right of research result, - a point which was raised by hon. Ganoo - we have included a confidentiality provision in the Act. Again, I will explain, it is in no way an impediment for whistleblowers. We are not saying employees or anybody for that matter, not only employees, anybody from the public on that matter who comes to know that anything wrong is going on, anything which is going on against the law, against established principles, they should of course by all means denounce and go ahead to report the matter. So, it is not confidentiality as if trying to make people shut their mouths, keep their mouths shut even if something wrong is going on. It's only on intellectual property, on results of research which has been carried out.

FAREI will perform in a more accountable and transparent manner. As I said earlier, the Director of Audit will be responsible for audit purposes; which was not the case for FARC. With these elements, several questions need to be asked; maybe I will take it one by one on all the points that have been raised by hon. Ganoo and also, hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee; they somehow relate to more or less the same sections or same clauses rather of the Bill. Let me elaborate on few of the points which have been raised by both hon. Members from the other side, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The first question which was raised by hon. Ganoo, and maybe rightly so, whether the new institution will which be called FAREI is a body corporate. Yes, it is. It is a Statutory Body just like any other Statutory Body set up under an Act of Parliament. It will carry the same status as FARC. Therefore, in terms of status it will maintain its status, and salaries and conditions of service of the employees, of course, will be under the purview of PRB. Concerning fees - this is the case in so many cases - fees for the Members of the Board and the Chairman will be determined by the Board, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But of course, bearing in mind all the parameters which are there, which have been put by PRB and any other institution which is responsible for such matters.

Under Clause 4 (b), hon. Ganoo put a question; he asked whether FAREI is a competent authority to research on forestry and forest produce. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say that agro-forestry research is a new sector which is coming up. It is a new sector which is coming up

which has been developed in so many countries. Agro-forestry is a new concept - maybe we don't have it here so much - but we are promoting this concept of agro-industry, agro-forestry connected to agro-industry. What we are trying to do is that we limiting the number of institutions which are going to do research work. Forest Services, for example, it falls under the aegis of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security. We know we have limited resources, we know we are limited in so many aspects. Do we for the purpose of forestry go and set up another institution independent of FAREI? So, we thought no, it would be a good idea to put all under one umbrella. We are rationalising. Already, as we said, rationalising the Council with AREU, why not forestry also?

As I said, an area which needs forestry, agro-forestry, is one which needs institutional capacity to be set up and also strengthened. We don't need to create an institution on its own bearing in mind the cost that is involved, the expertise that is required to run such an institution. Again, this is nothing new. I must inform my good friend hon. Ganoo that this is already provided for under FARC Act, under Section 4 (d) of FARC Act. Forestry is already included.

Moving on to Clause 5 which was again raised by hon. Ganoo, whether in its function, the issue of commercialisation should be included, whether there should have been a sub section in that particular Clause 5 which give the power to FAREI to commercialise, but this is inbuilt in the sections that we have already, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The development component includes commercialisation and also promotion of research results and products. So, this is there even if it has not been put expressly, implicitly, but it's there.

In fact, when we talk of power to sell property under Clause 6, it is power which is being given to the Board of FAREI, power to the Board to FAREI which power can be delegated to the CEO. It's power especially to sell the products of research, to sell also, maybe, some of the properties, research stations, hydroponics and other kind of new models of products which will be put in place, but also maybe other property. I will come to the other aspect when it concerns other property later on.

Another question which was asked by hon. Ganoo - whether FAREI can conduct research, coordinate research and manage research stations, whether this is not in conflict, whether we are putting too much under one umbrella, but this is the essence, the very essence of this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is the very essence of setting up FAREI. We are taking

the functions of the Council under FARC which is limited to coordinating research only. They cannot, any Council for that matter, under any enactment, under any law in this country where a Council is set up, the Council does not have the mandate, does not have the power, to carry research. They can only coordinate research activities which are carried out by different institutions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, this is what we are doing. We are putting under one apex body, again FAREI, the function of coordinating research, and also the function of AREU which is to do research in fact, to carry out research, and also give extension services under one roof. We are bringing this together and this is the essence of rationalising. Otherwise, we should go on keeping distinct Directorates; one for research, one for coordination, another one for extension.

So, this cannot go on, because we are living at a time when we are limited in resources also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We should think in terms of budget, in terms of putting the money where the mouth is, as you say, because we need to put more money in research done in Directorate, for example. The research projects will bring results, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and not as such the Directorate, especially where it is being duplicated in two different units or two different institutions under one particular law.

Another point, which is very interesting, was raised by hon. Ganoo. In fact, I was also talking about this when I was discussing the Bill with the staff of my Ministry, whether we should have included a section in the law on the control, use or abuse of pesticides, but this has already been done by AREU. It is an administrative measure and there were policies. In fact, there was a PQ today; unfortunately, it did not come as it was quite behind the list of questions. But, Sir, we have already set up for the control and use of pesticide. There is also a Control Board Regulatory Body at the Ministry of Health level. In fact, there are different institutions looking after this issue of pesticide residue.

On Clause 5(f), hon. Ganoo asked about what 'other research and activities' exactly mean. Here, I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we are making provisions for strategic research, not only food crop. We want to go outside the parameter of only food crops, that is, fruits, flowers and any food crop. If I may give one or two examples, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for example, there is a need for Mauritius to produce Biomass for renewable energy production. There is a high demand for Biomass. Is it not proper now to be proactive instead of coming up

again and amending the law or coming up with another institution just for that sake? We have already been proactive and we have included in this Bill that, subject to the approval of the Minister, they can go outside the mandate, which is very expressly formulated in the Bill. They can go outside, for example, as I have said, for energy production and also for medicinal plants which are in high demand. We can also develop sugar substitutes. We have this in so many countries. This is why we have extended the mandate by putting other activities which we have not defined, but which can be defined.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in Clause 6(f) –

“sell or exchange any property”.

We are a country where there is pool of law and we know that for a fact, there have been abuses, there are abuses and there will be abuses. As I have said, we are creating a modern model parastatal. We have to give the power to the Board. The Board is accountable and answerable. The Board will have to function within the parameters which we have put, which will be very transparent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, selling or exchange does not mean stealing, swindling or appropriating. Selling means selling under the laws, rules and regulations of this country; there are financial manuals. It will be subject to inquiry by ICAC. It will be subject to PNQs and PQs in Parliament. It will be subject also to the Director of Audit. The accounts of FARC were not audited by the Director of Audit. We are introducing it here to bring transparency and accountability that the accounts will be audited by the Director of Audit. In a way we have put a *garde fou*. This is why also the position of the CEO now – Director-General previously – is contractual. So, he will be under constant watch, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

On Clause 7, on the composition of the Board, the first thing that I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that it has been proved, and my good friend hon. Ganoo, or any hon. member for that matter will agree with me, that any committee where there are more than 10 members, it does not function properly, it becomes ineffective. It becomes a market place. This has been proved.

In fact, for the composition of the Board previously under the FARC Act, there were 11 members and today we have reduced it to nine members only. The Minister, under the old law,

under the FARC Act, could appoint five people from outside. I have reduced it to four. Again, we have taken all the stakeholders who are involved in research, as far as non-sugar sector is concerned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

We have the University of Mauritius which is on Board. We have the Chamber of Agriculture which coordinates and it has been taken on Board. We have AREU, but there is no other institution, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There are the two things, I must say. There is a new provision here. We have put the possibility of the Board setting up committees. We don't need to put a Board, the General Board, the body which is responsible for the running and managing of the Institution. We have put 20 members because when we add up to the 11 that existed and those which hon. Ganoo proposed, - he proposed so many, two from the University of Mauritius, from the Exporting Associations - it becomes too many. This is why there are two provisions there.

Over and above the composition of the Board by nine members, the Board has the power to co-opt any number if the need is felt, if the expertise is required. This is one possibility. This justifies why, instead of putting 20 members on the Board, we are giving the power to the Board to co-opt and take on Board people with relevant competence and expertise to come and help on different subjects.

Secondly, there is the possibility of putting committees of experts. If a research project is being implemented and the Board is of opinion that there is no expertise which is required for that particular research and project, they can again put a parallel committee of members which includes three members from the main Board so that they have control and they know what exactly the committee is doing, what exactly the committee has been mandated to do, that they are in line with that particular mandate which has been given to them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Clause 11 – Appointment of employees

“(1) Where The Board may, subject to the approval of the Minister, appoint such number of employees as may be necessary for the proper discharge of its functions (...).”

This also was raised by hon. Ganoo. This is in the FARC Act. There is nothing new, it is not that because I am the Minister today - I won't be the Minister all the time - it is there in the

FARC. It is there in so many statutory provisions; when it comes to recruitment of employees, the approval of the hon. Minister is required.

Clause 12 – Powers of the Minister. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Ganoo raised that issue, whether directions are given by the Minister to the Board in public interest. He proposed that the words ‘public interest’ should be scrapped and ‘food security’ should be replaced instead. In my humble opinion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, public interest is broader. It includes food security. If there is a real problem of food security and we are minded at the level of Government to come up with a research project for that matter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will it not come under the purview of public interest? It will! Public interest will absorb food security or food insecurity for that matter.

Clause 9 on confidentiality, I have already explained that this is not to stop people from disclosing or denouncing things which shouldn't happen, and which are happening at FAREI or at any committee level or by any employee of the institution. By all means, this will be as it is today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

On the last point which was raised both by hon. Ganoo and by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, I said, in my main speech, that no one will be laid off. I repeat it again, in no uncertain terms, loud and clear that no one will be laid off. There will be no redundancy. When you read the section, in fact, section 23, if you will allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I may go through section 23(g), just one line,

“Any person employed on the permanent and pensionable establishment of FARC may, within 30 days of the commencement of this Act, instead of a transfer under paragraph (c), be offered the option.”

And this is voluntary.

So, we are not proposing. I am saying it clearly in the House that we are not going to abolish posts and then impose upon them. No, it is an option that is being given to them. Either to be offered the option, they are being offered the option. So, they have to accept. We are not going to impose upon them. It is an option. They are being given a choice, that also if they desire to accept the choice. They have two choices. Otherwise, they stay where they are. Either, for example, as I said to be redeployed if they are not happy with the transfer in the new situation,

or, secondly, if ever it is proposed to abolish a post, they will have the option to retire or they can reject that option and continue to be in service. This is our interpretation; this is our intention, which is very important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are legislating today and this is what our intention is; let this go on record and everybody will be bound by the record, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Having said that, I think I have done with all the points that have been raised by all the Members from the other side. So, let me, once again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank hon. Alan Ganoo and hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee for their intervention and also my friend Minister Seetaram.

Let me with these words again commend the Bill to the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION INSTITUTE

BILL (NO. XXI OF 2013)

Clauses 1 to 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 9 (Committees)

Motion made and question proposed: 'that the clause stands part of the Bill'.

Mr Ganoo: Can I intervene on Clause 9? I just wanted to ask the hon. Minister with regard to Clause 9 (Committees). It is not a proposal for a new amendment; it is just a question. No mention is made if the Committee members will receive allowances, and in case they will, who will have the authority to determine their allowances? Can the hon. Minister just enlighten the House on this point, please?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as for the Board members, there has been express provision. It is the Board which is going to decide, as far as remuneration is concerned for the Chairman and also for the members. I believe it will be the same. The Board will decide, for the

Committee members as well, the amount and also who are the members who are going to sit.

Clause 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 10 to 24 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill was agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute Bill (No. XXI of 2013) was read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 29 October 2013 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

(7.08 p.m.)

MATTERS RAISED

MORCELLEMENT PEERUN, VACOAS – SEWERAGE PROBLEM

Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise an issue which concerns the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Environment, as well as the Minister of Local Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since two years, faecal waste, *la matière fécale*, from an overflow of a septic tank is being dumped into a drain at Morcellement Peerun. I am tabling a picture taken by myself.

In fact, on 10 October 2011, a complaint was filed at the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix regarding the bad odour emanating from that drain. I am tabling a copy of the complaint as recorded by the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix.

Since then, out of the persons suffering from this situation, a lady aged 70 plus has been calling the Municipal Council for at least 20 times, Sanitary Office, Minister of Environment and so on. Several site visits have been effected by the Mayor and even my colleagues of the constituency.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister is aware of the situation at least since last week and I would like, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to put on record my appreciation for his immediate response to that issue. But, unfortunately, the promptitude of the Deputy Prime Minister has not been followed. Once again, site visits have been effected; meetings have been held, but nothing has been done to alleviate the problem.

This poor lady is suffering a lot and during all this period of Durga Puja, she has not been able to have one single prayer at her place and we know what it means for a lady aged 70 plus.

Now Divali is coming and she is just wondering what she has to do. May I, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, make an appeal to the Ministers concerned so that this drain be cleaned; fire services can flush it but wastewater has to pump it immediately to avoid polluting the river into which this drain runs and, of course, immediate action must be taken against the person responsible for the overflow of the septic tank. It is difficult to understand why during the two years nothing has been done to alleviate the suffering of that poor lady. I thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Aimée: Can I have the exact address hon. Mrs Labelle?

Mrs Labelle: I said at Morcellement Peerun, Vacoas.

Mr Aimée: Thank you for informing us about the situation of sewerage at that particular place. I am going to look into the matter and do the necessary work for that.

LA PRENEUSE BEACH - ACCESS

Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to raise an issue which concerns the Minister of Housing and Lands.

The Minister will surely recall that some time before July 2011, the Minister of Local Government, myself and himself went for a site visit at La Preneuse beach where we took cognizance of the number of accesses to the beach which have been blocked by owners of *campements pieds dans l'eau* so that fishermen cannot get access to La Preneuse beach. Amongst these accesses, there was one near Mariposa hotel at avenue des Pêcheurs whose size has been so reduced that fishermen would not be able to drag their boats along this access. Same concern other accesses like avenue Papayeville, accesses from the cooperative up to the end of Tamarin. I recall that, at that time, a ministerial committee was set up to look into the possibility of reopening all these accesses. Now, two years after, the situation is still the same and both fishermen and the public at large are still complaining.

At the same time, I wish to draw the attention of the Minister of Housing and Lands to the fact that many owners of *Pas Géométrique* land have constructed structures up to the beach so that the public cannot get access to the beach; the public cannot walk along the beach. Additionally, during the site visit which my colleagues over here and I made in the north, I can tell the Minister of Housing that the owners of those *campements pieds dans l'eau*, besides having these structures, have put two to three, I would say, *molosses* or *bouledogues* there so that the public cannot even approach the beach.

So, I'll request the Minister of Housing and Lands to look urgently into the matter. Thank you.

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I quite recall about these obstructions. We had given instructions. They were cleared. Probably, they have just been put back and as far as the *bouledogues* are concerned, I think we have to go and shoot them down because it is again...

(Interruptions)

No, it is the law because if any injury comes to any member of the public, they will be sanctioned, but I'll have to send again my army there, my officers to make sure that it is alright.

TROU AUX CERFS – SLABS

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): M. le président, je souhaiterais à nouveau évoquer la situation du Trou aux Cerfs à Curepipe. Je l'ai fait à plusieurs reprises. Vous vous souviendrez, M. le président, que j'avais lancé un appel que ce lieu, qui est devenu par la force des choses un parcours de santé, soit rendu plus accessible, soit rendu plus sûr mais sans pour autant toucher à son cachet naturel qui fait son attrait et sa beauté. Ne voila-t-il pas qu'alors que nous étions en vacances; que nous n'avions donc pas la possibilité d'évoquer la question ici, le ministère de l'environnement a commencé toute une série de travaux au Trou aux Cerfs; des travaux que personne ici n'a évoqué ou n'a demandé. Le ministère de l'environnement a fait construire un drain en pierres taillées s'il vous plaît mal conçu qui mène nullement part sans débouchée pour l'eau qui va s'accumuler.

Deuxièmement, ils ont fait placer du béton, des *slabs*, à Trou aux Cerfs. Imaginez-vous ce qui va se passer avec les grosses pluies, cela va devenir glissant et personne ne va entretenir ces *slabs* qui vont causer des accidents. Pire encore pour la première fois depuis que les gens fréquentent le Trou aux Cerfs, le ministère de l'environnement fait placer une barrière, je crois que c'est en plastique, tout autour du cratère. Pourquoi? Avez-vous entendu des gens qui tombent dans le cratère du Trou aux Cerfs M. le président? Et, en plus, il y a une distance conséquente entre le rebord du cratère et la barrière donc l'espace laissée aux marcheurs, aux joggers est d'autant plus réduit. Et je me suis posé la question qui a demandé ces travaux. J'ai vérifié auprès de la mairie; jamais la mairie n'a été consultée avant que le ministère de l'environnement débarque sur les lieux. Je sais pour un fait que le député Eric Guimbeau n'a pas été consulté ni mon collègue, l'honorable Dr. Boolell, ni moi. Je suis convaincu que le ministre Sik Yuen n'a pas été non plus partie prenante de cette décision sinon on l'aurait vu à la télé comme on le voit tous les jours, tous les deux jours faisant son travail de PPS de Curepipe. Qui a autorisé, qui a permis, qui a demandé au ministère de l'environnement d'aller défigurer ce lieu M. le président? De quel droit alors qu'il y a des priorités au Trou aux Cerfs. Il manque d'espace de stationnement. Si le Premier ministre était là, je sais qu'il porte cette question à cœur, il aurait entendu. Il manque d'espace de stationnement; les toilettes n'ont pas de robinet; le lieu est

toujours mal éclairé alors que des centaines de gens fréquentent ce lieu même après la tombée de la nuit. Le service de gardiennage n'est pas adéquat. Voilà des choses concrètes.

Si le ministère de l'environnement avait un surplus d'argent et qu'il fallait à tout prix dépensé, voilà des choses qu'on aurait pu faire pour le bien des curepiennes et des curepiens. A la place, nous avons tout un ensemble de travaux inutiles et comme tous les jours je vais marcher à Trou aux Cerfs, les gens se demandent pourquoi. Qui a obtenu ce contrat, combien cela va coûter et à qui le crime profite-t-il. Donc, M. le président je fais trois demandes: d'abord en dénonçant le comportement odieux du ministère de l'environnement; je demande que tous ces travaux soient stoppés immédiatement et que le ministère de l'environnement n'aille pas faire n'importe quoi au Trou aux Cerfs sans consulter la mairie de Curepipe d'obédience Travailleuse, MMSD PMSD; sans consulter les députés de Curepipe y compris les deux députés associés à la majorité et les deux députés de l'opposition. Donc voilà mon appel pressant, M. le président. Arrêtez le massacre. Cessez d'imposer des choses décidées en plus haut lieu au ministère de l'environnement sur les curepiennes et les curepiens sans demander leur avis ou l'avis de leurs représentants. Merci.

The Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr D. Virahsawmy): It is a pity Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that when we try to do embellishment works, then we find that there are objections from those who do not understand exactly what was happening at the Trou aux Cerfs.

There was landslide there and we had to take actions to prevent that landslide and we have taken actions which had to be taken at the different sites but we cannot embellish the whole of Trou aux Cerfs so we have to give priority to problems which were existing.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & HUMAN RESOURCES – HRKAD FUND - SCHOLARSHIP

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise a matter which concerns the Minister of Education and Human Resources. It is in relation to a very unfortunate girl who is a second-year student at the University. She has applied for a scholarship under the HRKAD Fund. Her mother

earns only Rs2000 plus they have a pension of Rs2300. Her father is in prison and was following methadone treatment for drug rehabilitation. She first applied for the scholarship and it was turned down last year on the basis that there is no death or incapacity. Then, in June 2012, she applied again. In March 2013, again her application was turned down, but this time for the reason that her parent is not being rehabilitated for drug addiction in a recognised institution.

Well, in fact, the father was imprisoned and he was following rehabilitation. Then, for health reasons, the father stopped methadone and discontinued the treatment, but he is still in prison. So, the girl has applied again in April of this year and again later this year in May 2013, her application was turned down on the ground that there is no death or incapacity. Now, we have a very unfortunate situation for this girl, but I am sure that there may be many other people in her situation where there is only one parent who is earning but the other parent is in prison and cannot earn and because he is not following any treatment, she is not entitled to any assistance from the HRKAD. It is in a very heartbreaking way she said, and I quote -

“As my scholarship has been disapproved, for that reason my father has decided to consume methadone again in prison.”

Just to be eligible now, someone who has been rehabilitated, just because he is no longer incapacitated, she is finding her father wanting to consume drug again so that she can get a scholarship. I am going to table a copy of all the press contents and I would urge the hon. Minister to look into the matter and if need be enlarge the criteria so that needy students can benefit from the HRKAD scholarship.

The Minister of Education & Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to inform the hon. Member and the House that the fund is no longer functional now for new cases. Only those cases which have already been decided upon in the past and students whose studies are not over are being continued. This is one thing, but there is a new scheme coming up for children like this. I will look into the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem, the documents you have tabled contain names, if you can kindly erase the names or you can just hand over the documents directly to the hon. Minister.

ROUTE DES PAMPLEMOUSSES/ CORNER MILITARY ROAD

- TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, I will raise an issue which I have already raised through a PQ back in May 2013, PQ No. A/102, but up to now it has not been answered by the hon. Prime Minister. It relates to a traffic problem in my Constituency which is Route des Pamplemousses and Corner Military Road. Every day, we have heavy traffic in the evening especially at 4.30 p.m. till 6.30 p.m. and 7.00 p.m. and there is no policeman over there. On Saturday morning also, when there is market fair, we have heavy traffic there and there is no policemen present. I have, myself, intervened on several occasions to call to Police Station so that policemen be delegated there. This is causing a real problem to inhabitants of the region, especially in this area and if you go to the region of Valley des Prêtes, Cité La Cure and Ste Croix, so many densely populated area. So, can I urge the Deputy Prime Minister to convey the message to the Commissioner of Police?

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): It will be conveyed to the hon. Prime Minister.

BELLE RIVE/DUBREUIL – STREET LIGHTING

Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my problem is with the access road from Belle Rive to Dubreuil. This road is supposed to be the only access that you could possibly have from the Wootun area towards Dubreuil and it is becoming very dangerous at night with Sinohydro lorries which were not meant to go on these roads. They are actually using it for heavy rally training and it is so dangerous that even taxis will not leave Curepipe to bring in the late comers to that village. The village is isolated enough, the surface is now quite broken down with lots of potholes and there are some deviations which have been included. There are no lights and it is a kind of very dangerous roads and the inhabitants of Dubreuil village are requesting the hon. Minister to look into it, and if possible to get the lorries to travel through sugar cane access roads to get to the Chartreuse area rather than render this steep road extremely dangerous.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of this situation, in fact, we had given instructions to the heavy vehicles to utilise the sugar cane roads, but they are refusing it. In fact, they should have used that road, but unfortunately they are destroying the existing road and even there have been cracks in many places but I can assure the hon. Member that I am trying to find funds that is required because that will cost us a little bit of money, so that, before the end of the year the work can start. We are going to do the needful.

CARREAU ESNOUF - WATERCRESS PONDS

Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the point that I am going to raise tonight concerns the watercress ponds at Carreau Esnouf. The Watercress Planters Association which represents the 37 planters has contributed enormously with the plantation of watercress in the region of Carreau Esnouf and Sauveterre, occupying an extent of land of 7.14 hectares *avec une récolte de 45 tonnes de cresson annuellement*. Since a few years early drying of the ponds had been observed thus causing considerable economic loss to growers. The hon. Minister of Agriculture is well aware of this problem being given that he made a site visit on the premises on 19 October 2010, in presence of my friend, hon. PPS Thierry Henry and myself where he met several members of the association. Since 14 November last year, the association had made an application to the Ministry of Agro Industry through the Permanent Secretary for financial support out of the Food Security Funds to purchase water pumps and undertake the drilling of two boreholes at Carreau Esnouf. I had been informed that they have already submitted the quotation for this project and made the required applications with the different relevant authorities. I am sure that my friend, the hon. Minister, will give due consideration to this issue so that watercress could be made available at Carreau Esnouf before the coming of the New Year.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security and Attorney General (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am well aware of the plights of the watercress planters in Carreau Esnouf. In fact, it is a longstanding problem connected with water supply. We have had lots of meetings, in fact, in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister also with the representatives of the planters to find a long-term solution to their problem. But unfortunately, it

would appear that no solution has been found so far. I am aware of the application which has been made at the level of my Ministry in regard to food security fund. I will look into the matter and I'll see how far we can go to help the planters.

The Deputy Speaker: I should like to inform the hon. Members that we have got a time constraint, if they can afford to be brief.

MALARTIC & REVEREND LEBRUN STREETS, ROSE HILL – ROAD SAFETY

Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président ma requête s'adresse à l'honorable ministre des Infrastructures Publiques et concerne la rue Malartic à Rose Hill. M. le président, la rue Malartic est une rue très passante puisqu'elle relie la rue Vandermeersch à la route Royal de Rose Hill. Le complexe Résidentiel 'Le Clos Verger' et le Morcellement Larcher donnent sur cette route. Malheureusement, M. le Président cette rue est très étroite, il y a un trottoir d'un côté, il n'y a pas de place pour mettre un trottoir de l'autre côté. Deux voitures passent tout juste et il y a eu pas mal d'accidents sur cette rue ces derniers temps. Ma requête, M. le président, est que l'honorable ministre puisse voir la possibilité de rendre cette rue à sens unique et que la même chose s'applique à la rue juste après, c'est-à-dire la rue Révérend Lebrun afin que les usagers empruntent l'une d'entre elles pour monter vers le centre de Rose Hill et l'autre pour descendre vers la rue Vandermeersch, ce qui rendrait la circulation beaucoup plus fluide dans cette région.

Merci beaucoup.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to take up this issue with the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit. I do not think that by converting the routes into one-way that can solve problems. On the contrary that can create more problems. I request the hon. Member to bear with me; I am going to request the TMRSU to have a look at it.

CAMP LEVIEUX, ROSE HILL -- FUNERAL PARLOUR

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise an issue regarding both the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands. The Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill has received numerous representations from the residents of NHDC Complex at Camp Levieux about difficulties encountered by them especially those living upstairs on the death of a relative for the transport of the corpse and coffin and for the accommodation of visitors. In this context a request has been made to the Council to construct a funeral parlour. The Council as by way of a motion decided that a funeral parlour be constructed in that area and an amount of Rs1.2 m. has been earmarked for this project. Accordingly the Council has identified an unoccupied plot of land adjacent to the Police Station at Camp Levieux which belongs to the Ministry of Housing and Lands. It would therefore be appreciated if the hon. Minister could kindly consider vesting this plot of land to the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

Thank you.

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will most certainly look into the request and do whatever is necessary to ensure the well-being of the inhabitants of Camp Levieux.

GRANNUM, VACOAS – DISPENSARY – SETTING UP

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am in possession of a petition dated 03 July 2013 addressed to the Minister of Health and Quality of Life on behalf of the members of the Grannum Social Welfare Senior Citizens Association, the inhabitants of Grannum, Allée Brillant, Sadally, Camp Créole, Engrais Martial, Saint Paul Road and Riverwalk for the setting up of a dispensary in the region of Grannum, Vacoas.

I met few inhabitants on Tuesday 15 October 2013 in Grannum, they have expressed their deep concern about the difficulties they are facing everyday to reach the nearest dispensary at Route du Club Vacoas, a quite long distance causing a lot of difficulties to sick, old and handicapped persons, pregnant women, mothers and newly born child and children. I would like to make a special appeal to the Minister of Health and Quality of Life to find a solution. May the

Minister consider the renting of a Government building to provide medical and health care for all the residents of the region.

Thank you.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr L. Bundhoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Member will appreciate that the location of an area health centre is dependent on the number of inhabitants and the vicinity of other area health centres within this area location which she is mentioning. I will surely conduct a study to see whether this request can be entertained and, if it is so, I am sure it will be done with pleasure. Thank you.

BEAU BASSIN – WATER SUPPLY

Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to call upon the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities to consider very seriously the acute problem of water shortage and water cut in lower Beau Bassin. The hotline is always busy and in spite of the goodwill of one, Mr Mamade Bundhoo, who tries everything to help out, we are having tremendous problems and in view of the many public holidays coming soon, may I appeal to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to have a special team to look after the problem because I am sure this is going to arouse a lot of discontent in that region. Thank you, Sir.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I certainly will.

At 7.44 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 29 October 2013 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

NATIONAL IDENTITY CARD PROJECT - DATABASE

(No. B/780) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the new Mauritius National Identity Card project, he will

state the authority which has been entrusted with the responsibility of managing and maintaining the database thereof, indicating the cost thereof.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/808)

NATIONAL IDENTITY CARD PROJECT - COST

(No. B/808) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the new Mauritius National Identity Card Project, he will state the -

- (a) cost thereof, indicating the variation cost, if any and
- (b) names of the sub contractors therefor, if any, indicating in each case, the nature and value of the works.

Reply: I shall reply to P.Q. No. B/780 and P.Q. No. B/808 together as they relate to the same matter.

On 17 October 2012, the Government of Mauritius and the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise signed an Agreement for the implementation of Mauritius National Identity Scheme (MNIS) Project on a Government-to-Government basis. The contract cost is 44,326,139 Singapore dollars, excluding VAT.

The project comprises a number of components over and above the ID cards themselves. The contract signed with the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise includes the following elements -

- Programme Office
- MNIC System
- Smart Card
- Central Population Database Version 2.0
- MNIS Certification Authority
- MNIS e-Services and Government Service Platform
- Card Conversion Exercise

- Operation and Support
- MNIS Infrastructure Set up
- IT Security/ IT Security Audit

The implementation of the Project started on 01 November 2012 and the registration of the public to obtain a new identity card started on 01 October 2013, following a pilot phase of two weeks. There is no variation so far on the contract cost.

In the context of the implementation of the Mauritius National Identity Scheme, amendments have been brought since 2009 through the Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, for the provision of biometric information by citizens applying for a new card. The National Identity Card (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013 was passed by the National Assembly on 09 July 2013. Subsequently, the National Identity Card Regulations 2013 were also made under the Act and came into operation on 16 September 2013.

In accordance with the National Identity Card Act, the Registrar of Civil Status is the repository of the MNIS databases; and the Registrar of Civil Status has been registered as the Data Controller in respect of the MNIS databases under the Data Protection Act.

With the implementation of the Mauritius National Identity Scheme (MNIS) Project, a number of sophisticated and secure systems have been installed at the Data Centre. These systems include servers, networking equipment, security appliances, databases and software for the MNIC conversion application, MNIC Registration application, Card Personalisation systems, Central Population Database Systems and Certification Authority Systems.

A team of local IT professionals from the Central Informatics Bureau and the Central Information Systems Division has been set up at the Data Centre and the Card Personalisation Centre of the National Identity Card Unit to maintain and manage the MNIS systems.

It has been widely publicised that the Data Centre for the MNIS project, including the databases thereof, is hosted by the Government Online Centre (GOC) at the Ebène CyberTower 1. The facilities at GOC are already hosting a number of important government applications and data. A team of IT staff from the GOC is assisting the Civil Status Division in the operation of the Certification Authority System, which has been set up especially for the MNIS project.

Hence, the responsibility for managing and maintaining the MNIS databases has been entrusted to these IT professionals attached to the NIC Unit and at the GOC. The cost of these IT professionals will be a recurrent feature.

However, given that the MNIS systems are totally new, there is provision under the Contract Agreement with the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise for a team of experts from the Singaporean consortium and their vendors to temporarily provide the necessary support while handing over to the local team, thereby giving adequate opportunity for local capacity building. This component namely 'Operation and Support - Managed Services' will be provided over a period of nine months from commissioning of the hardware and software; and the costs thereof are covered under the project value to the tune of 1.24 million Singapore Dollars.

Thus, the ownership and responsibility for managing and maintaining the MNIS databases rest with the operations and support team from Government of Mauritius with the technical assistance from Singapore for the first months. It is to be emphasised that the Contract Agreement contains Non-Disclosure Agreement provisions to ensure further data security. It is therefore being ensured that capacity building of our local team is completed within the initial nine-month period under the Contract Agreement.

In the fulfilment of the Contract Agreement the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise has engaged with both international and local suppliers and experts for provision of products and services which fall under the scope of work of Singapore Cooperation Enterprise and they independently carry out their procurement exercise. Government, therefore, does not get involved in the procurement process of the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise. However, Government has to ensure that the conditions of the Contract Agreement are respected.

For instance, the conversion exercise for replacing the old ID Card by the new Card is carried out based on an outsource model on a cost per card basis. An agreed number of cards to be delivered during the conversion period serve as the Key Performance Indicator in this respect.

There have been two applications for interim injunctions against the project before the Judge in Chambers. The Learned Judge in Chambers declined to grant the injunctions. In one of the cases, the Learned Judge concluded that the applicant had failed to show any urgency on account of clear and blatant violation of his constitutionally entrenched rights such as to necessitate the granting of an injunction. Furthermore, according to the judgment, , it does

appear that the applicant will have to surmount a formidable obstacle before the competent Court in order to prove his case in the light of the arguments advanced by the State.

The implementation of the MNIS project is well on track and we will continue to provide the public with a rapid service and information to be able to complete the conversion exercise within the project scheduled time limit that is 15 September 2014. Government has no intention to freeze such an important and innovative project which forms part of our strategy to transform and modernise the country.

SPORTS BILL (NEW) - INTRODUCTION

(No. B/809) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the deadline imposed by the International Olympic Committee for the introduction of a New Sports Bill in the National Assembly, the failure of which may entail the suspension of Mauritius at the international level if not respected, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: In April 2013, following a Supreme Court Judgement that five fictitious Federations should not have voting rights in the Mauritius National Olympic Committee (MNOC) election, two officials from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) visited Mauritius on the invitation of the MNOC. In an attempt to find a solution, they issued a "*Feuille de Route*" wherein my Ministry was given a time frame of six months for finalising the review of the Sports Act. Essentially, the reason for pressing for the amendments to the Sports Act was to be in line with the Olympic Charter.

In my reply to PQ No. B/291, I informed the House that intensive consultations had to be carried out with all stakeholders with a view to reaching a consensus on the pertinent issues to be addressed in the new Sports Bill. As a matter of fact, the drafting and finalisation of the new Sports Bill has taken quite some time. Moreover, since Parliament was on leave from 24 July to 22 October 2013, the time frame of six months could not be respected. The IOC has been apprised of the situation and has agreed to extend the time frame to end of December 2013. The State Law Office has submitted a first draft which is being looked into by my Ministry.

Hopefully, after Government's approval the new Sports Bill would be ready for introduction in the National Assembly by mid November 2013 and may be adopted before the end of December.

We are showing our good faith in aligning the Sports Act with the Olympic Charter. From this angle, we are not worried about any suspension from the IOC. However, there are other issues outside Government's purview, more precisely, whether MNOC and IOC will allow fictitious federations to vote at the General Assembly of the MNOC against the ruling of the Supreme Court.

My Ministry is having close consultations with the IOC on this issue.

SPORTS - TRUST FUND FOR EXCELLENCE - SCHOLARSHIPS

(No. B/810) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Trust Fund, information as to the total amount of money received, since January 2013 to date, indicating the -

- (a) sources thereof and
- (b) number of scholarships allocated in respect of each sport discipline.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question a sum of Rs14.5 m. has been provided by my Ministry to the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports for the year 2013. In addition the Trust Fund has received an amount of Rs1,857,793 as CSR money for the period 2012/2013.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am tabling a list of beneficiaries for period 2012-2013 ending June 2013 as well as two exceptional cases for 2013/2014 which had to be finalised in presto because the beneficiaries had to join their training programme which started on 1 October 2013.

The Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports is presently working in consultation with the different Sports Federations on the 2013- 2014 edition of the scholarship. I am informed that the list for 2013/2014 has been finalised, but some cross checking is being carried out in consultations with the federations, following which it will be made public.

MEDICAL COUNCIL - DOCTORS' REGISTRATION EXAMINATION

(No. B/811) **Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Doctors' Registration Examination carried out by the Medical Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to -

- (a) the composition of the Board of Examiners therefor, indicating the
 - (i) criteria used for the selection of the examiners, and
 - (ii) examination syllabus circulated therefor;
- (b) if same ought not to have been held prior to the internship training, and
- (c) if the candidates who graduated from the University of Mauritius ought not to have been exempted therefrom.

(Withdrawn)

POINTE AUX SABLES - LA COLOMBE SHELTER - INCIDENT

(No. B/812) **Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the La Colombe Shelter of Pointe aux Sables, she will state if an inquiry has been carried out into an incident which took place thereat, on Sunday 22 September 2013, and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: In regard to the incident which took place at La Colombe Shelter of Pointe aux Sables on 22 September 2013, I wish to inform the House that both my Ministry and the National Children's Council (NCC) have carried out an enquiry in the matter. I am apprised that the Police and the Ombudsperson for Children's Office are also investigating into the said incident. In addition to the social enquiry being carried out at the level of the CDU and further to a press article published on 26 September 2013, I set up an Independent Committee of Enquiry to probe, *inter alia*, into the alleged attempt to choke a two-month old baby.

The psychologist of my Ministry has conducted several follow-up sessions with residents involved in this incident. The carers concerned were offered psychological support. Baby E.D was medically examined.

To ease tension at the Shelter and as a precautionary measure, the teenage mother E.E and her two children have been transferred to another institution. Furthermore, upon application to the District Magistrate, one of the alleged defaulters, minor M.J.F, 16 years, has been transferred from La Colombe to the Rehabilitation Youth Centre. A request has been made by the Officer-in-Charge of the Shelter to the District Magistrate for the alternative placement of another child, namely, minor O.R, who is reported to be beyond control.

I would like to inform the House that, on 17 October 2013, I met the newly appointed Chairperson as well members of the NCC Board. They were apprised of the incident and the stand of the Ministry. They were requested to review the current mode of services offered at the Shelter and to come up with concrete measures for an effective and efficient management thereof.

The NCC has reported that the situation is under control and that the Board will shortly inform the Ministry of their proposed course of action.

POINTE AUX SABLES - LA COLOMBE SHELTER

- OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN - RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/813) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the La Colombe Shelter of Pointe aux Sables, she will state if the recommendations contained in the Report 2011-2012 of the Ombudsperson for Children in relation thereto have been implemented and, if so, give details thereof.

Reply: Most of the recommendations contained in the Ombudsperson for Children Report 2011-2012 in relation to the Shelter La Colombe have been addressed.

Various training sessions for child caregivers have been carried out by both the Ministry and the National Children's Council (NCC). No recruitment of additional Child Caregivers has been made given that the Memorandum of Understanding regarding the management of the

Shelter by the NCC ended in October 2012, and same is being renewed on a month to month basis pending the award of the Management Services Contract to a successful bidder.

All efforts are deployed for children of the Shelter to join the mainstream schooling system. The children are admitted in the schools found in the catchment area of the Shelter. Arrangements have been made with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources for 3 Special Needs Primary School teachers to be posted at the Shelter for children who have never been enrolled in the schooling system and for those with special needs. Children with disabilities attend specialized schools as appropriate. Elder children at the Shelter are being trained in life skills education.

As for the participation of the residents in leisure activities, various recreational tours as well as holistic indoor activities are organised for them on a regular basis.

Concerning acceleration of procedures for Foster Care, it is to be pointed out that the duration of the procedures depends upon the specificity of each case. In line with the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the best interests of the child are considered at each and every step of the process. On average, one case may take between 3 to 6 months to be finalised.

RODRIGUES – FISHERS - BAD WEATHER ALLOWANCES

(No. B/814) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Fisheries whether, in regard to the criteria for the payment of the Bad Weather Allowances for the in-lagoon fishers, he will state if he proposes to eliminate the North Zone, from the Baie Pistache to Pointe au Sel, the East Zone, from Pointe au Sel to Petit Gravier, the South Zone, from Petit Gravier to Baie Topaze and the West Zone, from the Baie Topaze to the Baie Pistache, for a fair and equitable assessment of the state of the sea in the lagoons of Rodrigues and, if so, when.

Reply: The criteria for payment of the Bad Weather Allowance was reviewed and approved by Government in June 2006, in line with recommendations of the Director of Audit.

With due respect to the autonomy of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA), my Ministry may consider any proposal that the RRA might submit with regard to the assessment of the state of the sea in the lagoons of Rodrigues.

DRIVING LICENCE - SMART CARD

(No. B/815) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the driving licence and its counterpart, he will state if Government proposes to adopt a smart card therefor and, if so, when.

Reply: At this stage it is not proposed to introduce an electronic driving licence and counterpart.

Before embarking on such a project, a feasibility study will have to be carried out as it will, among others, involve huge financial implications and amendments to the existing legislation.

The issue of a driving licence and the format thereof lies within the responsibilities of the Licensing Officer, who is appointed under the Road Traffic Act by the Commissioner of Police.

STATE LAND - SQUATTERS

(No. B/816) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether in regard to the squatters of State land in mainland Mauritius, he will state the number thereof, zone-wise, giving a list thereof who are of Rodriguan origin, indicating those who are already lessees of State land in Rodrigues and the measures taken by his Ministry in relation thereto.

Reply: Squatting over State land is illegal and should not be tolerated or encouraged.

In fact, I have personally intervened through media, at official forum and more importantly in this august Assembly to sensitise the public at large against squatting on State land. Over the years 3,850 cases have been detected and as at date, 2,714 cases have been regularised. The remaining cases are being processed on a case to case basis and are as follows -

SN	District	Total

1	Rivière du Rempart	137
2	Pamplemousses	52
3	Flacq	146
4	Moka	45
5	Plaines Wilhems	30
6	Black River	294
7	Grand Port	91
8	Savanne	111
9	Port Louis	230
	Total	1136

The squatting unit at my Ministry operates with the assistance of the *Police des Terres*. Its major responsibility is to detect squatters throughout the island.

To discourage squatting, my Ministry with the assistance of the *Police des Terres* carries regular monitoring of squatting prone areas. Moreover, there is ample sensitisation through the media and official forum to discourage people to squat on State lands.

I also wish to highlight that the issue of squatting is complex due to its inherent human factor, the scarcity of State lands and the need to strike the right balance in allocating lands. However my Ministry is monitoring the situation with compassion, but also with firmness in order to discourage abuse.

I do not propose as requested to circulate a list of persons coming from Rodrigues who are squatting on State land in Mauritius as this would be unethical. Rodriguans are full-fledged citizens of the Republic of Mauritius.

Regularisation of any case of squatting is subject to the beneficiaries satisfying the eligibility criteria for the allocation of a plot of State land. One of these criteria is that the

beneficiaries should not be owner of a plot of private land or already a building site lessee either in Mauritius or Rodrigues.

MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL – AWARD SCHEME

(No. B/817) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether in regard to research and development, he will state if Government proposes to set up a Research and Development Scheme with a view to providing internships and necessary support, either locally or overseas and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: The Mauritius Research Council has a post graduate award scheme and a traineeship scheme for young graduates, which is open to researchers of Mauritius and Rodrigues and include training and internships.

The Tertiary Education Commission also provides 15 full-time MPhil/PhD Scholarships, 15 Part-time Bursaries and for 2 Postdoctoral Fellowships undertaken at the University of Mauritius and University of Technology, Mauritius which are open to students in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

The number of Rodriguan students pursuing tertiary education studies has been increasing gradually and has almost doubled since 2005/2006 from 238 to about 500 in 2012. In the context of our strategy for higher education, students will continue to be sensitised on postgraduate studies and research. The Mauritius Research Council will continue outreach programmes to encourage students to engage in research. Since October 2011, 4 students from Rodrigues have been offered traineeship at the Mauritius Research Council Office in Rodrigues.

EIILM MAURITIUS – EIILM SIKKIM - AGREEMENT

(No. B/818) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the EIILM Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as to if it has any agreement with EIILM Sikkim and, if so, indicate the nature and conditions thereof.

(Withdrawn)

WATER SUPPLY - MEASURES

(No. B/819) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply during the prevailing dry season, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to the measures taken to cater for the water supply needs, and
- (b) state the other measures, if any, taken to address the issue.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/804)

CEB - POWER PLANT ENGINES

(No. B/820) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Power Plant Engines owned by the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to the –

- (a) lifetime and make and country of origin of each, and
- (b) measures taken for the replacement of the old ones.

Reply: In regard to part (a), I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that engines for power generation fall under four categories, with different life expectancies based on the running hours, as follows –

- low speed engines either 150,000 running hours or twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) years;
- medium speed engines either 100,000 running hours or twenty (20) to twenty-five (25) years;
- high speed gas turbines around 30 years, and

- hydro turbines up to 50 years.

I am further informed that the actual life expectancy of each engine depends on other factors, such as –

- loading pattern over the years;
- frequency of start-stop cycles;
- type of fuel used;
- quality of maintenance;
- generic defects, and
- vibration level of the engine.

I am tabling the information on the make, model, country of origin, commissioning date, and running hours as at 30 September 2013 of all engines in operation in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

In regard to part (b), I am informed by the Central Electricity Board that the oldest engines still in operation are –

- five diesel units (Medium Speed) commissioned at Saint Louis from 1978 to 1981 of total capacity of 60 MW, which have been derated to 25 MW on account of long service age;
- two diesel units (Medium Speed) commissioned at Fort-Victoria in 1989 of total capacity of 19MW, and
- two diesel units (low speed) installed at Fort George in 1992 and 1993 respectively of total capacity of 48 MW.

I wish to inform the House that additional capacity is added to the system on the basis of the phasing out of old engines and the need to meet increase in electricity demand. The additional capacity may be provided by either CEB or IPPs. The measures being taken by CEB to increase its generation capacity are –

- the redevelopment of St Louis power station by the installation of four engines of capacity of 15MW each. CEB has invited Requests for Proposal for consultancy services in respect of this project and the closing

date is 23 October 2013. The new units are expected to be operational by 2015;

- Request for Proposal for consultancy services for the replacement of the two oldest 2X24 MW engines at the Fort George power station will shortly be launched, and
- the implementation of the CT Power Project for a 100 MW coal based plant at Pointe aux Caves with stringent EU environment emissions standards which is expected to be operational early 2017, and
- a pre-feasibility study for the use of LNG for electricity generation is ongoing and is expected to be completed by mid 2014.

CIVIL SERVICE - RECRUITMENT

(No. B/821) Mr A. Gungah (First Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the civil service, he will state the number of officers recruited, since 2005 to date on a yearly basis -

(a) by the Public Service Commission, and

(b) under the Service to Mauritius Programme.

(Withdrawn)

ANSE LA RAIE VILLAGE - HOTEL DEVELOPMENT - APPLICATION

(No. B/822) Mr A. Gungah (First Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Anse la Raie Village, he will state if his Ministry has received any application for hotel development thereat and, if so, indicate when and the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

VEGETABLES (FRESH) – PESTICIDE - TEST

(No. B/823) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney General whether, in regard to the fresh vegetables sold on the market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority, information as to if tests are carried out on a regular basis to determine the pesticide levels in the residues thereof and, if so, indicate the findings thereof.

(Withdrawn)

WATER SUPPLY - AGRO-CHEMICAL RESIDUES

(No. B/824) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney General whether, in regard to the underground water tables and drinking water, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority, information as to if tests are carried out on a regular basis thereon to determine the level of agro-chemical residues therein and, if so, indicate the findings thereof.

(Withdrawn)

GINI COEFFICIENT

(No. B/825) 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 Gini coefficient, he will state the figures thereof over the past three years, indicating if there has been any deterioration of the poverty gap.

(Withdrawn)

STREET VENDORS

(No. B/826) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the issue of the street vendors, he will state if any solution has been found in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the time frame set therefor and, if not, why not.

(Withdrawn)

STATE LAND - RODRIGUAN FAMILIES - SQUATTERS

(No. B/827) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the families from Rodrigues who are squatting State land in mainland Mauritius, he will state if there is a report which indicates the number thereof, indicating if his Ministry has taken measures to stop these families from squatting these land.

(Withdrawn)

TOURISM SECTOR – HOTELS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/828) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the tourism sector, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of rooms available in each category of hotels, and
- (b) state if he proposes not to recommend the construction of new hotels, having regard to the prevailing state of affairs in the sector.

Reply: According to figures made available by Statistics Mauritius, as at June 2013 there were a total of 11,977 rooms in registered hotels categorised as follows -

- (a) 8,962 rooms in 49 large hotels; and
- (b) 3015 rooms in 60 non-large hotels.

As regards part (b) of the question, the answer is no.

The House will appreciate that -

- (i) on one hand, it is the declared policy of this Government to promote entrepreneurship; and
- (ii) on the other hand, despite the euro zone crisis, our tourism sector is renewing with growth which has been triggered by our market diversification strategy targeting mainly emerging markets in Asia, Middle East countries and in the region. I must also point out that the forecasts made by Statistics Mauritius indicate that tourist arrivals will grow annually at the rate of at least 3.2 % during the period 2014 to 2016. Hence, my Ministry will continue to pursue a hotel development strategy that caters for diversity and meets the requirements of our niche market segments such as MICE, etc.

FISH AUCTION MARKET - OPERATIONAL

(No. B/830) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Fisheries whether, in regard to the Fish Auction Market, he will state if it is now operational.

Reply: The House would recall that in my reply to PQ B/159 on 16 April 2013, I informed the House that the Ministry of Business, Enterprises and Cooperatives had expressed interest to operate the Fish Auction Market.

A Technical Committee comprising officials from my Ministry, the Ministry of Business, Enterprises and Cooperatives, the Fishermen Investment Trust and the Mauritius Fishermen Cooperatives Federation Ltd. was set up with the main objective to discuss and work out the modalities and assess the financial implications for the operationalisation of the Fish Auction Market.

The Technical Committee has submitted its report on 03 October 2013 which contains the following recommendations -

- (a) the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing (Prices of Controlled Products) By-catch Fish (Amendment) Regulations 2004 made under Section 14 of the Mauritius

Agricultural Marketing Board Act 1971 be reviewed to make provision for the operationalisation of the Fish Auction Market;

- (b) the Fish Auction Market to be entrusted to a Consortium comprising of the Fishermen Investment Trust, the Mauritius Fishermen Cooperatives Federation Ltd. and a strategic partner, and
- (c) the facilities of the Fish Auction Market to be converted into a fish processing plant in the event that there would be no operator willing to invest in the Fish Auction Market.

These recommendations are being examined by my Ministry and a decision will be taken shortly.

LES SALINES - FISHERS

(No. B/831) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Fisheries whether, in regard to the fishers of Les Salines, in Port Louis, he will state if he is aware of the difficulties they are encountering with the Mauritius Ports Authority and, if so, indicate the actions, if any, he proposes to take in relation thereto.

Reply: I have been informed that the Mauritius Ports Authority has embarked on the implementation of the Extension and Strengthening of the Quays at the Mauritius Container Terminal at Mer Rouge which include a component of dredging and land reclamation. The dredging works will start in mid 2014 and with a view to minimising the impact on the marine environment; the Mauritius Ports Authority proposes to construct a bund wall at Fort William and Fort Georges for the disposal of dredged materials.

In August this year, the Mauritius Ports Authority held a meeting with the representatives of fishermen of the region to brief them on the different components of the port project. The fishermen raised the following issues -

- (i) their small fishing boats are presently being moored at Fort William and another mooring place should be identified in consultation with them when the dredging works would start;
- (ii) the fishermen were facing difficulties in catching live baits (sardines) in the Port area, and

- (iii) the fishermen apprehended the effect of wave actions following the dredging works.

My Ministry has requested the Mauritius Ports Authority to take appropriate measures to address these issues.

EIILM UNIVERSITY - OPERATION

(No. B/832) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the EIILM University, he will state if his Ministry has ascertained –

- (a) the identity of the owners and managers thereof
- (b) if it is operating with the green light of the University Grants Commission of India, and
- (c) if it is complying with the conditions set down by the Tertiary Education Commission, with a view to safeguarding the interests of the students enrolled thereat.

(Withdrawn)

STATISTICS MAURITIUS – INCOME DISPARITIES

(No. B/833) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether he has been made aware of the latest figures of Statistics Mauritius pertaining to income disparities and social inequality generally and, if so, state if he has recommended to Government the urgent revision of the prescribed minimum wage in the relevant sectors of employment and/or measures of direct income support.

(Withdrawn)

**GOVERNMENT SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS SCHOOLS/INTEGRATED UNIT
– MONEY DISBURSED**

(No. A/260) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Government Special Education Needs Schools/Integrated Unit, he will give a list thereof, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) addresses and disability type thereof
- (b) number of –
 - (i) students attending thereto
 - (ii) teachers from his Ministry attached thereto, and
 - (iii) teachers or any other employee from any Non Governmental Organisation, if any, attached thereto, indicating the quantum of grant paid to the said Non-Governmental Organisation, and
- (c) total yearly amount of money disbursed therefor, since 2008 to 2011.

Reply: The information requested is being placed in the Library.

NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT FUND - BENEFICIARIES

(No. A/261) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the National Empowerment Fund, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of surveys carried out to identify the beneficiaries thereof, since the setting up thereof to date, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) dates on which the surveys were carried out, and
- (b) number of families identified.

Reply: The National Empowerment Foundation has informed that a first survey was undertaken in 2006 by the then Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups and had revealed that 7,157 households were living below the poverty threshold, which was capped at Rs4,000 per month.

In July 2010, a similar exercise was carried out when the monthly poverty threshold was reviewed to Rs5,000 and 6,199 households were registered.

The assessment of vulnerable households is an ongoing exercise of the Foundation. In February 2012, following a review of the poverty threshold to Rs6,200, the number of vulnerable households registered had increased to 11,571.

BEAU BASSIN & PETITE RIVIERE – ROADS - RESURFACING

(No. A/262) **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 Constituency No. 20, he will state the number of ongoing projects thereat, indicating if funds are being allocated for the resurfacing of the roads and, if so, give the list of the roads identified therefor.

Reply: The information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as it will be ready.

SCHOOLS - SLAM, DRAMA, PHOTOGRAPHY - PROMOTION

(No. A/264) **Mrs J. Radeconde (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to slam, drama, photography, reading and writing, he will state if the promotion thereof is being done in schools and, if so, indicate the names of the -

- (a) resource persons recruited therefor and the respective quantum of fees allocated thereto, and
- (b) schools selected therefor.

Reply: Regional Drama Workshops, Residential Drama Workshops and National Drama Festivals are organised at national level in ten languages by my Ministry annually and implemented by officers of my Ministry. No resource person has therefore been recruited and no fees paid. A list of participating schools for this year is being placed in the Library.

Furthermore, I wish to inform the House that the National Slam Competition 2013 is scheduled to start in December 2013. The competition will be open to all students. The resource

persons thereof have not yet been finalised. Four regional workshops on Slam are scheduled for early next year prior to the Slam Competition at secondary level.

As regards reading and writing, the CELPAC centres which are located around the island promote reading and writing in these centres. CELPAC subscribers who are mainly students borrow books for reading.

As regards to the other activities, I am informed that the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has a programme in this respect, except for photography.

MAURITIUS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA - SETTING UP

(No. A/265) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a Mauritius Symphony Orchestra, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: In my reply to the PQ No. A/164 at our sitting of Tuesday 11 June 2013, I mentioned that the setting up of a Symphonic Orchestra is a very complex process with huge financial implications.

The major hurdle in the setting up of the Symphonic Orchestra is that specialised human resources are not available locally. A minimum of 70 persons is required for a Symphonic Orchestra of international standard.

In addition to the huge financial outlay which is required to launch the project, the economic challenges faced by Symphony Orchestras begin with the fact that their performance revenues from concerts, broadcasts and recordings do not cover their performance expenses for artistic personnel, concert production, marketing, and general administration.

The Conservatoire National de Musique François Mitterrand is working on the creation of a model symphonic orchestra from existing resources through its training programmes.

CEB - NON-PAYMENT OF BILLS - DISCONNECTION

(No. A/266) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in

regard to electricity supply, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the number of households which have been disconnected for non-payment of bills, since 2005 to date, indicating if consideration will be given for a waiver of the amount due and reinstatement of the connection thereof.

Reply: I am informed by the Central Electricity Board (CEB) that from January 2005 to 30 September 2013, 109,437 domestic households have been disconnected, out of which 90,839 have been reconnected.

I am further informed that it is not the policy of the CEB to apply a waiver in respect of the amount due by a customer. The electricity supply is reinstated solely upon settlement of the outstanding amounts.

However, the CEB gives due consideration to vulnerable households whereby payment facilities may be granted on a case-to-case basis, upon request to the CEB.

Moreover, I would like to inform the House that my Ministry and the CEB are encouraging customers, particularly those in the vulnerable groups to opt for the pre-paid metering scheme, which will be operational shortly.

PARISOT BRIDGE - PRIVATE LAND - COMPENSATION

(No. A/267) **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 Parisot bridge at Mesnil, he will state if a plot of private land has been used therefor and, if so, indicate –

- (a) who leveled same;
- (b) the tonnage and cost of the filling materials thereof, and
- (c) if the owner thereof has been compensated therefor and, if so, indicate the quantum of the compensation.

Reply: For the purpose of the implementation of a project of widening of the Parisot Bridge in Mesnil, Government has had to acquire 2 plots of private land of an approximate area of 7.66m² and 6.26 m² respectively. Procedures have already been initiated in that respect and the quantum of compensation is being determined by the Valuation Department.

In the course of execution of the work it was imperative that a plot of land very close to the subject site be used as access and storage of materials, plants and equipment. It happened that the only suitable plot of land available was the one belonging to one Mr H.; which land was adjacent to the construction site.

The works were completed after nine months. By that time with the various activities that took place on the plot of land used as storage, the land suffered physical damages apart from a vegetative hedge having been removed, thus impeding on the privacy and security of the land owner. Request was made to the NDU to restore the land to its initial state. About 40 tonnes of fill materials and 12 tonnes of crusher run were laid and compacted by the zonal contractor of NDU for a sum of Rs59,000.

This arrangement is the most cost-effective one when compared to what it would have cost if alternative site was to be rented for the construction period added to the cost of transportation of materials from storage site to construction site.

No compensation has been paid to the owner of the plot of land.

MEDCO COLLEGE - TEACHERS

(No. A/268) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the MEDCO, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the number of rectors and deputy rectors thereof who are equally employed as teachers, indicating in each case, the -

- (a) names of the colleges in which they are working;
- (b) date of transfer to the MEDCO college, and
- (c) weekly workload.

Reply: Out of the 14 Rectors who have been transferred to MEDCO and redeployed to secondary schools, six are performing teaching duties in a number of colleges. Seven of the remaining Rectors are providing administrative support and one has been assigned duties of Rector.

With regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question relating to the names of the colleges in which they are working, the date of transfer to MEDCO and their weekly workload, the information is being laid in the Library.

However, as for the workload, it is expected to range between 15 to 20 periods per week as per the guidelines of the Circular dated 17 April 2012 issued by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

In fact, the actual number of periods to be serviced depends upon the exigencies and other factors and may not be fixed.

CHILD LABOUR – MEASURES

(No. A/269) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to child labour, he will state the number of reported cases thereof at his Ministry, since 2008 to date, indicating in each case, the -

- (a) age of the child;
- (b) nature of the work performed, and
- (c) actions, if any, taken against the employer.

Reply: Under the Employment Rights Act 2008 a child is defined as a person under the age of 16 and Section 12 thereof provides that no person shall employ a child for employment or work in any occupation. The Act also provides that any person who employs a child shall commit an offence.

From January 2008 to 30 September 2013, there have been 11 cases of child employment. Out of the 11 cases, nine (9) were reported by the '*Brigade des Mineurs*' and one (1) by the Ombudsperson for Children. Furthermore, one (1) case was detected by officers of my Ministry during inspection visits carried out.

Information relating to age of the child, nature of work performed and actions taken against the employer in each of the 11 cases is being placed in the Library.

PAILLES, CAMP CHAPELON - MOBILE HEALTH CARAVAN

(No. A/270) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to Camp Chapelon, Pailles, he will state if he proposes to place a mobile health caravan thereat, on a weekly basis, to provide health services such as the taking of blood samples for tests and the taking of blood pressure, and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: Camp Chapelon, Pailles, is located within a radius of less than 2 Kms in the catchment area of Pailles (East) Community Health Centre where facilities for taking blood samples and blood pressure are already available.

As such, it is not proposed to place a mobile health caravan there.

CANAL DAYOT – WORKS CARRIED OUT

(No. A/271) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the works being carried out at Canal Dayot, he will state the -

- (a) nature thereof;
- (b) name of the contractor, and
- (c) cost thereof, indicating the start and expected completion dates thereof.

Reply: With regard to works carried out at Canal Dayot the scope involved cleaning of the river of all vegetation and debris, de-silting of the river, widening the river to an average of 18 metres and construction of rock bunds.

As for part (b) of the question, Nawrang & Co. Ltd had undertaken the works.

As regards part (c), the cost of the project is Rs12,346,170 (exclusive of VAT). The project started on 04 April 2013 and has been completed on 05 September 2013.

FIRE STATIONS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. A/272) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the construction of the new Head Office, Port Louis Fire Station and Training Centre at Riche Terre, of the Goodlands, Montagne Blanche and Rose Belle new fire stations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Government Fire Services, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service as follows -

(i) Construction of the new Head Office, Port Louis Fire Station and Training Centre at Riche Terre

A plot of State land of the extent of 16A30 at Riche Terre has been vested in my Ministry for the construction of a new fire station for Port Louis, a new Head Office for the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service and a Training Academy.

A proposal has been made to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for the provision of funds to conduct a feasibility study for the project as required by the Investment Project Process Manual.

(ii) Construction of new Fire Station at Rose Belle

This project which is estimated to cost Rs100 m. has been approved by the Project Plan Committee. After consultation, the Drawings are being amended by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping. Funds would be earmarked for the implementation of this project in the Programme Based Budget 2014-2016. Bids would be invited next year.

(iii) Construction of new Fire Station at Goodlands

The project estimated to cost Rs90 m. has been approved by the Project Plan Committee. The same design for the Rose Belle Fire Station will be used for the proposed Fire Station at Goodlands.

A proposal has been made to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for provision of funds in financial year 2015 under the Programme Based Budget 2014-2016.

(iv) Construction of new Fire Station at Montagne Blanche

The project estimated to cost Rs80 m. has been approved by the Project Plan Committee. The same design for the Rose Belle Fire Station will be considered for this project.

A proposal has been made in the Programme Based Budget 2014-2016 to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to provide funds for this project in financial years 2015 and 2016.

COROMANDEL FIRE STATION - DAMAGED VEHICLES

(No. A/273) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the old and damaged vehicles lying in the yard of the Coromandel Fire Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Government Fire Services, information as to the number thereof, indicating how and when they will be disposed of.

Reply: I am informed by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service that there are eight damaged firefighting appliances and six damaged Double Cab Pick Up Vans, which are beyond economical repairs and same will be disposed of by December 2013 in accordance with procedures in force. Relevant details on these vehicles are indicated in the document laid in the Library.

MILITARY ROAD, CITÉ MARTIAL - TRAFFIC OBSTRUCTION

(No. A/274) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First 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 he is aware of traffic congestions in the vicinity of the mosque situated at corner Paul & Virginie and Military roads, Cité Martial, Port Louis, during prayer time and, if so, indicate if urgent consideration will be given for appropriate traffic measures to be taken thereat, including double-yellow road markings at Impasse Military, opposite the Mosque and junction of Paul & Virginie and Military roads and the placing of handrails to reinforce security thereat.

Reply: The Madinat-ul-Munnawara Mosque has been built right on the edge of Military road opposite the junction of Paul & Virginie street.

The Mosque does not have off-street parking facilities. Consequently people coming to Mosque by cars and motorcycles have no choice than to park on the road itself. On-street parking is very likely to cause obstruction to traffic, especially as the road is relatively narrow (width between 4.50m-5.00m).

Moreover, car users tend to park nearest to the Mosque or at a distance considered reasonable and safe for them, often in a disorderly manner, thus causing traffic obstruction.

Military road and Paul & Virginie street are both narrow roads and accordingly there is need to control parking of vehicles and prohibit parking on certain sections of the roads to ensure a relatively smooth traffic flow. A comprehensive survey will be carried out to identify those sections of road where parking needs to be prohibited. Relevant measures will consequently be implemented to ensure that the road does not get obstructed.

Concerning handrails, being given that Military Road is very narrow it is not advisable to install handrails as, instead of improving safety, they would constitute a danger themselves. It has been found out there is a footpath along the frontage of the Mosque, which is narrow (width 1.00m or less). The installation of handrails on this footpath would hamper the movement of pedestrians and become a source of traffic hazard. Moreover, there is a high risk of vehicles rubbing against the handrail or even crashing into them.

ABERCROMBIE - POLICE DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. A/275) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First 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 proposed construction of a new and modern Divisional Headquarters at Abercrombie, he will state if -

- (a) a site survey and collection of brief have been completed and, if not, why not, and
- (b) the project will include a detention centre and, if not, why not, indicating where matters stand.

Reply: In reply to Parliamentary Question A/131 in June 2013, I submitted to the National Assembly an implementation schedule for the Proposed Construction of a New and Modern Divisional Headquarters at Abercrombie. The implementation schedule will be respected.

The Police Department has recently submitted the survey plan from the Ministry of Housing and Lands to the Architects Section and the site survey which has started will be completed within a fortnight.

The Project Plans Committee (PPC) has recommended the Project for implementation on 10 October 2013. A detailed brief which includes: the project Police Station, Criminal

Investigation Division, Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit, Police Prosecutor's Office, Sub-Divisional Headquarters, Garage and Parking facilities, has been submitted to this Ministry.

As regards part (b) of the question, the project does not include a Detention Centre as the purpose of a Detention Centre is very different from the functions of the Headquarters. Moreover, the Detention Centre at the Line Barracks meets the requirements of the Police Department and, therefore, the construction of another Detention Centre is not envisaged at this stage.

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS - CHANCELLOR & PRO CHANCELLOR
- SALARY & ALLOWANCES

(No. A/276) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the Chancellor and Pro Chancellor of the University of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University, information as to the names of the incumbents, indicating the respective

- (a) salary and allowance drawn;
- (b) terms and conditions of appointment, and
- (c) make and model of the car put at the disposal thereof.

Reply: The information is as follows –

		Chancellor	Pro Chancellor
	Name	Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall, G.C.S.K.	Professor Sudarshan Jugessur C.S.K.
a)	Salary and Allowance	Nil	A monthly allowance of Rs28,500 in accordance with Paragraph 19.11 of 2013 PRB Report.

b)	Terms and Conditions	In accordance with Section 8 of the University of Mauritius Act 1971 (<i>amended by Act No. 47 of 1992 and by Act No. 27 of 2012</i>) and by the Statutes of the University of Mauritius 2013 (Statute 3). Extracts are annexed	In accordance with Section 10 of the University of Mauritius Act 1971 (<i>amended by Act No. 47 of 1992 and by Act No. 27 of 2012</i>) and by the Statutes of the University of Mauritius 2013 (Statute 5). Extracts are annexed
c)	Make and Model of Car Put at his Disposal	Nil	Nil

**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT,
LAND TRANSPORT & SHIPPING - ADVISERS/PRESS ATTACHÉS - APPOINTMENT**

(No. A/277) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the advisers/press attachés and/or persons employed on contract at his Ministry, he will give a list thereof, indicating in each case, the

- (a) position held;
- (b) date of appointment;
- (c) qualifications, and
- (d) terms and conditions of appointment.

Reply: Appointment of Advisers on contract is made under Section 89(3) (h) of the Constitution and with the approval of the Prime Minister. The list of Advisers at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping has been placed in the Library.

However, in view of lack of technical capacity, Ministries and Departments often resort to appointment of officers on contract against established posts. The power for such recruitments rests with the Public Service Commission. The list of officers appointed on contract has been placed in the Library.

P.Q. No. A/276

APPENDIX

**UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS - CHANCELLOR & PRO CHANCELLOR -
SALARY & ALLOWANCES**

Section 8 of University of Mauritius Act 1971

(amended by Act No. 47 of 1992 and by Act No. 27 of 2012):

- (1) There shall be a Chancellor of the University who shall be the Head of the University and who shall have such powers and functions as are prescribed by the Statutes.
- (2) The Chancellor shall be appointed by the President of the Republic acting on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- (3) The Chancellor shall -
 - (a) hold office for a period of five years;
 - (b) be eligible for re-appointment;
 - (c) be appointed on such other terms and conditions as are prescribed by the Statutes.

Statutes of the University of Mauritius 2013:

Statute 3 - The Chancellor

- (1) The Chancellor shall be appointed by the President of the Republic on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- (2) The Chancellor shall -
 - (a) hold office for a period of 5 years; and
 - (b) be eligible for reappointment.
- (3) The Chancellor shall confer degrees including Honorary Degrees and Diplomas awarded by the Council or the Senate.
- (4) The Chancellor shall preside at any Ceremony of the University.

Section 10 of University of Mauritius Act 1971

(as subsequently amended by Act No. 47 of 1992 and by Act No. 27 of 2012):

- (1) There shall be a Pro-Chancellor of the University who shall be ex-officio Chairman of the Council.
- (2) The Pro-Chancellor shall be appointed and shall hold office on such terms and conditions as are prescribed by the Statutes.
- (3) When and as often as the office of Chancellor is vacant or the person holding that office is for any reason unable to perform the functions of the office, the Pro-Chancellor shall perform those functions.
- (4) Nothing in subsection (3) shall be construed as authorizing the Pro-Chancellor to confer degrees, diplomas or other academic qualifications.
- (5) Notwithstanding the Provisions of subsection (2), the first Pro-Chancellor shall be Sir Harilal Ranchordas VAGHJEE, KT.

Statutes of the University of Mauritius 2013:**Statute 5 – The Pro-Chancellor**

- (1) The Pro-Chancellor shall be appointed by the Chancellor on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- (2) The Pro-Chancellor shall hold office until the end of the third year following his appointment or until such earlier date as the Chancellor may, in each case determine. He shall be eligible for reappointment.
- (3) The Pro-Chancellor may resign his office at any time by letter addressed to the Chancellor.