

No. 04 of 2014



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

THIRD SESSION

TUESDAY 22 JULY 2014

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(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 of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues
Dr. the Hon. Ahmed Rashid Beebeejaun, GCSK, FRCP	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
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
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Hon. Satya Veyash Faugoo, GOSK	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney- General
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Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and

Razack Mohamed	Employment
Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Tourism and Leisure
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Hon. Mrs Maria Francesca Mireille Martin	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sutyadeo Moutia	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

THIRD SESSION

Debate No. 04 of 2014

Sitting of 22 July 2014

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis

at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office–

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills –
 - (i) The Professional Land Surveyors' Council Bill (No. VI of 2014),
and
 - (ii) The Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (Amendment) Bill (No. VII of 2014).
- (b) The Annual Report 2013 of the Mauritius Ports Authority.
- (c) The Agreement for the Exchange of Information Relating to Taxes (United States of America – FATCA Implementation) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 135 of 2014).
- (d) The Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment) Rules 2014 (Government Notice No. 136 of 2014).
- (e) The Private Pension Schemes (Administration) Rules 2014 (Government Notice No. 138 of 2014).

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

- (a) The Road Traffic (Control of Vehicle Emissions) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 134 of 2014).
- (b) The Merchant Shipping (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (Government Notice No. 137 of 2014).

C. Ministry of Education and Human Resources –

The Annual Report 2012 of the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC).

D. Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives–

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Cooperative Development Fund for the years ended 30 June 2007 and 30 June 2008 (In Original).

ANNOUNCEMENT

ICAC - PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE – MEMBERS - ELECTION

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make regarding the designation of hon. Members to serve on the Parliamentary Committee set up for the monitoring of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Dr. the hon. Prime Minister has, in the exercise of the powers vested with him under section 59(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, designated -

1. Dr. the hon. Rihun Raj Hawoldar
2. Hon. Ms Kumaree Rajeshree Deerpalsing
3. Hon. Mrs Prateebah Koomaree Bholah
4. Dr. the hon. Balkissoon Hookoom
5. Hon. Ahmed Reza Goolam Mamode Issack

Dr. the hon. Prime Minister has also designated Dr. the hon. Rihun Raj Hawoldar, Chief Government Whip, to be the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT SYSTEM PROJECT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Light Rail Transit System Project, he will state –

- (a) if the alignment and the financial and economic analysis thereof have been finalised and, if so, indicate the estimated –
 - (i) total cost thereof, and
 - (ii) impact thereof on the bus companies and on employment;
- (b) where matters stand as to the tender exercise, indicating the –
 - (i) reasons why some operators have pulled out, and
 - (ii) expected start and completion dates of works in relation thereto;

(c) if he will lay copy of the agreement signed with Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, indicating the sums paid as at to date thereto and to Singapore Mass Rapid Transport, and

(d) if a National Traffic Master Plan is available.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would avail myself of the PNQ to reply to PQ 1B/54.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, it was highlighted in the Government Programme 2012-2015 that Government is committed to modernising Mauritius and laying the foundation for a still more prosperous country in years to come. Thus, investing in infrastructure is necessary both for improving the life of our citizens and for long term growth. It follows that the development of a major nationwide Mass Transit System is an infrastructural project with significant potential for people and businesses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was, in fact, referring to the sections dealing with Public Infrastructure of the Government Programme on page 13 thereof. This shows that Government has a clear vision for the future and cannot be satisfied with mere short term public infrastructural projects. The Mauritius Light Rapid Transit (MLRT) project is a priority transport infrastructure project that will deliver major and much needed travel improvements to the public at large as well as generate substantial transport, economic environmental and community benefits.

The MLRT project aims at enhancing initially travel between Curepipe and Port Louis. The House would agree that this is a corridor that serves the fastest growing areas in the country and the project will contribute significantly to the future economic development and prosperity of the nation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today much ground has been covered in terms of developing and working towards implementation of this national project.

Given the innovative and complex nature of the project, Government decided to draw on the development experience of Singapore to assist us from the inception stage up to the delivery of the project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to inform the House that as deliverable under the MLRT Consultancy Services Contract Stage 1, the Consultant, on the basis of a multi-criteria analysis, proposed the Preferred Corridor. From within this corridor, the preferred alignment was identified and finalised. For the purpose of firming up the choice of the preferred alignment, the following factors were reckoned with -

- (a) reducing traffic congestion;
- (b) encouraging the mode shift from private to public transport;
- (c) improving the quality of public transport;
- (d) improving mobility within the urban area;
- (e) improving the image of Mauritius;
- (f) stimulating inward investment;
- (g) supporting socio-economic development and providing a value for money service;
- (h) creating opportunities for future expansion of the service;
- (i) improving residential amenity, and
- (j) providing a corridor which would impact the least on private properties.

Furthermore, the Consultant, as part of his deliverables, prepared a Feasibility Study Report detailing, among others, the financial and economic analysis of the project. The Feasibility Study Report dated October 2013 indicates that the Capital Cost of the project in present value terms is Rs22.2 billion. Besides, the Report concludes that the project is economically, financially and technically viable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, insofar as part (a) (ii) of the question is concerned, I wish to emphatically assure the House that the LRT System is being implemented within an integrated approach whereby the existing bus transport will be fully on board.

As a matter of fact, the design of the project provides for existing buses to operate as feeders within a catchment area and the gainful redeployment onto other routes on a felt-need basis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) (i) of the question, I need to inform the House that the tender exercise has been a full-fledged and multi-pronged one ranging from a Market Sounding Session up to the actual Request for Proposal. In fact, a Market Sounding Session was held, under the lead of the Consultant during the period 18 to 21 December 2012 to

-

- (i) inform interested parties about the MLRT project proposal;
- (ii) seek comments on suitable Public/Private Partnership schemes for the project;
- (iii) gather further information and use feedback received to refine the key aspects of the project, and
- (iv) facilitate material collection to produce the most appropriate Expression of Interest document.

27 participants, both local and foreign, attended the session.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as per the procurement plan, an Expression of Interest exercise was subsequently carried out. In February 2013, an Expression of Interest was floated by way of an open international advertisement. As at the date limit, that is, 12 April 2013, eleven firms responded to the invitation.

The Expressions of Interest were assessed by the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise together with its technical, legal and financial specialists/experts. After a strict and methodological assessment of the submissions received, the following six entities were selected and retained for the Request for Proposal exercise -

- (i) MRTP Consortium (made up to Bouygues, Alstom Transport and Egis Rail) from France;
- (ii) Rapid Link Consortium from United Kingdom (made up of Bombardier, Keolis and Aveng);
- (iii) Afcons Infrastructure Ltd from India;
- (iv) MCJ Consortium from China (China Communications Construction Company, Hong Kong Mass Transit Railway and Jiang Su Transportation Institute);

- (v) China State Construction Engineering Company Ltd, and
- (vi) BCEG/BUEDRI/BMTRO Consortium from China.

On 11 November 2013, Requests for Proposals were invited from the six qualified delivery consortia. The date limit was 23 May 2014, after two extensions of time of two weeks each were granted upon the request of two of the parties concerned.

In response to the Request for Proposals, three Proposals have been received from two bidders. AFCONS – SPCL Consortium has submitted both a Base Proposal and an Alternative Proposal, and China State Construction Engineering Company has submitted a Base Proposal.

The evaluation exercise is ongoing and it is expected to be completed by 27 July 2014.

As for part (b) (i) of the question, it must be pointed out that although six entities were invited to submit their proposals, it rests with these entities, at their own discretion, to participate or not. The reasons as to why some operators pulled out are unknown to me.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to the approved procurement plan, the Financial Close is scheduled for 31 October 2014, meaning that thereafter the contractor would mobilise and works would start.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that under the Government to Government Agreement, Consultancy Services were procured from the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise which is an entity set up by the Government of Singapore to promote cooperation between Singapore and other countries whereby we can draw from the expertise and development experience of Singapore.

The MLRT Consultancy Services was concluded on 07 September 2012 and it spans over an eleven month period covering the following key tasks -

- (i) to determine the feasible alignment for the LRT Corridor;
- (ii) to prepare Feasibility Study Report;
- (iii) to develop concept and preliminary design, and
- (iv) advise on potential extension of LRT Corridor north of Immigration Square and south of Ian Palach.

The contract was concluded for the sum of 7.8 million Singaporean dollars.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a logical sequence, the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise was entrusted with Transaction Management Services under a Stage 2, still under Government to Government Agreement. The Stage 2 Contract runs up to 31 October 2014, that is, the Financial Close and encompasses the following key tasks -

- (i) Market Sounding Exercise to determine appetite of private promoters for the project;
- (ii) Expression of Interest (EOI) Exercise to shortlist capable applicants;
- (iii) Request for Proposals (RFP) Exercise to select a preferred bidder amongst shortlisted applicants from the EOI exercise, and
- (iv) Negotiation Exercise to sign a contract with the preferred bidder.

The cost of Stage 2 amounts to 8,822,000 Singaporean dollars.

It must be pointed out that a Due Diligence Exercise was carried out for both Stages 1 and 2 to determine whether the contract yields value for money.

By virtue of clause 12.1 and the Sixth Schedule to the Government of Mauritius – Singapore Cooperation Enterprise Agreement, the parties are bound by a Confidentiality/Non-disclosure Agreement.

It will, therefore, not be in order to lay a copy of the Agreement on the Table of the Assembly.

Notwithstanding the confidentiality clauses, the information relating to the price and payments are being communicated to the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (d) of the question, I wish to inform the House that a National Road Transport Policy - "*Tomorrow's Transport*" - was prepared as far back as 1997. The policy set out the guidelines on Government transport vision for the next 20 years, its operating philosophy and strategy it intends to follow to achieve its objectives. The policy was encompassed in Government's National Development Strategy of 2003.

The Strategy formulated six objectives around which to build up the integrated land use and transport strategy -

- implementation of an alternative mode of transport between Curepipe and Port Louis;
- discouraging car trips to the town centres along Port Louis - Curepipe corridor through control on parking supply;
- improving public transport;
- improving traffic circulation in town centres;
- emphasizing maintenance and management of road network and less provision of major new roads, and
- building new roads to improve accessibility to ‘economic’ areas and to bypass towns and villages.

The Strategy recommended that a LRT be introduced to relieve chronic traffic problems, discourage car trips to town centres, reduce dependency on cars for journeys to work and improve the quality of public transport on the island.

The Strategy also proposed that the alignment of LRT would link the town centres of the conurbation and development would be clustered around the town centres and the LRT stations. These stations would thus be a central component in bringing people, jobs and leisure back to the town centres. Town Centre redevelopment will promote higher densities and mixed use development for a dynamic and vibrant urban life.

Moreover, my Ministry has, within the framework of the Strategy, identified a number of road projects to be implemented as a matter of priority with a view to alleviating road congestion islandwide. Projects already completed include -

1. Terre Rouge – Trianon;
2. Phoenix - Beaux Songes;
3. Triolet, Goodlands, Schoenfeld and St. Pierre by-passes;
4. Third lane from Phoenix to Port Louis;
5. dualling of Pamplémousses - Grand Bay road;
6. upgrading and enlargement of Wootton to Quartier Militaire road, and

7. enlargement of Higginson road.

The following projects in the pipeline comprise -

1. A1 - M1 Link road;
2. access road to Flic en Flac;
3. Bel Air - Forbach road;
4. Ring Road Phase 2;
5. dual-carriage way from Souillac to Nouvelle France;
6. East - West Link road, and
7. grade separated junction at Jumbo and Phoenix roundabout.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I would like to assure the House and the public at large that all the necessary measures have been applied to ensure strict compliance with the Public Procurement Legal Framework to protect the integrity of the whole procurement process.

It is worth pointing out that the governance structure put in place provides for a Steering Committee consisting of high ranking public officials, namely the Secretary to Cabinet and the Head of Civil Service, the Financial Secretary and the Solicitor-General, amongst others.

The Steering Committee ensures that the whole process is fair, transparent and accountable.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have been told that the project will cost more than Rs20 billion. Can I know whether, at this stage, there are any indications how fares will compare with bus fares and whether Government has already decided to grant subsidies to that project?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as at now, we do not know the exact fare, but it has already been decided that the fare will be the same as of the bus ticket. It will be the same. It will not be higher than that, but it all depends what would be the bus fare at the time when it is in operation, that is, five years from here.

(Interruptions)

It is being assessed. We are at the stage of assessment. Once we know who got the contract, we will be in a position to know how much money has to be put into it. In fact, I am going to lay a copy on the Table of the Assembly of the feasibility report which mentions all these facts.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Vice-Prime Minister say that bus companies will be taken on board. Some time back, he gave the guarantee that there would be no loss of employment, but, today, I did not hear the hon. Vice-Prime Minister repeat that guarantee. Will he give to the people concerned - the unions, the employees and to the population at large - the guarantee that there will be no loss of employment?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware since 1995 when the question of LRT was raised, a commitment was taken by the then Government and even by successive Governments that we will have to go for the policy of redeployment. So, we have to try to redeploy all those who will be affected by the introduction of LRT.

Mr Bérenger: Do we have any indication what is meant by redeployment at this stage?

Mr Bachoo: It is the same as when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was the Prime Minister; he had given the same guarantee. The same policy will also imply with us as well, that is, there will be no loss of employment.

Mr Bérenger: Regarding part (b) of my question, I did not get the date. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister confirmed that the tender exercise is ongoing, he gave *une date butoir*. Can we have that date by which time this exercise is supposed to be completed?

Mr Bachoo: The exercise is supposed to be completed by 27 July 2014.

Mr Bérenger: *C'est derrière la porte!* By July 2014?

Mr Bachoo: Yes, 2014!

Mr Bérenger: As far as Part (c) of my question is concerned, of course, we cannot agree that this agreement between Mauritius and Singapore is confidential. But, at least, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, what does that agreement provide as far as local partners chosen by the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise are concerned? Do we have information on the local partners; how have they been chosen, and if such information is available, will it be provided?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, most of the contents of the agreement, in an indirect way, I have already revealed to the House except that I am not going to submit a copy because of the confidentiality clause. Secondly, any local group which is being chosen, that is, then strictly according to the tenders is invited and, through tender process, we are trying to recruit, for example, the local communication team and then the recruitment of land surveyors. All have been properly done according to the procurement exercise.

Mr Bérenger: When we say that the tenders are being resorted to, who is in charge of the tender? Will it be the Central Tender Board or the Ministry or the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise?

Mr Bachoo: It is, in fact, the SCE which is looking after all these projects because the entire project has been entrusted to them.

Mr Bérenger: I forgot to put a question earlier on when we were told that, at first, they were 11 companies interested, then it went to six and then to three and now these three offers are being considered. I heard the hon. Vice-Prime Minister saying the reasons why out of 11, therefore, 8 have been either pulled out or have been excluded. Am I right in saying that, in fact, the firms with the best reputation, as far as providing that kind of best Light Rail is concerned, have either been pulled out or been put aside?

Mr Bachoo: Well, I can give a guarantee to the House. I have just mentioned that there were exercises conducted; firms were invited, first of all, whether they are interested or not and then, Expression of Interest was launched before Request for Proposals. I do not find, personally and sincerely speaking, anyone who has been deliberately put out. But if four of them have pulled out of the exercise or three of them; I am sorry I will not be in a position to answer for them why they have left.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the three firms that are being considered, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister tell us whether all three of them have wide experience of setting up such enterprises throughout the world?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, as far as the tender exercise is concerned, I don't know much about it because it has been completely out of my Ministry, but I am aware there are two firms and one has submitted an alternative bid, so, that comes to three. One is an

Indian company and as far as I have read in the papers, they are very reputable companies and they have also undertaken such works in India, plus, if I am not mistaken, their annual turnover has been about IND Rs26 m.

As far as the second company is concerned, that is, China State Construction Engineering Limited, that company, unfortunately, is under debarment by the World Bank.

Mr Bérenger: Why?

Mr Bachoo: Why? Because the bidder had failed to comply with a disclosure obligation specified in the Request for Proposal. In the Request for Proposal, it was mandatory for anyone interested in the project to declare whether they are debarred or whether they have any problem with international organisations. As a matter of fact, that particular firm had been debarred by the World Bank on the account of an infringement of part I (15) (a) (ii) of World Bank Procurement guidelines. A request for clarification was issued by Singapore Cooperation Enterprise to China State Construction Engineering Company, but the explanations given by the proponent in response to the request for clarification were not considered satisfactory and did not warrant the exercise of any waiver by the MLTA. That was the reason why that company had been debarred and we are left with one company - with two, that is, one alternative, and both are being examined and looked into by the SCE.

Mr Bérenger: I take it that the three firms that are still being considered, none has been debarred by either the World Bank or any international organisation.

Mr Bachoo: No. In fact, this question was not asked to me, but I am answering it now as the hon. Leader of the Opposition is putting a supplementary question that this company has been debarred. We are left with that Indian company with two alternatives and that is being assessed by the SCE.

Mr Bérenger: Well, it is a bit contradictory what the hon. Minister is saying. He said earlier on that the three consortia concerned are being examined, it is ongoing, and now he says that - if I heard him right - we are left with one company only. Is that the situation?

Mr Bachoo: In fact, I have mentioned in my statement that one of the two companies has come with an alternative solution. So, that makes three. That is two companies, but one with two alternatives. That is what I have mentioned, only two firms and three bids. I have mentioned in

my main answer; one bid from China and AFCONS has submitted two bids. So, the two bids are being examined and I am told that this is legally possible.

Mr Bérenger: If I can move on and leave some time to others; if I can move on to the last part of my question. It is clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister brought us back, when I asked whether a National Traffic Master Plan is available, to 1997 and then travelled all the way down up memory lane rather. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it was reasonable to go ahead without a proper up to date National Traffic Master Plan? Why I say that? Because on the one hand, we are supposed to go forward with the *metro léger*, on the other hand, the hon. Minister himself and his Government have been busy building roads all over the place - roads, bridges and everything. The policy of Government has been to encourage import of cars. *Le parc automobile* has increased massively; leasing is all over the place, that there is no coordination in all that. Is the hon. Minister aware that in Singapore, for example, it is the place in the world where cars are the most expensive because the policy is to tax them all out and more or less force people into the public mass transport? Well, at least, the people of Mauritius are entitled to know: is that policy coming forward? It is the Singapore people advising us. Are they going to push us in that same direction? Are we going to see the prices of cars and so on increasing massively as in Singapore? Is it not right for us, better late than never, to ask the World Bank again, *faute de mieux*, to come and to have a look at all these: the Light Rail Transport System, construction of roads, *le parc automobile*, the taxation policy and so on and give us a report?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, well, we can easily say that we have to control the importation of cars, but you know whenever anybody acquires a car, that also shows a sign of prosperity.

(Interruptions)

I am just giving my opinion and the opinion of Government as well. You know, anybody who procures a car, it shows a sign of prosperity in the house. Unfortunately, there has been an increase for the last 10 years of 4.8%. It has been going on very fast. Let me, first of all, try to answer to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we don't have only one report, only one case which I have cited, but there has been the National Development Strategy Plan which was

prepared by the Ministry of Housing. That also has put up in detail for 20 years the number of roads that we have to construct, the amenities we have to provide and, at the same time, we had an Integrated National Transport Strategy Paper that also has formulated six objectives. So, we have enough reports with us on which we can work. Now, the number of roads that we are constructing, everybody will have to accept that all these roads have been of great facility to people in different parts of the country. The light rail is limited to Curepipe and Port Louis, that is not spreading throughout the island. Just imagine the amount of works that we have done, for example, in Pamplémousses and Goodlands, the bypass in Triolet, plus the dualling of the road from Pamplémousses to Grand' Baie.

(Interruptions)

Unfortunately, in Flacq we don't have dual-carriage way. But it is my misfortune, we don't have it; if I had the possibility, I would have done it. But in different parts of the country, wherever there had been too much of traffic jams, at least, everybody will have to be honest and accept that we have been able to do a lot of work.

Secondly, the amount of money which had been spent on our roads goes beyond Rs15 billion to Rs20 billion, but, in fact, we are trying to benefit out of it. We are bound to do it whether we accept it or not. In addition to this, we are not stopping here, we are also going ahead with other road projects because the LRT is limited to one particular region and it is not going to cater for the needs of everybody. Imagine people who are living in the extreme North or in the extreme South, when you are witnessing ...

(Interruptions)

It is supposed to go, but that will take 10 to 15 years. So, what are people going to do in 10 to 15 years? Even now, at times, at peak hours people get stranded everywhere and that is the reason why construction of roads - I am sorry to say - will continue. As the hon. Prime Minister himself tells me repeatedly to see to it that development goes to every nook and corner of the country. So, we are going ahead with it, but it is not in a haphazard way. In fact, we have got reports; based on reports we are trying to do our works. I can assure the hon. Member that as a short-term measure, construction of roads; as a long-term measure, the LRT. The first part from Curepipe to Port Louis, and the second part from Port Louis towards the North and from Curepipe towards the South. That is definite. But Members have to bear with us, construction of

roads cannot be done every week. The hon. Prime Minister has also, on many occasions, instructed us to have a look at the importation of second-hand cars because that too is also creating a lot of problems.

Thirdly, for example, the lifespan of a car in our country is approximately for taxi, for example, it is 20 years and if we can reduce it and make it 15 years that will be so far the better. We are working on that. The NTA is already having a committee which is looking into the detail.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister will allow me to clarify that I am not asking for prices of cars to be increased for taxation. I am saying that there must be coordination in all that. *Le ministre s'est rattrapé*, at first, he said the light rail is of interest to Curepipe, Port Louis and then, he corrected himself because the plan is to go up right to the North, Grand' Baie, Goodlands and so on and right down to the South, Mahebourg and so on. Therefore, there is need to coordinate. I am not convinced at all - the hon. Minister will allow me to say - that things are coordinated as they should be. And, therefore, I repeat my request: will Government consider urgently appointing the World Bank or some better equipped bodies, if there so exists, to review the whole thing and advise us – we will take the decision, but advise us?

Mr Bachoo: Well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the LRT itself will come with some policies to ensure an integrated system, but I don't feel the need of putting up other committees because we have got plenty of such institutions doing the work. I will only maintain one point: that wherever the need is felt, the work is being done. As far as the LRT is concerned, we are in our initial stage, it will take time and in the meantime people living in different parts of the country will not be made to suffer. That is the reason why we have got two means: one short-term and another one long-term means. I hope that with the amount of work that is being put on - I will give another example, Terre Rouge-Verdun, Verdun-Trianon. Just imagine the relief that people are getting! But, if we had been concentrating ourselves in only LRT, then the rest of the country would have been devoid of such facilities.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Vice-Prime Minister has stated that the bid of the company China State Construction Engineering Corporation is not being taken into consideration because it has been debarred from the list of the World Bank. Can he confirm whether this company has been debarred since January 2009? Can he explain then if that principle applies with regard to

the tender process of the LRT, why was that company awarded the contract for the construction of the airport in December 2009?

Mr Bachoo: The hon. Member has been Minister of Finance, he must have known it better than me that when there is a G to G and Exim Bank of China provides support for construction of the project, so what happens, the Chinese Government recommends and proposes you companies. I remember in this particular case...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish, I have just started!

(Interruptions)

The Chinese Government has recommended three names: firstly, Beijing Construction Engineering Company Limited; secondly, China State Construction Engineering Corporation Limited; thirdly, China International Water and Electric Corporation. Out of these three names, one company, that is, China State Construction Engineering Corporation had extensive experience in construction of airports. It had worked on projects with *Aéroports de Paris* and hence the contract was awarded because they had done plenty of works and in their request for proposal such things were not mandatory as it is in our case. The name was recommended by the Chinese Government because it was a G to G.

The Deputy Speaker: I invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition for a final question to round off.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: If you rule that it is the final question; we have been informed that there is only one firm left and yet, supposedly, the decision will be taken this very month of July. Can I, through the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, appeal to Government to postpone a decision until after the next General Elections? Because we start with 11, we are left with one. We are talking about Rs20 billion. Therefore, can I, through the hon. Vice-Prime Minister appeal to Government to postpone a decision for the required number of months?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, legally all procedures have been fulfilled. You know, in the past Governments have come and gone. In 1995 we started, we had to stop. In 2001 we started, we stopped. In 2008, we started with the busway, we stopped. Now, we have started,

I think returning will be as tedious as to go over. I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that everything is being done according to the law. All strict procedures are being followed. We have got no other alternative. People have waited for too long; over 30 years. Now, we have to continue and we can assure that we will be back in power.

(Interruptions)

Next time also we will be here to inaugurate it.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister.

(Interruptions)

JULES KOENIG TRAFFIC CENTRE - INDIVIDUAL BUSES - CONTRAVENTIONS

(No. IB/1) Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Jules Koenig Traffic Centre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if contraventions have been issued to individual buses for having picked up passengers outside same, over the past twelve months and, if so, indicate the number thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that nine contraventions have been established against drivers of individual buses for the offence of picking passengers outside the Jules Koenig Traffic Centre in Quatre Bornes over the last twelve months.

In fact, from January 2013 to 17 July 2014, forty-five contraventions have been established by the Police for other types of offences, including obstruction and hindering traffic, against bus drivers in general, but including individual bus drivers, at Jules Koenig Traffic Centre and its surroundings.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Police could increase and be there at the Jules Koenig Traffic Centre at more regular intervals especially on Saturdays and Sundays, when there is the market fair and so on and, in fact, the individual buses continue to block the right lane and there is a left lane where cars go and they pick up passengers at the traffic light; it is a real danger for pedestrians who just cross from the

left lane to come to the right lane where the buses will turn and one day there will be a fatal accident there.

The Prime Minister: In fact, the Police have increased the deployment, but perhaps it needs to do more. There is now, during peak hours from 07.30 to 09.30 every morning and between 02.30 and 06.30 in the evening, additional Police Officers are being deployed, but apart from the mobile patrols that are from the Divisional Traffic Police, Traffic Branch and the Emergency Response Service. Also, I should add the areas are now covered by the CCTV surveillance system. They will be able to look at it, even if they don't pick it at the time; they will be able to pick up these things. But I will again impress on the Commissioner of Police. The problem is that there is too much traffic; that is the difficulty.

Ms Deerpalsing: Since the hon. Prime Minister has mentioned the CCTV cameras; can I ask that, in fact, the images of the CCTV cameras are regularly reviewed so that – I don't know whether law permits this – to give them contraventions on the basis of images recorded by the CCTV cameras?

The Prime Minister: My understanding is that this is actually being done now.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether those drivers who have got contraventions, they fall under the regulations which say that they could be fined to a sum not exceeding Rs10,000 and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or they have only been off with a fine of Rs200, as it seems, is the current practice.

The Prime Minister: I cannot say for sure how much they are paying the fines, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister - he has mentioned CCTV camera, but this is the fourth time, if I am not mistaken, a question comes from hon. Ms Deerpalsing on this issue. For years, we have double yellow lines and these drivers just don't care. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister, is he going to set his foot down to the TMRSU to really make these people respect the double yellow lines and forget the CCTV camera?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I believe two questions were asked, not four. But this is what the Police are doing. People have also to know that they cannot break the law with impunity, but the Police are doing as I said. Since the questions were asked, the number of contraventions has increased. If I give you the number of contraventions earlier on; it was much less. So, it is increasing and they will also look at the CCTV cameras.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Ribot.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is envisaging to ask the National Transport Authority to have the permit of those recurrent drivers removed once and for all.

The Prime Minister: This is actually being considered. This is a good point that we have also said. You can't just keep doing the same thing and think you will just pay a fine. Their permits will be removed.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Ms Deerpalsing!

HORSE RACING – COMMISSION OF INQUIRY – SETTING UP

(No. IB/2) Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to gambling, he will state if consideration will be given for the setting up of a committee to look into the concerns thereof, in particular, with regard to the recent allegations concerning horse racing.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to PQs No. IB/2 and IB/7 together as they relate to the same matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government views with great concern the wide-ranging allegations about the organisation and management of horse-racing in Mauritius. Government is equally concerned about criticism levelled at agencies dealing with horse-racing and betting activities related thereto.

It is very obvious that public confidence in the integrity of the horse-racing industry has been severely dented. This state of affairs warrants what the French would say: "*Un véritable remède de cheval*".

It is only thus that confidence could be restored in an industry that still attracts thousands of Mauritians at each meeting.

I have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after careful consideration, after having talked to some people who know, who have made suggestions to me, have given opinion of what is happening, after careful consideration, I have decided to set up a Commission of Inquiry to look into all aspects of horse-racing in Mauritius. The Commission will also consider the advisability of setting up a Turf Authority for overseeing the organisation of races in Mauritius.

I would also like to add that the Commission of Inquiry will be assisted in its work by forensic auditors and other experts from overseas.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have also noticed of late that a clearly crafted campaign of disinformation has been orchestrated with a view to giving a political twist to any incident taking place in Mauritius, in particular, at the Mauritius Turf Club.

It seems that certain people at the Mauritius Turf Club itself with the complicity of some in the media, I must say, have become experts at name-dropping. They would drop names of important personalities to justify their despicable acts, including my name.

I have asked the Commissioner of Police to act in a most rigorous manner against such characters, and also to act promptly in all cases referred by the Mauritius Turf Club.

Meanwhile, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government has decided as follows -

- (i) henceforth, no foreign jockeys will be permitted to ride in Mauritius for normal race meetings, unless such a jockey comes from a country with which Mauritius has an extradition agreement;
- (ii) the Gambling Regulatory Authority will be requested to ensure that no jockey whose services have been terminated with one stable be permitted to reside in Mauritius and ride for another stable during the same annual racing season. In other words, the musical chair of jockeys from one stable to another within the same racing season will not be allowed anymore;
- (iii) the Mauritius Turf Club should immediately inform the relevant authorities, including the Gambling Regulatory Authority and the Mauritius Revenue Authority, of whatever sanctions it has decided against any jockey;

- (iv) under no circumstances will a stable be allowed to field more than two horses in a particular race;
- (v) no single horse race should have less than six horses participating therein, and
- (vi) the departure of any jockey from Mauritius will require now the prior clearance of the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Police.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to reassure the House and the nation at large that I will take all the necessary measures to ensure that the Mauritius Turf Club does not turn out to be a den of sin and impropriety.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we go all the way for a Commission of Inquiry to be set up. But can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has already given thought to who is going to chair that? That is the key question. Who is going to chair that Commission of Inquiry? I hope it is not some former this and that that will do a cover-up job. The choice is vital, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But, at the same time that I approve of fully a full-fledged Commission of Inquiry, will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that, in the meantime, what is required is not just *un remède de cheval, il y a beaucoup de rotins et de balais*, not just at the Mauritius Turf Club, but at the Gaming Authority, which the hon. Prime Minister has referred to? The *balai* must reach there also, and the *Police des Jeux*. The Commissioner of Police has been asked to act. He should start by acting there. Will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me?

The Prime Minister: In fact, all three propositions is what we intend to do, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It will have to be, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition says, *un balai* to all those concerned, because there has been clearly...

(Interruptions)

I am not satisfied with the things that have been running, and this is why we want to do this; and also the *Police des Jeux*, I totally agree. In fact, we are relooking at this with the Commissioner of Police.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has talked about *remède de cheval*, and the Leader of the Opposition has talked about *balai*. May I say that it is a case of cleaning up the Augean stables? I thank the hon. Prime Minister for this Commission of Inquiry, which I think is a great idea. Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether the terms of

reference of the Commission of Inquiry will be rather wide, so that they look into the demarcation lines which are really blurred between all kinds of institutions, including the Bar Council? There are lawyers who have *prête-noms*, they have their own horses, and then they are members of the MTC and they go and defend jockeys in Court cases. All these demarcation lines are so blurred. I would like to know whether the Commission of Inquiry will look at the role of the GRA, the MRA, the Police and so on.

The Prime Minister: In fact, the hon. Member is right. There is a conflict of interest; it is obvious in certain cases. That will have to stop. They will look at that. We have wide-ranging terms. And to answer the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am also giving very careful thought on who will chair the Commission. It is essential that we get to the bottom of this, and it must not be somebody who has some kind of connections with anyone in the Turf Authority. Not easy to find, but I am sure we will find the right person.

Mr Bhagwan: I am sure that all *turfistes* will welcome this suggestion of the hon. Prime Minister, the decision to appoint a Commission of Inquiry, with somebody very firm at the top. But, pending the work of the Commission of Inquiry - we all know the mafia operating on a day-to-day, if I can say minute by minute, at the Champ de Mars - can the hon. Prime Minister, at least, request - and he is the Minister of Finance - the Mauritius Revenue Authority to conduct an immediate inquiry with regard to those who own horses, into their sources of revenue, and also the GRA with regard to the connection of the servers? There must be a main server connected to all the bookmakers. I think there are lots of problems happening, and Government is losing, I think, more than Rs800 m. yearly on this.

The Prime Minister: In fact, I have been told that this is probably the case. I must say that - I did not want to give details - the MRA will be requested, with the help of foreign auditors, and also about the server. It appears that there is not enough - I do not know whether they do not have enough knowledge to be able to look at this properly. I am also requesting a foreign Government to help us with this.

Mr Jugnauth: A few years ago, the hon. Prime Minister set up a High-Powered Committee to look at all the issues with regard to gambling. May I know if that Committee has come up with a report, and if that report can be tabled in the National Assembly?

The Prime Minister: The Committee has come up with a report. We have started action on the measures, and I have no difficulty in tabling the report on the Table of the National Assembly.

Ms Deerpalsing: The hon. Prime Minister has mentioned about what the MRA is going to do, and I agree with hon. Bhagwan. Could the MRA look into also – I do not know whether this would come probably under the Serious Fraud Office the Prime Minister has talked about – people who use *prête-noms* to have horses and to have interests in bookmaking business?

The Prime Minister: That is so, as hon. Bhagwan also said. The MRA should have had inquired how do people suddenly come to own horses. Yesterday, they were not extremely rich or whatever, and suddenly they have horses all over the place! Why the MRA has not investigated in this, I do not know, but this will be looked into in detail.

Mr Bhagwan: The Prime Minister has stated, rightly, that his name has been used; dropped by people. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will give strict instructions to high-level officers working in Government - at the highest level, although we all know that people may like horse racing and so on - at least to make sure that their presence at the Champ de Mars does not hinder the proper running of the Police Force, of the other services of Government, just by their presence there and their connection with all the mafia at the Champ de Mars?

The Prime Minister: I totally agree with hon. Bhagwan, and I have already told the people concerned that they have no business. I know they have a private life, they can do whatever they want, but in those circumstances I do not think it is right, and they are not going to be allowed to do this any further. I think the hon. Member is totally right to say this.

Mr Jhugroo: Being given that there is one bookmaker, Mr Paul Fook Yune, who has been given a licence as owner of a stable, would the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that there is a conflict of interest and the source of many problems which are happening actually?

The Prime Minister: I totally agree with the hon. Member. I have talked to the Mauritius Turf Club about this also, and I requested them that action has to be taken.

Ms Deerpalsing: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, in the meantime of the Commission of Inquiry, Government will push on to the MTC to totally professionalise

themselves, and not be a gentlemen's club stuck in time, and take best practices and benchmarks from, for example, the Hong Kong Jockey Club? Could Government bring somebody here to just advise the MTC to professionalise themselves, instead of being stuck in time like a gentlemen's club?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that is a good suggestion. As I said, I am in touch with foreign countries to help us, both the UK and France, and maybe I could push that too as a suggestion.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, bookmakers are already under legal obligation, under the law, to ascertain the identity of people betting with them, even *prête-noms*, and also the source of funds. Obviously, this is not being done at this point in time. So, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister, now that he is the Minister responsible for the Financial Intelligence Unit, to press onto the FIU to carry out whatever investigation that needs to be carried out with the bookmakers to see whether they have records? Because they are required by law to keep records of all those who bet with them, and maybe the Commission of Inquiry can have that as a term of reference to see how we can combat money laundering for those who use horse betting to money launders.

The Prime Minister: My understanding is that this is not so easy to do because some people go and bet a few thousand rupees or whatever privately and it is not possible to control this bit, but for the big bets certainly. I would enlarge the terms of reference of the Commission of Inquiry to include this.

Mr Bhagwan: In the same line, the hon. Prime Minister has stated that he will enlarge the scope of the Commission of Inquiry. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if it would be possible, at least, to enlarge the scope of the Commission of Inquiry to see into the activities of these agencies like Bet On Line, Tote or all these On Lines...

(Interruptions)

...where there are people who are now exiled in UK...

(Interruptions)

SMS *Pariaz* Ltd. exiled in UK, where there are lots of illegal activities going on, on a daily basis?

The Prime Minister: I must say I agree with the hon. Member that this is actually an unsupportable affair that we have to look into in detail. That is why I would enlarge the terms of reference. I will make sure that the terms of reference cover all this.

Ms Deerpalsing: The hon. Prime Minister mentioned the High-Powered Committee and the report. There was a question on all the bookmakers given the ravages that gambling everywhere in the nooks and corners of the country is causing. Would the hon. Prime Minister say whether the Report has mentioned that all bookmakers would be repatriated in Champ de Mars?

The Prime Minister: Yes, in fact, the report does make reference to this. It is one of the worries that we have discussed even among ourselves. They have suggested that, because there are contracts involved, it can only be done in a phased manner. They have already started with it, no new bookmakers are being given licences, but in a phased manner they are being told now that they will have to move.

Mr Bodha: In view of the gravity of the situation and the fact that we have illegal betting around the island, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether strict measures cannot be taken now to see to it that illegal betting in all the corners of Mauritius should stop? We have cases of hundreds of millions of rupees in this betting every Saturday. So, can I ask whether the hon. Prime Minister could consider strict measures to be taken to address this problem?

The Prime Minister: I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the reasons why a policy decision was taken is because there were lots of illegal betting being done before and one of the reasons Government decided on this policy was, in fact, to prevent illegal betting. But, I tend to agree - I believe - that illegal betting is still taking place and we will have to find ways and means of curtailing it.

Mr Lesjongard: Pending the Commission of Inquiry as stated by the hon. Prime Minister, can he request the GRA to look into a case of direct conflict of interest where the relatives of a Stable Manager are major shareholders of a betting company which to me is a direct conflict of interest?

The Prime Minister: All this is being looked into and will be in the Commission of Inquiry. I have already talked to some people in the know-how and we are looking into this very carefully, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Ms. Deerpalsing!

Ms Deerpalsing: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister now that he has the Finance portfolio, various different Ministers of Finance have hesitated to tackle the GRA because...

(Interruptions)

It is true! And we are here because the GRA has completely failed in its responsibility to regulate. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, pending the Commission of Inquiry, there will be a complete overhaul of the GRA immediately?

The Prime Minister: I would not say that it has failed completely, but there have obviously been some loopholes that have to be closed. I am looking at all this in the meantime and this is why I have taken some of the immediate decisions that I have taken.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!

DANGEROUS DRUGS - SEIZURE

(No. IB/3) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to dangerous drugs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to a breakdown thereof seized over the past year, in terms of the -

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

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the breakdown of seizure of dangerous drugs for period July 2013 to April 2014 is as follows -

	Category of Drug	Quantity	Value (Rs)
1.	Buprenorphine	6,341 tablets	9,511,500.00
2.	Cannabis	111.6 kgs	50,238,796.50
3.	Hashish	1.46 kgs	3,661,425.00
4.	Heroin	14.23 kgs	213,516,600.00
5.	Sedatives/Tranquilisers	2,752 tablets	412,800.00

These figures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, clearly indicate that the anti-drug and anti-smuggling measures taken, which I have emphasised many times in this House, are yielding positive results.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, recently with the case of Gro Derek, it came to evidence that boats, more specifically the Mauritius Pride, have been used as carrier for the traffic of drugs. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether this issue of using boats as carrier for the traffic of drugs has been looked into and what has been done to remedy the situation, especially for the coming of the new boat?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the reasons why you see the high positive results is precisely because a lot of intelligence is being used and, very often, the Police already know who is doing what on the boats and we have not had recent cases since then. But, of course, these measures will continue to be strengthened.

Mr Jhugroo: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there has been a proliferation of drugs in certain secondary schools since a few months and, if so, what are the remedial measures that are envisaged by the Government?

The Prime Minister: They are the same measures and the law will apply as it applies to everybody who is dealing with drugs. I must say that I congratulate some Rectors who have actually reported cases to the Police.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, since we know that there is an increase of *synthétique* drugs on the market like ‘black mamba’ and others, what action has been taken with regard to these types of drugs?

The Prime Minister: There was a question which was asked - I do not remember whether it was by the hon. Member himself - and the Police said that at the Forensic Laboratory they cannot analyse all these new drugs unfortunately and new equipment is being brought in to be able to analyse, but they seem to be one step ahead with the combination of drugs and all those things. That is why we have a new person at the Forensic Laboratory now who is looking into this.

Mr Jugnauth: In view of the seriousness of the situation and that there are cases of drugs even at secondary schools, will the hon. Prime Minister now consider that it is an appropriate time to set up a Commission of Inquiry to look at all the aspects of drug trafficking in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: We had a Commission of Inquiry before, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Rault Commission of Inquiry, which was a good Commission of Inquiry, but things have not improved. I think what we need to do is to take the action we take. If we feel there is a need - as the hon. Member probably knows, a Commission of Inquiry will take a long time; we are looking at this very seriously. This is something which is not just happening in Mauritius, but all over the world, and we have to look at the best practices that are being used abroad.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Ms. Anquetil!

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME - PLACEMENT

(No. IB/4) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Youth Empowerment Programme, he will give a breakdown of the number of young people placed in the private sector constituency-wise, since January 2014 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I take it that the hon. Member must be referring to the Youth Employment Programme (YEP) and not the Youth Empowerment Programme.

The Programme was announced in the Budget Speech 2013 and launched in January 2013 to promote employability of unemployed youth aged between 16 and 30 years. Under the Programme, an unemployed youth is given placement, that is, training in a company for an initial period of one year with the possibility of permanent employment thereafter.

I am informed that 2246 youth have been placed under the YEP Programme in 408 companies from 01 January 2014 to 10 July 2014.

I need to point out also that the YEP database is not compiled on a constituency-wise basis.

Ms Anquetil: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given that job placement carried out by different bodies such as YEP, NEF and the Ministry of Labour creates confusion, can the hon. Prime Minister state if Government will consider regrouping all under one umbrella?

The Prime Minister: In fact, we tend to agree after seeing how it is working, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It was a good initiative that the former Minister of Finance took, but there are, in fact, too many institutions dealing with the same youth and employment and as the hon. Member said it is too fragmented. We are giving thought to bring all under one institution, probably the Ministry of Employment.

Ms Anquetil: Can the hon. Prime Minister state whether Government is agreeable to extend the Youth Employment Programme to parastatal bodies?

The Prime Minister: I must say that I am not sure whether this is actually a good idea. We are now dealing with private companies. If we start doing it with parastatal bodies, the first thing that my good friends in the Opposition will start saying is that we are placing people we know in parastatal bodies. So, I would prefer not to look into parastatal bodies at this point, at least.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Seeruttun!

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS - LIVE BROADCAST

(No. IB/5) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the parliamentary proceedings, he will state –

- (a) if a decision has been reached in relation to the implementation of the live broadcasting thereof on a permanent basis;
- (b) the criteria used presently to broadcast live a parliamentary sitting, and
- (c) if presently, the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation has the exclusive rights for the broadcast thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, in my reply to PQ No. B/835 on 12 November of last year, I explained that I would discuss with Mr Speaker the way forward in regard to the live broadcast of the proceedings of the National Assembly, given that there is still, I believe, consensus on both sides of the House in favour of live broadcast and there was a tacit agreement for not instituting a new Select Committee.

The House will also recall that in the course of the ensuing discussions, hon. Ganoo suggested that I should come up with a motion that this House should adopt and implement the recommendations made in the Report of the previous Select Committee under the Chairmanship of hon. Bodha.

I signified my agreement to hon. Ganoo's proposal, but I also said that I wanted to, at least, look at the draft Report in detail.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that Speakers of the House have used their discretion to allow the MBC to broadcast live special events of great concern and interest to members of the public. And the MBC is also allowed to broadcast excerpts of the proceedings of the House in the Radio and Television news bulletins.

In regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that, at the Sitting of the Legislative Assembly on 11 October 1983, the then Speaker of the House had made an announcement to the effect that he had exercised his discretion, under the Standing Orders, and had acceded to a request made by the MBC/TV for a live coverage of the Budget Speech delivered on that day.

The use of this discretion was motivated by the fact that there was great interest of members of the public in the Budget Speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I propose to discuss with Mr Speaker, the recommendations of the draft Report of the Select Committee as soon as he comes back from the mission that he has gone to attend.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in his reply, the hon. Prime Minister stated that he wanted to have a look in detail of that report chaired by hon. Bodha before coming up with a decision. May we have a deadline of time frame when he proposes to come forward with a full-fledged decision as to the implementation of that decision to have live broadcast of Parliamentary proceedings?

The Prime Minister: I have looked at the report. There are some areas that I want to discuss with Mr Speaker. Otherwise, as I said, as soon as he returns from his mission, I am going to speak to him about this.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, yes, please!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister - the Speaker obviously gave his green light for the recent direct television of the debate on the Electoral Reform and so on – whether he will discuss with Mr Speaker, the fact that will the same Director General at the Head of the MBC, even on such solemn occasion, *la manipulation* is just as *infecte*? Will he discuss that with Mr Speaker?

When *coze cozé* is on, my moustache is all over television.

(Interruptions)

When *coze cozé* is off, my moustache disappears from the television.

(Interruptions)

But, more seriously, will the hon. Prime Minister discuss with Mr Speaker that this manipulation must stop immediately?

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thought that that debate which was shown was live, so how would you manipulate the images, I am not sure. I did not look at it myself because I was here. I will, in fact, look at it and inform him accordingly.

HORSE RACING – COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

(No. IB/7) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues whether in regard to horse racing, he will state if Government proposes to review, with the Gambling Regulatory Authority, the manner in which same is being organised by the Mauritius Turf Club at the Champ de Mars.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. IB/2)

MURDER & SERIOUS ASSAULTS - CASES

(No. IB/14) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & PlaineMagnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to murder and serious assaults, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of thereof in each case, since January 2014 to date, indicating the additional measures being envisaged, if any, to curb the incidence thereof.

(Withdrawn)

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ IB/14 has been withdrawn. Time is over!

Hon. Members, I have to inform that PQ No. IB/25 addressed to Dr. the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Information and Communication Technology, PQ No. IB/29 addressed to the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security/Attorney General will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare and PQ No. IA/6 addressed to the hon. Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare.

I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours for lunch.

At 12.58 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

HILLCREST AVENUE, QUATRE BORNES - WORKS COMPLETION

(No. IB/16) Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Hillcrest Avenue, in Quatre Bornes, he will state the timeframe for the completion of the works thereat.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the contract for upgrading of Hillcrest Avenue has been awarded to Gamma Construction Company Limited. The works started on 06 June 2014 and the contractual period is 365 calendar days. The works are expected to be completed by 05 June 2015.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure whether he could set up a Coordinating Committee because as he has stated the works have started on the 06 of June, but, in fact, the inhabitants of the region know that there is nothing to be seen.

Mr Bachoo: Because invisible works are being done actually as the detailed designs are being worked out and, at the same time, the uprooting of services like telecoms, CWA and electric poles take a lot of time. But I can assure the hon. Member that I am looking into the issue personally and I will see to it that the work is completed not on time but before time.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure whether he will see to it that there is a Coordinating Committee for a strict coordination between all the services provided: CWA, Mauritius Telecom and CEB. Mauritius Telecom, at the moment, is putting a lot of fibre or whatever under the ground and ironically Mauritius Telecom is not communicating. So, there has to be a communication with the inhabitants.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have assured the hon. Member; I'll chair the Coordinating Committee myself and see to it that the work is properly done.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, le ministère procède aussi à l'abattage des arbres tout le long de Hillcrest Avenue. Est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre s'il y a un programme d'aménagement d'espace vert et si tel est le cas de le rendre public pour que les membres de

cette Assemblée puissent prendre connaissance de ce plan d'aménagement tout le long de Hillcrest Avenue. Merci.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, on the central verge, there are those trees which are hampering the work that need to be uprooted because of the big roots that spread over both sides of the roads. That is the reason why they have to be removed and, of course, we have taken the decision to plant trees on both sides of the roads, but we are going to communicate definitely because this is a very interesting project that will modernise the entire region.

Dr. Sorefan: May I know from the hon. Minister the contract value of this project and whether there will be a jogging track along the roads?

Mr Bachoo: The hon. Member knows that by the side of the highways we are not authorised to put any jogging track. The value is Rs78,150,238.35.

BAGS (PLASTIC) - BAN

(No. IB/17) Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development whether, in regard to plastic bags, he will state if Government is proposing to ban the use thereof in Mauritius.

Mr Virahsawmy: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to PQ No. B/978 on 17 December 2013, whereby I informed the House of various measures which have been initiated by my Ministry since several years to gradually phase out plastic bags.

These measures include amongst others: a levy on plastic bags, promotion of alternatives and general awareness raising campaigns to discourage the use of plastic bags.

Accordingly, the following initiatives have been taken to promote the use of alternatives to plastic bags -

- Distribution as at date of 57,000 cloth bags in schools, women centres, community centres and social welfare centres;
- 350,000 long lasting bags jointly with Mauritius Telecom Foundation;
- Production locally of some five million paper bags per year for use by supermarkets and other commercial units;

- 300 sensitisation campaigns have been carried out since 2011 through talks, exhibitions, TV and radio spots, brochures and pamphlets among others.

These measures are also in line with the zero plastic strategy adopted by my Ministry since 2011 to gradually eliminate the use of plastic bags.

It has to be noted that representations were made by some stakeholders including SMEs and manufacturers of export textile products, to the effect that the complete ban on plastics would negatively impact on their activities.

Nevertheless, I wish to inform the House that, following the adoption of the above measures, supermarkets have considerably reduced the use of plastic bags and other commercial units have followed suit. However, it has also been observed that manufacturers of plastic bags have shifted from the production of plastic bags with handles to roll-on plastics. These bags are mainly being distributed in markets, fairs and the informal sector.

I wish to add, Sir, that in line with the zero plastic strategy, my Ministry is not entertaining new applications for the manufacture of plastic bags locally. Furthermore, in the forthcoming amendments to the Environment Protection Act (EIA), it is proposed to enhance the EIA mechanism, whereby promoters would be required to set out measures in the EIA reports to move towards zero plastic. This would help to ensure a proactive approach towards elimination of plastic by integrating eco-friendly practices at the design stage of projects.

I further wish to point out that under the Clean, Green and Pollution Free Mauritius Programme, my Ministry is sustaining its campaign on zero plastic strategy through mass sensitisation, TV and radio clips and exhibitions with a view to bring a change in the behaviour and mindset of the population to adopt eco-friendly alternatives to plastic bags. In fact, there has already been a positive change in the mindset of the population as according to a Household Survey carried out by Statistics Mauritius in 2012, the percentage of households using long lasting bags for shopping has increased from 7.9% in 2002 to 69.1% in 2012. Besides, 62% of the households have taken the good habits to reuse plastic bags.

I am also informed that research is presently being carried out by the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (MCIA) for the production of biodegradable plastics from sugarcane by-products. This study is being financed by the ACP/EU.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the eco bags that are already being produced can be imposed, in some way, in shopping centres, not necessary in market fairs, but in the programme of phasing out the plastic bags, at least the shopping centres, the malls and so on could be using paper bags?

Mr Virahsawmy: In fact, the 3 million paper bags are meant for shopping centres and supermarkets.

Ms Deerpalsing: But they are not using them, whether the Ministry could have some regulations...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Kindly, address the Chair!

Ms Deerpalsing: Sorry! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I agree that there are so many paper bags being used, but the fact is that in many of the shopping malls, the paper bags are not being used, so whether the hon. Minister could have some regulations by which these can be imposed?

Mr Virahsawmy: Yes, of course, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We can have a sensitisation campaign with all the supermarkets, hypermarkets and small traders to encourage them to use the paper bags and have a follow-up action on this.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Radegonde-Haines!

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I heard the hon. Minister talking about commercial centres, supermarkets and houses. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether, in regard to tourists entering the country, will their plastic bags be confiscated at the airport and be given another alternative?

Mr Virahsawmy: Unfortunately, we have not touched the tourists up to now because we are concentrating on Mauritians. We believe, at a later stage, we can also have a sensitisation campaign for tourists.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Rwanda introduces a legislature to ban plastic bags some years ago and today Kigali is one of cleanliest cities of the world. Will the hon. Minister consider having a look at what has been done in Rwanda, how they have been so

successful and maybe we can learn something from this successful venture that has been accomplished in Rwanda?

Mr Virahsawmy: Sure, we can have a look at what is being done in Rwanda, but I understand that in Rwanda it applies only in Kigali. In other villages, there is a black market on plastic bags. This is what we have been informed. But, definitely, we will have a look at what is happening in Rwanda and we will see whether it is practical to use the same principles and the same law. Like I said earlier, we had, at a certain time, been discussing with the private sectors, the SMEs, the traders about banning plastic bags and they have informed us of their problems because the SMEs, small and medium traders use plastic bags for packing of products like sugar and grains, lentils, butter beans and all the similar commodities. We have also been informed by the Chamber of Commerce that the exporting textile sector such as shirt manufacturing, for example, use plastic bags. We have asked them whether it is possible to use biodegradable materials, but they say it is more expensive.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister has told us himself that for years we have been hearing about measures to move towards the ban on plastic bags and one hon. Member referred to Rwanda. Lessons that can be learnt from Rwanda! But Rodrigues has taken the lead again. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he has found lessons to be learnt from the good example set by Rodrigues?

Mr Virahsawmy: In fact, we have studied the situation in Rodrigues and we found out that there are some examples which have to be followed. Before introducing the law for banning, we want to make sure that we do not affect a sector of the economy, especially, the SMEs.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister why same is not applied at the duty-free shop? Why plastic bags are not banned at the duty-Free shop?

Mr Virahsawmy: We have been telling all the operators, not only duty-free shops, but all the operators, to go towards paper bags and also to go towards biodegradable.

AGALEGA – PROJECTS - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. IB/18) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the

projects proposed for implementation in Agalega in relation to the improvement of air and sea connectivity and the living infrastructure thereat, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the project for improvement in air and sea connectivity in Agalega is being implemented by the Government of Mauritius with the assistance of the Government of India. The project will consist of various components, the major ones being –

- rehabilitation and resurfacing of the airstrip;
- construction of a 150 metre-long jetty;
- installation of a water desalination plant and a power generation facility, and
- construction of a National Coast Guard post.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the previous tender for the upgrading of the Agalega Airstrip was cancelled due mainly to the fact that the tendered prices received, exceeding by far the estimated costs. The Government thus decided to keep the project in abeyance.

In order to execute the project, the Government of India, through the Indian High Commission was approached and subsequently, in June 2013, a technical team from India effected a first field visit to Agalega. Also, following consultations with major stakeholders, the Government of India has transmitted a preliminary project outline wherein the Indian Authorities have proposed that the project be implemented on a design, finance and build basis, through a Government-to-Government arrangement.

In the above context, a High-Level Joint Project Monitoring Committee comprising of representatives of the Indian Authorities and high-level representatives from the Mauritian side, has been set up under my Chairmanship to steer the implementation of the project. Furthermore, an Implementation Committee has been established by my Ministry to work on the technical documentation, with the assistance of Indian experts, for the execution of the project on a turnkey basis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the above-mentioned project will definitely spring up the development of Agalega.

With regard to the other projects, the House may wish to note that the Outer Islands Development Corporation has an ongoing programme for the improvement in the living infrastructure of Agalega. For the year 2014, a number of projects have been earmarked for implementation, including the construction of four duplex houses for the inhabitants, the construction of a cold room and a warehouse to provide better storage facilities for food items and general improvement in the working and living conditions of the workers with the provision of vehicles and equipment.

I am informed by the Outer Islands Development Corporation that the building materials for the construction of houses and a warehouse have already been shipped to Agalega and the works have been entrusted to a local labour force. Moreover, tenders for the construction of a cold room have been launched and the closing date has been fixed on 01 August 2014.

I am also advised that, with regard to the various vehicles and equipment to be procured in the financial year, two tractors and a 15-seater van will be shipped to Agalega in the next voyage scheduled for September 2014. Tenders for the purchase of one forklift to facilitate the embarkation and disembarkation of goods at Agalega, will shortly be awarded.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House may also wish to note that there is a project for the provision of internet connectivity in Agalega which will be implemented by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology through financing from the Universal Service Fund. I am given to understand that two technicians from the Information and Communication Technology Authority have already proceeded to Agalega for an assessment *de visu* of the situation and have submitted their report.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is really incredible what I just heard from the hon. Minister, because since I have been Member to this House, this has been exactly the same answer that the hon. Minister has given to this House. What I understood today, the main words that the hon. Minister said, he said that it will be implemented, has been earmarked, there will be, but nothing has been done up to now. Since 2010, nothing has been done. About the airstrip also, now we understand that the tender has been cancelled and that another discussion has been engaged with India for the project of the airstrip.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, what is your question?

Mr Ameer Meea: There are so many questions to ask, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Start with one!

Mr Ameer Meea: My first question to the hon. Minister is for the airstrip. Do we have a time frame, when will the work start? This is my first ...

Mr Aimée: Very soon.

Mr Bérenger: Can the hon. Minister tell me, what does he tell to the people of Agalega, when they know that before the 2005 Elections, the Government of India had already been approached? Ten years later, we are back to square one, now going to the same Government of India! Can I know what does he tell the people of Agalega?

Mr Aimée: Up to now, they have not asked the question where and when. But let me tell you something, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on this decision of constructing an airstrip, Agalega does not remain only on myself as Minister. This is a Government decision.

(Interruptions)

This is an arrangement between G to G, Government of Mauritius and Government of India.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: I heard the hon. Minister refer to the jetty at Agalega being redone and so on. In the past, before 2005, what was envisaged was a mini-harbour, not just a jetty, but several jetties to work into a mini-harbour. Has this been given up? Are we just going to refurbish the jetty and this idea of a mini-harbour has been abandoned?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the way of doing the jetty or the harbour remains on the technicians from India, because this project is being financed by the Government of India. As I said in my reply, the technicians have already been there, they are going to produce a document to show the plan or the layout plan of what to do with the jetty, only then I can reply to the House what sort of jetty or what sort of harbour. I am not in presence of the document.

Mr Ameer Meea: In a past PQ on 10 July 2012, the hon. Minister stated to the House that –

“(...) six projects have been earmarked in the PBB 2012 (...)”

- (i) the upgrading and rehabilitation of the Agalega airstrip - now we just got the answer about it;
- (ii) the renovation of three quarters on South Island;
- (iii) the construction of two duplex-typed quarters;
- (iv) the construction of a Refugee Centre on South Island;
- (v) the purchase of a Fire Fighting vehicle, and
- (vi) the rehabilitation of coconut fields.”

Today, none of these six projects that have been announced since 2010 has been realised. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister all these measures that have been announced year after year, when will one of them start?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Refugee Centre is almost 65% done.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, allow the hon. Minister to answer.

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mr Aimée: You do not want me to answer.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, please! Go ahead with your answer.

Mr Aimée: Yes. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Refugee Centre has already started six months ago and it is almost 60% done actually. The acquisition of the vehicles has already been done and the firefighting vehicle is here. We are waiting...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr Aimée: We are waiting for a roll-on/roll-off ship because this firefighter vehicle is 10 tonnes and it cannot be accommodated on Mauritius Pride or the Trochetia to Agalega. We have to order a special ship from the Reunion Island to bring that firefighting equipment there.

You are talking about the duplex, last year, already we have done four duplex and this year we have four on construction already.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Minister, what was the cost for the firefighting vehicle? For what reason was it purchased? When it was purchased and why, up to now, it has not been there? I want to know where this firefighting vehicle is actually kept. I want to know when this fire vehicle will be available in Agalega.

Mr Aimée: I just replied to that question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I said we have already brought firefighting equipment and it is there at Coromandel waiting to be shipped to Agalega.

(Interruptions)

Six months ago.

(Interruptions)

I do not have the cost, I am sorry. I will table it afterwards.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please address the Chair! Yes. Hon. Mrs Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ No. B/55, more than one year ago, the hon. Prime Minister announced, I quote –

“A project for community hospital for emergencies and for delivery of babies in Agalega was nearly ready.”

And the hon. Minister has given us a list of buildings, but I have not heard anything about this hospital. May I ask the hon. Minister where matters stand regarding this project that according to the hon. Prime Minister was nearly ready more than one year ago?

(Interruptions)

Mr Aimée: No! Does the hon. Member want me to say that?

(Interruptions)

If it is like that...

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

(Interruptions)

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, yes, the Prime Minister informed the House - I do not know whether it was in the Budget or the day after the Budget...

(Interruptions)

...that they are making provision for a clinic - not a hospital - in Agalega.

(Interruptions)

But then, as to when it will take place, I think this question should be put to the Minister of Health...

(Interruptions)

...not to me!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister, last year, and this year again, stated that the tenders had been cancelled because the bid amount was more than what was budgeted. So, may I know from the hon. Minister what guarantee he has received now from India or elsewhere that there would be sufficient funding to meet whatever tender is quoted?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in a correspondence from the Government of India, there is a provision of 20,850,200 dollars for this project. The runway would cost 1,643,400 dollars;

(Interruptions)

installation of essential communication and navigation equipment 421,000 dollars; installation of two Reverse Osmosis Plant diesel generators and other support machinery will cost 280,000 dollars. The construction of the long implosive jetty would cost 18,250,300 dollars, and the construction of an MNCG post will cost 253,800 dollars.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister has given us some figures, referring to India. Was there a firm commitment from the then Government of India to fund that development, and has the new Government confirmed its commitment?

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the arrangement was with the previous Government, but to my knowledge, up to now the High Commissioner is looking after this project and he has confirmed that the Government of India is still keen to go ahead with it.

Mr Jugnauth: With regard to the Indian experts, can the hon. Minister say if they have started the work, when was it, and how long is it scheduled that they will complete and submit a report to the Minister?

Mr Aimée: As I said in my reply before, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am waiting for a team of technicians from India to come to Mauritius very soon - I said very soon. Then, I will be in a position to answer the hon. Member's question.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: So, clearly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, out of the major projects that had been announced, nothing has been done. But one project that the hon. Minister could have done personally is that - well, I do not know whether he did it up to now, or he can do it - he should have begged for pardon to the Church for the insult that he uttered to the Church last time he went there.

The Deputy Speaker: No, this is not a question! Next question!

Mr Aimée: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not going to the Church for pardon, as the hon. Member wants me to do. But I am prepared to take the firefighting equipment that is here to stop the fire in the Opposition!

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Ramano!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ramano!

(Interruptions)

S. BHARATI EYE HOSPITAL - AVASTIN INJECTION - COMPLAINTS

(No. IB/19) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Avastin injection, he will state the number thereof administered to patients as at to date, indicating the number of complaints received in relation thereto and the outcome of the inquiry carried out thereinto, in each case.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions No. IB/19 and No. IB/31 together, as they both relate to the same issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the use of Intravitreal Avastin injection for the treatment of patients suffering from serious intraocular disorders has started at the S. Bharati Eye Hospital as from mid-October 2008, following the advice and recommendation of Professor Tabatabay from *Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève*.

This injection is administered according to a well established protocol. It is known that this treatment is associated with certain risks and, therefore, patients are informed about these risks and are required to sign a special consent form for this treatment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from 2008 to date, some 4,000 injections have been administered without any complication, and no complaint was received until 23 May 2014.

On 22 May 2014, a batch of 28 patients was administered with Avastin injection. Four patients from this batch attended hospital complaining of severe pain and blurred vision as follows -

23 May, one; 22 May, one; 25 May, two.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all the four patients were admitted immediately for treatment. The other 24 patients were convened for assessment on 27 May, and no complication was detected – I mean on the 27 persons.

The four patients admitted were diagnosed of severe infection and inflammation. As necessary treatment for this condition is available locally, the four patients immediately received Intravitreal antibiotics and underwent surgery in accordance with existing protocol. However, as no improvement was noted, the patients were then referred to Sankara Nethralaya Hospital in Chennai for further investigation and management. The four patients have returned after receiving treatment, and have been given a follow-up review in Chennai.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a preliminary inquiry was conducted by the RHD, the Medical Superintendent and the Consultant-in-charge at S. Bharati Eye Hospital. In light of the preliminary inquiry, an independent Committee of Enquiry has been set up to look into the circumstances which led to complications in the four cases. The composition of the Committee is as follows: the Chairperson, Dr. J. Isabelle, Consultant in Ophthalmology in the private sector, and the members are Dr. Gaya and Dr. Manna, both Consultants in Ophthalmology in the private sector, Dr. (Mrs) S. Aboobakar, Regional Public Health Superintendent, and Mr S. Shewraj, former Director Nursing.

The findings and recommendations of the Committee are expected by the end of August 2014. Appropriate action will be taken in light of the findings and recommendations.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, il y a des allégations en ce qui concerne les quatre patients. Est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer que l'injection a été faite par le médecin traitant ?

Mr Bundhoo: The injection was done I would not say by the *médecin traitant* but by a doctor who is a specialist. I would not know whether it is a *médecin traitant*, but by a specialist doctor.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the Minister say why it was only 22 days after these patients reported that they could not see with one eye that the decision to send them to Chennai was taken? Why was it only after 22 days?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once the four patients complained of what they complained, the usual treatment that is being given to patients with complications was administered in Mauritius, and then there is a small procedure whereby then they go to India. I must emphasise to the hon. colleague that the treatment given in Mauritius was exactly the treatment given to them when they were in India. Therefore, the treatment that was given to them in Mauritius would have been the same had they been in India earlier or not. But they were sent to India for further investigation and if there were any other possibilities of management.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is what the hon. Minister is saying, but the patients themselves have reported that in India they have been told, had they been there earlier, the situation would have been different.

Can I ask the hon. Minister why two of the patients have had to bear all the costs of travelling and the hospital costs while they have been sent to Chennai? Why two of them have had to bear the costs themselves?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, the first observation made by the hon. Member. I have to repeat that the treatment that was given in India was exactly the same treatment that was given in Mauritius following the protocol that is applied.

Secondly, out of the four patients, two of them fully satisfied the criteria as laid down by the Ministry of Health and the Security Office. But I do accept that on humanitarian ground all four should have been paid for the treatment in India. When I have learned about this, I asked them to make an application. Only yesterday I have approved the refund of the third one and, hopefully, for the fourth one. This also is being done without any prejudice if ever they have any complaint in the future.

Mr Ganoo: Will the hon. Minister confirm whether this product, Avastin, has been banned in certain countries?

Mr Bundhoo: I have to say and I would request the House to kindly bear with me, Avastin is being manufactured for a specific reason and put on the market for a specific reason. There is a common jargon in the world of medicine whereby a medication is used off-label. Yes, Avastin, may be banned in certain countries, but equally – this is the big controversy – it is being used exactly for eyes treatment to prevent deterioration in many countries, whether it is Pakistan, England, Mauritius and other countries. I must say that only in France, on 08 July - on the very day that we have put a Committee to inquire about what has happened - on that very day, the French National Assembly was voted for the use of Avastin with regard to eye treatment.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister where do matters stand right now as far as those four patients are concerned? Are they still under treatment after they lost the use of one eye?

Mr Bundhoo: From the information that I have gathered, and it is with regret that I have to say that, all four have lost the use of one eye. But they are still under review, both in Mauritius and Chennai, and I would make sure that it is being done under the cost of Government.

Mr Baloomoody: According to my information, the four patients were administered the injection on 22 May between 11.00 a.m. to noon. The hon. Minister just informed us that it was a doctor who administered that injection. Why is it that the authority is refusing to give the name of the doctor who administered the injection to those four patients?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at no time did the authority refuse to give the name of the doctor/specialist who has given the injection.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: The hon. Minister has just acknowledged the fact that his Ministry should have borne the cost for the four patients irrespective of whether their income is more than Rs50,000 or not. Does the hon. Minister acknowledge also the fact that this was a very serious matter and he should have followed it from A to Z, what was happening to those patients, what was being done administratively to get these patients to Chennai? Therefore, he has failed in his duty to follow this case.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question of failure does not arise because ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, you have asked a question, allow the hon. Minister to answer now.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have met all the four patients personally. I have given a request for all the four patients that their fees at the Indian Hospital be paid by the Government of Mauritius. We are asking that a Committee of Enquiry be set up with respectable doctors to look into the issue. I have no intention whatsoever to play dirty politics on the names of these four patients whom I regret, that in difficult circumstances have all lost the use of one eye.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he has been made aware that whenever there have been ophthalmological disasters following the injection of Avastin, these have been in sets of four and five due to the fact that Avastin is marketed in a vial containing several doses, which is liable to infection when these doses are converted into multiple injections.

Consequently, I would like to ask the hon. Minister how many doses the vial of Avastin used in Subramania Bharati Hospital contained.

Mr Bundhoo: I did check that. Thank you very much. I went there personally to check that. In fact, the vial contained 30 doses and it was made in sets of 10/10/10. That is how it has been administered. The hon. Member is a doctor by profession and he has hit the nail exactly where it has to be. In fact, the last ten doses whereby the four patients who are affected are in the very batch of the ten last patients. When I learnt about this, and subsequent to the preliminary inquiry, even and despite it was all done under strict conditions in the Operating Theatre, I decided after having spoken with the hon. Prime Minister to set up a Committee of Inquiry. In fact, it was the hon. Prime Minister who recommended and advised that Dr. Isabelle chairs this Committee.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, irrespective of what the hon. Minister is saying, I am surprised to see the reaction of the Government on this issue when the patients and their families were traumatised and they have had to secure loans to go to Chennai. Can I now ask the hon. Minister whether Government proposes to compensate those four patients for moral damage and for all the prejudice which they have suffered?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a reason why we decided to set up a Committee of Enquiry. The Committee of Enquiry would have to establish what they have to establish and subsequent to that I have said in my main reply that Government will take the appropriate actions and whatever has to be done will be done.

Mr Jugnauth: Will the hon. Minister ensure that the Committee that has been set up hears evidence from the doctors in Chennai who have treated those patients?

Mr Bundhoo: I thank hon. Jugnauth for putting this question. In fact, this is exactly what it is all about. They are going to have video-call conferences with the doctors. They are going to speak with Dr. Tabatabay and interview all the patients. They are also going to interview some of the previous doctors involved in Avastin and everybody concerned. I have to say one thing. It is quite a delicate issue with regard to the use of Avastin. The House will also appreciate that in Mauritius almost 20% to 25% of the population are diabetics. One of the consequences of diabetic is the loss of the use of the eyes. Therefore, we are in a very tricky position. Right at the moment, despite the fact that we have stopped the use of Avastin, almost 500 patients are waiting for injection of Avastin. Since the last incident, Government has to be more than careful before thinking of the next step.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Ramano!

Mr Ramano: Merci, M. le président. Dans la même direction que l'honorable Docteur S. Boolell, l'utilisation de l'injection Avastin requiert des conditions d'hygiène vraiment exceptionnelles. Est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre s'il est satisfait de la condition hygiénique qui prévaut actuellement à l'hôpital de Moka et aussi prenant en considération qu'il y a des travaux d'envergure qui ont lieu actuellement à l'hôpital de Moka?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member will appreciate on that very day from 9 a.m. to noon, 30 patients were administered with Avastin, only the last batch and out of the last batch only 4 patients encountered the difficulties. Now, the issue the Committee would have to decide is what was the impact of – as hon. Dr. Boolell rightly pointed out – pulling the whole 30 doses at one go and then making it in 3 sets of 10.

Secondly, how the environment within which this was done was as appropriate and in accordance to the protocol established.

And, thirdly, out of the 10 patients, only 4 had these difficulties, but this does not mean that the other six would not have or could not have or they might have been exposed, but, luckily, it was not this case. And, again, I have to say one thing here to the credit of hon. Dr. S. Boolell, this has been the case in many places, but, as I said, the fundamental question remains: had we not used Avastin, the other options would have been 30 times more costly, but then, it is not a question of money only, it is also a question of what is the best possible treatment that we can give to the population of Mauritius.

ST. JEAN ROAD, QUATRE BORNES – LANE LAY-OUTS

(No. IB/20) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the new lane lay-outs along the St. Jean Road, in Quatre Bornes, he will state if complaints have been received in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the nature thereof and remedial measures taken in relation thereto, if any.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been

informed that to date the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has not received any written complaints from the road users regarding the new lane configuration along St. Jean Road.

However, several phone calls were received at the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit from the public inquiring about the time at which the additional lanes are operational.

There are presently four traffic lanes along St. Jean Road from its junction with Girofliers Avenue near the market up to the pedestrian crossing near Orbis Court.

During morning peak, there are two lanes, one existing lane and one additional lane which are open to traffic proceeding towards Port Louis and one lane for traffic heading towards La Louise. The additional lane which has been provided along St. Jean Road in the direction of Port Louis and which was previously being used as paid parking, is operational from 07.00hrs to 10.30hrs. Hence, during morning peak, vehicles will be able to park on the opposite additional lane where parking is allowed.

Similarly, during afternoon peak when the additional lane in the direction of La Louise will be operational from 15.00hrs to 19.00hrs, vehicles will be able to park on the opposite additional lane where parking is allowed. Hence, during afternoon peak, there will be two lanes of traffic in the direction of La Louise and one lane in the direction of Port Louis.

The pedestrian platforms at all signalised junctions (St. Jean Road/Capucines Ave/D'Epinay Ave and St. Jean Road/Buswell Avenue/Orchidées Avenue) have been removed to cater for additional lanes along St. Jean Road both in the direction of Port Louis and La Louise. To further maximise safety of the crossing pedestrians, the pedestrian signal phase at the signalised junctions have been increased to ensure that pedestrians have sufficient time to cross the four lanes safely.

To further improve safety of the pedestrians at the existing pedestrian crossing near Orbis Court, this Ministry will soon convert this level crossing into a pelican crossing. This measure is essential to ensure maximum safety of the crossing pedestrians when the additional lane in the direction of La Louise will be operational.

Moreover, the cross junction (St. Jean Road/Draper Ave/Avenue des Glaieuls) will soon be signalised where two pedestrians phases will be provided to ensure safety of the crossing pedestrians.

Given the fact that there is a high demand for parking in QuatreBornes and particularly along St. Jean Road, my Ministry will soon implement the following measures to increase parking supply -

- When Avenue des Rosiers will be converted into a one-way road from its junction with Avenue des Manguiers to its junction with YlangYlang Avenue, vehicles will be allowed to park on the left hand side while ensuring an interrupted traffic flow along the opposite lane in the direction of Sodnac Avenue.
- A parking facility which can accommodate about 5-6 parking bays will soon be provided along Girofliers Avenue near Gold Crest Hotel which is presently being occupied by food sellers. Access to this facility will be along the additional lane which will be provided along St. Jean Road. This parking facility will be able to cater for both short and long-term parkers.
- Additional parking spaces for about 200 cars will also be provided at the back of the market fair near the CAB of QuatreBornes. This new parking facility will cater for the high parking demand during market days and will significantly contribute to reduce traffic congestion on all lateral roads surrounding the market.

I wish to inform the House that all paid parkings have been cancelled along St. Jean Road from its junction with Avenue des Tulipes up to its junction with Girofliers Avenue near the market and free parking is available for both short and long-term parkers along both additional lanes except when they are in operation and where double yellow lines have been provided.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, est-ce que je peux demander au ministre de considérer favorablement l'aménagement des *handrails* tout le long des trottoirs longeant la route royale, vu la proximité dangereuse qu'il y a maintenant entre les piétons et les véhicules qui empruntent le *lane* additionnel?

Mr Bachoo: I'll look into this issue because I've got a team of engineers from the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit. They are conducting a survey in that region and if the need is felt, definitely we are going to introduce it.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure - because he mentioned in his answer about the conversion of the one-way streets in the lateral roads in conjunction with this new lane – whether - again it is a

question of communicating with the inhabitants. The whole plan of converting streets into one-way plus this new lane, people are in the dark about the whole plan; it needs to be communicated.

Mr Bachoo: Okay. I take good note of the suggestion that the hon. Member has made and I will see to it that this is properly communicated through the television also.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: Sorry! The hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the new lane lay-out is the anticipation of the light rail transit which, to my information, will be on pillars along the St. Jean Road?

Mr Bachoo: Well, for the time being, the light rail has nothing to do with the work that we are doing at St. Jean because everybody knows the difficulty that people have to undergo either in the morning or in the evening. That is why we have started from Tulipe Avenue, we are moving towards Hillcrest and, here, we have already put up four lanes and we are going to improve the situation of that town.

Mrs Ribot: M. le président, je voudrais demander à l'honorable ministre s'il est au courant que là où se garent les voitures en ce moment, c'est-à-dire sous les varangues des boutiques, c'est beaucoup trop court dans certains endroits, ce qui fait que la queue des voitures dépasse, ce qui représente encore un plus grand danger pour les voitures qui empruntent le troisième *lane*.

Mr Bachoo: There are places where parking is not allowed. We have got double yellow lines, but if they are taking the risk and they are parking the cars, they will have to bear the responsibility. I am going to look into it; you have raised the question; I will try to see to it that they have to avoid parking on the roads.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, les automobilistes éprouvent pas mal de difficultés pour tourner à gauche ou à droite vu l'existence maintenant des deux *lanes*. Je demanderai au ministre de revoir le *remarking* sur place pour s'assurer que ceux qui souhaitent tourner à gauche ou à

droite, ils peuvent le faire facilement vu qu'il y a deux *lanes* pour les véhicules venant en sens inverse.

Mr Bachoo: We are going to take extra precautions and I am going to instruct the technicians of my Ministry to look into it because the hon. Member is perfectly right. There are places where the markings are not clear and those regions are prone to accident; I am going to give instructions to them.

'BACK TO WORK' PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN - IMPLEMENTATION

(No. IB/21) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the project for the implementation of a new 'Back to Work' Programme for Women, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the measures announced in the Budget Speech 2014 to address female unemployment and the gender gap was that the Skills Working Group and my Ministry would implement a 'Back to Work' Programme for Women who wish to rejoin the labour force.

In actual fact, ever since this announcement in the Budget of 2014, the 'Back to Work' Programme financed under the National Resilience Fund has been implemented by the Skills Working Group under the aegis of Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in collaboration with my Ministry. In fact, my Ministry has only been there as a matter of support and nothing much more than that.

I wish to inform the House that a dedicated website has already been developed for the programme, namely the www.backtowork.mu. It provides for registration of women and employers willing to benefit from the programme and will be launched shortly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you look at the website of backtowork.mu as well as yep.mu, it is exactly the same website with different writings and you will see also in the home page in bold, white and huge characters - the font is quite big enough to note - that it is an initiative of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and not of any other Ministry. They made it clear to put it up there.

With regard to additional information I can provide, I have been informed recently by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development that the implementation of that particular programme is now being handed over to my Ministry. Moreover, the dedicated website, which has already been developed before being handed over to my Ministry, as I explained, will allow for such registration and I am informed that there are necessary agreements, templates that are being prepared between the National Resilience Fund Management Committee and the employer - once again, that is not being shared by my Ministry - and the Human Resource Development Council are being vetted by the State Law Office and would be signed soon and maybe the programme will be launched sometime in August 2014. This is the information I have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to the good question that has been put to me.

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As per the implementation timetable for 2014 Budget measures, the date limit for the implementation of the project was February 2014. Can the hon. Minister state the reasons behind the delay of the project?

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: You see the thing is; I would have liked, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the hon. former Minister of Finance to have been present, then the hon. Member could have put some additional questions in order to clarify, but he is not here and neither any hon. Member of his party. The reason why it has delayed is because of this greed of the Minister of Finance then, of taking everything that is of employment: Youth Employment Programme, initiative of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. Second issue, what we are going to have is also Back to Work Programme announced *en fanfare* in the Budget, initiative of the Ministry of Finance. I am only here as they call me so well a junior Minister; I can't answer that question. I am a small junior Minister, I can't answer the question.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Ribot: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No cross-talking!

MrsRibot: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether, now that the scheme Back to Work Programme for women has come to his Ministry, the special training schemes to prepare those women for, at least, 15 occupations still holds good?

Mr Mohamed: I think that is a good question. Yes, it still holds good. To be honest, I do not really like the lists as they are prepared and which most probably the hon. Member may have seen on the website; that is already up. I think that the way the list is being prepared for the work that women are supposed to do is very sexist. I think that there are more intelligent and constructive jobs that women are better qualified to do than men. The fact that they limited to a certain number of jobs that are traditionally known for only women and the big 'wow' factor is that women will be a receiver, a conductor in a bus is, according to certain people, non sexist. So, I believe that the list also must be revamped, but the programme is still on. But what is most important and there I come back to what the hon. Prime Minister said this morning is that imagine what you have here: you have a website, that is, yep.mu. You have another one, that is, backtowork.mu. Then, you have something else than the NEF will do. Then, you have something else that the Ministry of Employment will do. And I am happy to see that not only are we saying that this programme is still on and not off, but we are saying that this programme is basically going to be strengthened. With the good help of the hon. Prime Minister, we are going to centralise everything in order to give better service to those women who have to be helped. More than ever the programme will have to be streamlined together with the funds that have to come with it in order to ensure that those women are not only given jobs, trained, but that those jobs are not precarious jobs. They are jobs that last and do not last only one year and only last for that time because companies are being subsidised by Government coffers.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

Ms Anquetil: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister state if special support and consideration will be given to needy women like single mothers and women with disability?

Mr Mohamed: We should always try to give jobs to people who have an urgent situation in finding a job. For instance, if you look at the Registry at the level of the Ministry of Employment, there are a number of registered people who declare themselves unemployed, but who seriously also are unemployed with no jobs. You have others who register, but who are

already in employment. We have to give priorities to those who do not have a job and to make use of resources in a constructive manner and judiciously for those who really need the help of the public service in finding a job for them. So, to answer the hon. Member's question; it is yes. We will have to prioritise and this is what we already do at the level of the revamped employment service that is starting to work and operate in an excellent manner.

SCHOOLS - TABLET DISTRIBUTION PROJECT

(No. IB/22) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Tablet Distribution Project to Form IV Students, he will state the total cost thereof for the first year, indicating the number of -

- (a) tablets purchased, and
- (b) students having received a tablet, as at to date, indicating the fees payable by each student in relation thereto.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me at the outset inform the House that the Tablet PC project, which was initiated in 2013 with the elaboration of tablet specifications and initiation of procurement procedures, consisted in the provision of 26,100 Tablet PCs to students of Form IV in 2013 and educators of all State as well as private aided secondary schools of the Republic of Mauritius.

I must point out that the project which is meant for Form IV students was worked upon in 2013 to Form IV students of that year. However, the implementation process which involved procedures was completed by late 2013 and distribution was effected in early 2014. As such, the Form IV students had already moved to Form V in 2014, hence it was decided to distribute the tablets to those Form V students of 2014 who, in fact, were Form IV students' cohort 2013.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Tablet PCs will support the teaching conducted in class through the use of Classroom Management Software to better enable the teacher-learner interaction.

The Tablet PCs, which are meant basically for educational purposes, are equipped with pedagogical contents relevant to Forms IV and V curricula, aligned with the teaching of Cambridge GCE 'O' Level syllabi for Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the total cost of the project relating to the procurement of the Tablet PCs amounted to Rs134,349,018.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, let me inform the House that 26,100 Tablet PCs have been purchased (20,700 for students and 5,400 for educators of all State as well as Private Aided Secondary Schools of the Republic of Mauritius.)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding part (b), I am informed that, as at date, a total of 24,289 Tablet PCs have been sent to all the State and private aided secondary schools of Mauritius and Rodrigues (including 70 tablets to MIE for training purposes) for distribution to students and educators the process of which is still in progress.

I am informed that some -

- (i) 6520 students out of the 7761 Form V students of State Secondary Schools have already received their tablets, and
- (ii) 7766 students out of 9894 Form V students of Private Aided Secondary Schools run under PSSA have already received their tablets.

As at date 14,286 students out of 17,655 Form V students have already received their tablet PCs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order to provide coverage for the eventual replacement of the tablet PC in case of theft or damage, an amount of Rs650 is paid by the beneficiary student. In this respect, a mechanism has been put in place with the approval of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for this contribution to be deposited into a special deposit account. However, students who benefit from the Social Register of Mauritius Child Allowance (SRM CA) are exempted from the payment of the Rs650.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this project has been money well spent as it is contributing to taking Mauritius into the 21st century and making our students become digital learners in an increasingly digital environment.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government, at the outset, wanted to distribute laptops to Lower VI students. Then, they gave up that idea and then came up with the idea of distributing tablets to Form IV students. From the reply that we just got from the hon. Minister, it appears that some of the students are still awaiting the reception of the tablets. We

are already in July; the exams for the SC will be in a few weeks' time and it looks like those students, probably, will receive their tablets while they will be starting the Lower VI classes. So, we are back to the initial project. My question is that those tablets have applications meant for the SC exams. What will be the use of those tablets for students who are going to receive those tablets by the end of this year or beginning of next year when they won't be of any use for those students who will be taking HSC classes as from next year?

Dr. Bunwaree: Well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should, first of all, realise that it is a major innovative project and at the beginning there will be certainly some teething problems. But I am satisfied that it has been a project which has been successfully implemented. The distribution process involves, I must inform the House, registration of each tablet through the use of internet at the level of the schools. As we are all aware, the internet connectivity is not as good in all regions of the island. The process is, therefore, slow in certain schools and this causes certain specific problems. Then also, all these tablets have been – all of them – the 26,100 have been verified. It takes time to verify these tablets. What has happened is that in the course of the registration process, there are some delays, because the children have to register and, therefore, to pay Rs650. I have said that for the Social Register of Mauritius, children are exempted. This is what is causing the problem, in fact.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he could indicate to the House the number of schools which have received the tablets, but which have not been provided yet with free Wi-Fi connectivity, thus preventing the students from being able to use those tablets?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this question of Wi-Fi connectivity is to give them the facilities for internet, but the tablets are already in use in all the schools where they have been distributed, but not to 100% of students. There is a percentage which I have given. Wifi is a problem. I must say, I am informed that the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology will be launching a tender, in fact, it is today itself, for connecting all the 155 secondary schools to high speed internet under the SchoolNet Project. Pending the coming of the SchoolNet II Project, the Ministry has allocated a certain sum to all schools for internet connectivity. This is not giving full satisfaction. We have to wait for the procedures that have already started. This is under the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology.

Mr Seeruttun: Surely, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister must be aware that those tablets had problem of batteries. There have been complaints from many users that the battery does not last long. Will the hon. Minister inform the House what action has been taken to ensure that batteries that are integrated on those tablets are of a lifetime which is reasonable, whether those batteries are removable and whether they are available from suppliers for them to purchase those batteries if ever they are not functioning properly?

Dr. Bunwaree: The question was raised, in fact. There was a minor outcry and we looked into the matter. I must say that the technical tests have been carried out and it was on Tuesday 24 June 2014, to ascertain the aspect of battery duration by officers of the Ministry in the presence of the supplier which is the Mauritius Telecom. The test has indicated that under average typical classroom conditions, usage of the tablet for reading, browsing the internet, viewing videos and Powerpoint presentations and use of the Classroom Management System on the tablet PC, the average battery autonomy is 7 hours. If it is used along these conditions which were spelt out in the tender documents, the autonomy is around 7 hours, which is quite satisfactory for students who are at school for about the same time. Now, the Ministry has worked out, with the Mauritius Telecom, for the preparation of a guideline for power management of the tablet PC. The guideline is available on the tablet PC website and is also being updated. I will also inform the House that the Ministry is working with the Mauritius Telecom, as the tablet provider, regarding possibility of providing rack charges to schools to cater for tablets with low battery charge, because sometimes the students have not charged the battery at home and we are trying by all means to give satisfaction to these students.

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it has been widely reported in the press that some students misuse their tablets. This being the case, will the hon. Minister indicate whether he intends calling back the tablets and installing tougher software for parental security and whether he intends to launch a tender or whether MT will provide this enhanced security provision to prevent misuse of computer tablets?

Dr. Bunwaree: I can assure the House that I am very much concerned with this aspect of the problem. I must also say that we have put so many security measures there, but, unfortunately, not only that the students are well aware of everything that is happening insofar as technology is concerned, but almost every day, there are new technologies coming up which

have not been catered for in the tablets that have been distributed. So, what we are doing, first of all, I must inform the House that the tablet PC is configured with internet security through a parental control software. I think the hon. Member mentioned that. The Norton Family Parental Control Software has been configured on the tablet PC at school, an internet access from the school is filtered by the Government Online Centre. However, if students, in fact, may be able to bypass the parental control from home, access to unauthorised sites may be possible. The Ministry is, therefore, currently exploring possibilities with MT for potential solutions where such an internet security could be reinforced when the tablet is online. I am told that there are solutions. So, this problem will certainly be *une histoire du passé*.

Mr Jugnauth: May I know from the hon. Minister whether, out of the 26,000 and so tablets that have been received, there have been some faulty ones, and, if yes, may I know what amount this represents in terms of money?

Dr. Bunwaree: No, I am not aware of faulty ones. In any case, if there are faulty ones, they are covered as the provider has to take and replace the faulty ones *à l'heure où il prend l'autre*, this is the condition.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he could tell us the name of the supplier of those tablets and the cost per unit?

Dr. Bunwaree: I said it is the Mauritius Telecom (MT).

Mr Roopun: Hon. Minister, may I know what measures are envisaged for the timely update of the...

The Deputy Speaker: Kindly address the Chair!

Mr Roopun: Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. May I ask the hon. Minister what measures are envisaged for the timely updating of those tablets? For students who are today in Form V and when they reach Lower Six next year, is there any mechanism already in place?

Dr. Bunwaree: We started last year and we are already on target for Form IV and Form V and all the stakeholders who have responsibility there are already working on what is going to come after Form V. So, we are on target and on time.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question hon. Seeruttun!

Mr Seeruttun: We have been talking about students who were in Form IV last year and who are now receiving those tablets this year. May we know when students of Form IV this year are going to receive their tablets? Is it going to be this year itself, next year or the year after? Can we have an idea of when these students are going to get those tablets, please?

Dr. Bunwaree: In fact, if we follow the usual procedures once the tablets have been distributed, it is to Form IV students of last year, but once they have been distributed it is only after one year that we could have expected that the other batch of tablets would come. But it is not going to be like that, we are launching the tenders for the other batch in a few days' time, two or three weeks' time which means that the students of Form IV of this year who were in Form III last year should be able to get their tablets two or three months later.

But I fear, following what has happened last year, that this could take some more time because of the procedures. We are going to tendering again so this could take some more time and there could be the possibility where the students are already by the end of the year and they find themselves with the tablets to be distributed which can bring them to Form V next year.

What I have proposed to do is that we increase the number of tablets for which we are going for tender procedures, we ask for twice as many, but we ask the supplier to provide only half this year and the other half in January next year.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question hon. Seeruttun!

UNIVERSITIES (PRIVATE) - OPERATION

(No. IB/23) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the private universities operating in Mauritius, he will state the number thereof currently operational, indicating in each case, the -

- (a) date of coming into operation thereof;
- (b) number of students currently attending thereto, and
- (c) recognition status thereof.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the list of private post-secondary education institutions registered by the Tertiary Education Commission is available on the website of the Commission. However, I am tabling a list, provided by the Commission, indicating the institutions which are currently registered and are operational as at July 2014, the date of coming into operation and the number of students currently attending these institutions.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I would like to inform the House once again, that prior to 2005, the setting up and registration of tertiary education institutions was being approved by the Minister responsible for education. On 01 July 2005, the Tertiary Education Commission Act was amended to give authority to the Commission to register institutions subject to the prior approval of the Minister responsible for education.

On 31 July 2007, the power of the Minister to approve the registration of institutions was withdrawn through amendments to the Tertiary Education Commission Act, thus giving the Tertiary Education Commission the sole prerogative to approve the setting up and registration of tertiary education institutions.

The criteria and conditions for registration of post-secondary education institutions are set out in the Tertiary Education Commission Regulations for the Registration of Private Institutions or Branches, Centres or Campuses of Overseas Institutions, offering Post-secondary Education promulgated on 01 July 2005 by the then Minister of Education and I am tabling a copy thereof.

Thus, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all private post-secondary education institutions established prior to July 2007 were approved by the respective Ministers responsible for Education. Institutions set up as from July 2007 have been approved by the Tertiary Education Commission.

I am informed by the Commission that an application to set up a post-secondary education institution has to undergo three stages -

- (i) Approval of the project;
- (ii) Application for registration, and
- (iii) Application for accreditation of programmes.

I am also informed by the Commission that 37 criteria have to be satisfied, including *interalia* conduct of examinations, conditions and mode of appointment of examining bodies and examiners and award of qualifications.

I am informed by the Commission that all programmes offered by the institutions registered with the Tertiary Education Commission in accordance with section 12(a) of the Tertiary Education Commission Act and which have been accredited are recognised. I am tabling a copy of the letter from the Tertiary Education Commission.

It is only in one institution, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, l'École de Médecine Louis Pasteur, registered in 2002 with the approval of the then Minister, that the students faced problems for recognition of their qualifications. In the interest of the students, I had meetings with all the public tertiary education institutions. At the request of my Ministry, the University of Mauritius in collaboration with the Université de Bordeaux has found an appropriate solution. At its meeting of 10 March 2014, the University of Mauritius Senate approved the *Programme de Médecine menant au Diplôme de MBChB (cas particuliers)*, which started on 01 July 2014.

The House may wish to note that Government has requested the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) of UK to conduct an audit of all tertiary education institutions in Mauritius. A team comprising Dr. Steven Jackson and Mrs Irene Ainsworth has already conducted a scoping mission from 19 to 21 May 2014.

Mr Seeruttun: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that there are students of some private universities who have completed their First Degree and are now facing problems to get admission for a Master Degree in other universities, is he aware of the problems which those students are facing and what actions he has been taking to remedy that problem?

Dr. Jeetah: I am aware of certain difficulties of some students, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because of all the bad publicity that have been around the Indian institutions operating in Mauritius. But I can also add for the benefit of the hon. Member that we had a recent case of students at the JSS Academy who had some difficulties with the Council of Engineers who have reviewed their stand. There has been a Supreme Court judgment in India whereby now it is in the possession of Tertiary Education Commission and I am hoping that they will do the needful to make sure that such matters are sorted out.

Mr Seeruttun: Will the hon. Minister inform the House what are the other universities concerned and if he could name them?

Dr. Jeetah: These are all the institutions in Mauritius which are operating with an Indian awarding body, that is, an Indian University and there are five of them.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister confirm that there are no less than 11 tertiary education institutes in Mauritius, of course, which have not been authorised by the Tertiary Education Commission to recruit students for the next coming year?

Dr. Jeetah: I am aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Tertiary Education Commission has not given authority to all Indian awarding institutions to recruit, plus there is another one here which is not an Indian institution, from the list that I have.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Minister just said that there is a judgment from the Court in India. In that case, can he say whether the University Grants Commission, which should surely be aware of any judgment that has been delivered in India, has communicated to either the Ministry or the Tertiary Education Commission to say that those institutions which have teamed up or partnered with Indian institutions, they are, therefore, allowed to do so contrary to what the University Grants Commission stated publicly earlier on?

Dr. Jeetah: In this case, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the local JSS Academy sued not only the UGC, but also a University with whom it was attached. I presume they must have seen the judgment.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to JSS Academy, can the hon. Minister inform the House what was the main issue so that qualifications or degrees delivered by the Academy were not recognised by the Council of Registered Professional Engineers?

Dr. Jeetah: As far as I am aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 04 March, there was a decision taken by all the members of the Council, because there was a Ministerial Committee and I had the chance to sit and look at the deliberations. There was a unanimous decision, and for some obscure reason, this was not communicated, and now this has changed. I think the hon. Member raised a question in Parliament, himself. Now, all the students will be able to go through the process of registration through the Council of Engineers in Mauritius.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House what will happen to the students who have already been enrolled by D. Y. Patil Medical College and who have already started their courses in medicine?

Dr. Jeetah: They will have to go through the normal process, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Normally, when we finish with a first batch of medical students, they have to go to the Medical Council - the Medical Council, which is already sitting in certain committees - to vet the courses. We have to come to Government for registration of that institution, like it is normally done for all new institutions coming into play in Mauritius.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, out of those 11 private universities that have been prohibited from recruiting new students as from next year...

(Interruptions)

We understand that there are students who are at their second or third year in those same universities. What guarantee can the hon. Minister give us here that the students will be able to further their studies and get a diploma at the end of the day, which is going to be recognised?

Dr. Jeetah: With due respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to come back to the problem of recognition. Section 12(a) of the Tertiary Education Act allows the Tertiary Education Commission to recognise establishment of institutions, registration and accreditation. Once an institution goes through these 37 criteria, the question of not being recognised does not even arise. It is the regulator that decides. Yes, it is true that there are some institutions that have been asked - all these five institutions - not to recruit students, because there was an issue with the UGC. But, now, I have just mentioned that there is a new Supreme Court ruling in India that will allow the Tertiary Education Commission to take the decision that it deems fit.

I must also say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many times here in this House we have talked about UGC. All these institutions that are operating in Mauritius are governed by a regulation or by a law that was set up on 01 July 2005. Nowhere in that law was UGC mentioned. This is something that came up here, and a lot of noise was made out of it. This is what has caused prejudice to all these poor students.

Mr Jugnauth: May I know from the hon. Minister for what reason the Tertiary Education Commission has deemed it fit to issue a public communiqué on 03 June 2014 - as recent as that - to inform the public to be careful, that the following institutions are not authorised to recruit new students? So, for what reasons?

Dr. Jeetah: I have just mentioned the five institutions that are Indian institutions, which have Indian awarding bodies. There was a communiqué from the UGC suggesting that they are not authorised to operate here. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have mentioned it so many times; we have to go by the laws of Mauritius. In our law that was written on 01 July 2005, there was no requirement for the UGC to be consulted.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! I want some order! Yes, hon. Mrs Labelle!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, clearly, regarding this institution, we have a problem of awarding body for these diplomas and certificates. Can the hon. Minister enlighten us on the issue of awarding body for the certificates, for the students who are now following these courses? The hon. Minister has just mentioned this question of Indian awarding body. Now, there is a problem with these institutions. What is the solution that the hon. Minister is proposing to those students who are actually following these courses?

Dr. Jeetah: I have mentioned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the students in these institutions who satisfied all the criteria. I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I went through; there is a precedent. The first school started on 23 August 2002; this is when the first Indian institution started operating in Mauritius. It was on 23 August 2002, and this is MAURAS. Who was in Government in 2002? This is where...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Lesjongard! I want some silence in the House!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Lesjongard, please put your question. I want some order in the House! Hon. Lesjongard, please!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. With regard to the JSS Academy

...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please!

Mr Lesjongard: ...the students and the parents have gone through very difficult times for the past weeks and months with regard to the degrees for their wards. May I know from the hon. Minister who was responsible for that situation?

Dr. Jeetah: That's a very good question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Mr Bachoo, chaired a meeting, because the Council falls under his Ministry. This is where we discovered all these things. There was a unanimous decision taken on 04 March of this year that these students ought to have been recognised.

(Interruptions)

Exactement ! Je suis entièrement d'accord avec vous.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, address the Chair!

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am agreeable with the hon. Member's comments that these poor students have been through a lot of pain for no reason. It has been sorted out. There has been some tampering, I hear.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this big issue is about the recognition of certificates. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he can give the assurance to this House - and as hon. Bhagwan says - to the population at large that all the certificates of all those institutions are valid and recognised in Mauritius and outside Mauritius, in India and abroad, for further academic studies? Can he give this assurance?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun!

Dr. Jeetah: I would like to refer the hon. Member to a letter that I have from the Tertiary Education Commission that suggests that -

“All programmes offered by the institutions registered with the TEC (...).”

I am reading the letter in my hand here -

“(...) in accordance with section 12(a) of the TEC Act (...).”

because they have the authority -

“(...) and which have been accredited are recognised.”

What more can I say?

(Interruptions)

What are we talking about? Here, in Mauritius?

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Seeruttun!

Mr Seeruttun: Will the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether the University of Mauritius will accept students having obtained degrees from the University of those private institutions concerned?

Dr. Jeetah: If the students satisfy the admission criteria of the University of Mauritius, I do not see any problem.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Seeruttun!

DEUX FRERES & QUATRE SŒURS - INHABITANTS - RELOCATION

(No. IB/24) 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 proposed relocation of the inhabitants of Deux Frères and Quatre Soeurs affected by landslides, he will state where matters stand.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it had been confirmed by the Expert Team of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I want some order!

Mr Bachoo: ...that the matter reported at Deux Frères site is a case of localised soil erosion due to surface run-off and infiltration of rain water and not landslide. In February 2013, the Grand Port District Council was requested to take necessary action in terms of construction of drains and retaining walls. There is no case for relocation at Deux Frères.

As regards Quatre Soeurs, my Ministry has had several consultative meetings with the inhabitants whose houses had been damaged by landslide, in view of reaching a relocation agreement. Same has finally materialised in February 2014. The aggrieved inhabitants have agreed on the allocation of a portion of land of 11 *perches* each at Camp Ithier.

A Letter of Intent was issued on 27 March 2014 to each of the inhabitants by the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the families have confirmed their agreement to move to the new site. The Architects of my Ministry have designed prototypehouses of 142 m² based on the requirements of the inhabitants and with possibility of future extension.

Working drawings are under preparation and on completion of same, the bid document would be prepared and bids floated for the construction of the houses by September 2014. I would like to thank my colleagues, hon. Dr. Boolell and hon. Moutia for the support they had extended to find a solution to the problem.

Mr Seeruttun: Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House whether all the families concerned have been given the same size in terms of plot of land where they are going to be relocated?

Mr Bachoo: Of course, they have been given the same size, that is, 142 m² and in addition, the building is also being financed by the Government of Mauritius. In the past we never had such a thing.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister inform the House how come that, in some cases, families have been granted two plots of land whereas others have been granted only one plot?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is hearsay only because I was on site together with my two colleagues and we have seen and I have to thank the hon. Minister of Housing also who had been on the site several times. We cannot give two plots of land to somebody who had only one plot of land originally. That is not the case.

Mr Bérenger: If you allow me. We are talking about landslides but that part of the island, as we all know, is a very special part of the island and it is not only landslide but that road - the number of accidents – is very accident prone and partly because of landslide, of rain and so on. Is Government considering any alternative right now or has this been given up completely? Is there any alternative route being looked for? Is there any solution?

Mr Bachoo: Definitely, the consultants have already submitted a plan. The plan has already been submitted to the Government and we are working on that, but that would be a very expensive project and we are looking into it. At the same time, there are a few bridges which also need immediate and complete repair; we are looking into that as well. I sincerely hope that one of the bridges in that vicinity will be constructed in the months to come.

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will agree with me that uprooting families from one region is a very traumatic exercise and given the way this exercise has been carried out whereby some families that are perceived to be with the Opposition parties are being treated differently.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Vice-Prime Minister may go and check. There is, at least, one family that I know who has been granted two plots of land, whereas others who are living in much...

(Interruptions)

In terms of area. The land is much larger but still got only one plot of land whereby the family is living with the son and grandmother. So I would ask him to go and check before he comes with a proper answer.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that plot of land is in my Constituency and that is the best plot of land we have given. The hon. Minister of Housing together with my two colleagues were on that spot and we have seen. All these aggrieved families were called on many occasions to my office, we have spoken to them. All of them were agreeable, there was no compulsion on the part of anybody and no one has got two plots of land. This is illegal, unethical and immoral.

EBENE CYBERCITY - PARKING SLOTS

(No. IB/25) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Ébène Cybercity, he will state -

- (a) the number of -
 - (i) employees working thereat, and
 - (ii) authorised parking lots thereat and
- (b) if he is aware of the disorderly and unauthorised parking and traffic congestion thereat and, if so, indicate the remedial measures taken, if any, in relation thereto.

The Minister of Information and Communication Technology (Mr T. Pillay Chedumbrum): With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to answer the question which was originally addressed to my friend Minister of Housing and Lands, hon. Dr. Kasenally.

With regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd. that there are approximately 15,000 employees who are presently working at Ébène Cybercity.

With regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, there are, at present, approximately 40 completed buildings within the Cybercity and the number of parking slots for each building varies between 40 and 200 parkings, that is, there are approximately 3,600 parking slots in respect of existing buildings. Over and above, the BPML has authorised seven parking lots within the Cybercity to cater for additional 900 cars.

Concerning part (b) of the question, the hon. Member may note that in spite of the fact that adequate parking is available within the Cybercity, a number of employees are either not willing or are not prepared to pay the charges (ranging from Rs1,200 to Rs2,500) for parking within the authorised parking zones. About 40% of these parking zones thus remain unoccupied and employees resort to illegal parking along roadsides.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the BPML is taking the following measures to tackle the problem –

1. The construction of a Parking Tower for 900 cars at Ébène is scheduled to start in August 2014 and the project would be completed within 14 months. The project cost is approximately Rs300 m. All offsite parking will be directed towards the Parking Tower, which will provide paid parking facilities.
2. Since beginning 2014, all the main roads have been declared public, with the collaboration of the Municipality of Quatre Bornes, to enable Police to enforce regulations and act against contraveners. I have been informed by BPML that double-yellow line markings are being painted on all the main roads.
3. The existing bus routes within Ébène are being streamlined (Bus routes are being simplified) to avoid traffic congestion with the collaboration of the National Transport Authority (NTA).
4. BPML is upgrading and realigning(that is, is being straightened and widened) -the main roads, including the addition of roundabouts to make the traffic flow more fluid. Construction work for the first phase of the project to the tune of Rs23 m. is starting within one month.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Minister, he is telling us what the BPML has told him, well, has he been there? Has he witnessed that awful mess? This is a jewel in our crown and you have cars all over the place anywhere, bus stops anywhere, now you have vans, hawkers, food on the road. It is an awful mess! Is the hon. Minister aware that BPML is part of the problem and not part of the solution?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me reassure the Leader of the Opposition that, in fact, it was in a very disorderly manner. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the

problem was because there was a lack of facilities for parking of those employees. Let us say, there are some 15,000 people working there and there were parking problems there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we could not take action like that. There were seven plots of land which have been earmarked and already parking facilities are provided there. But now despite those facilities have been granted to these people, still 40%, as I have mentioned, of those parking slots are still unoccupied. Now, what we have done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have applied for and obtained from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes - the BPML - has applied for and obtained from...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I continue, please?

The Deputy Speaker: Please!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: ... has applied for and obtained from the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes and we have GN 26 of 2014...

(Interruptions)

...where those roads have been made public. Now, when they have been made public, we can contravene. As I have said, the competent authorities are taking contraventions. Yellow lines are being marked all along and, at the same time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have said, the construction of the parking tower will start in one month's time. We humbly believe that in a few months, the whole situation, I am not saying that it will be completed, but things will improve considerably.

Mr Bérenger: If you will allow, this is concerning traffic. An awful mess! I ask again the Minister: have you been there to look at the number of hawkers, people cooking food in front of cyber buildings, all over the place, bus stops, all over the place, you cannot drive through once the bus starts in a road. And the filth between the Cybercity and Rose Hill, the grass is never cut! People throw things all over the place. It is filthy and now, the hon. Minister is telling us what we - the Business Parks of Mauritius Ltd, when is that going to stop that filth and this disorder?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no need for the Leader of the Opposition to be nervous about it.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is happening, we have to take things...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, let's...

(Interruptions)

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the situation is as it is, let me assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition. In 2003, the planning guidelines...

(Interruptions)

You see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member doesn't want to listen because he is at fault!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order! Allow the hon. Minister to answer!

(Interruptions)

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: If the situation is as it is, it is good that you know what happened!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: The hon. Member is shouting because he knows what has happened.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you have asked a question, now, we must allow the hon. Minister to give his reply!

(Interruptions)

I will ask you to...

(Interruptions)

I want some order in the House so that the hon. Minister can answer the question you have asked.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 2003, the planning guidelines for Ébène...

(Interruptions)

...comprised a mandatory condition. The hon. Member doesn't want to listen because he knows what fault he has committed

(Interruptions)

In 2003, the fact speaks for itself; there are the guidelines which are there.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: If you don't maintain order in the House, we won't be able to proceed, and I will have to suspend the sitting.

(Interruptions)

I have got no control over the answer that the hon. Minister is giving!

(Interruptions)

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has asked a question, I must allow the hon. Minister to give the reply.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister, please go ahead! I want some order on this side of the House.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have given myself the warning that if I am lying, I know what will be the consequence.

(Interruptions)

So, in the circumstances, let me tell you what we have seen in the file. In 2003, the planning guidelines for Ébène comprise...

(Interruptions)

...a mandatory condition for promoters to provide one parking bay for every...

(Interruptions)

You can see how they work in a very disorderly manner.

(Interruptions)

The whole mess started because at that time there was no discipline in what they were doing. You realise they provide one parking bay for every 150 square metres of built up space.

(Interruptions)

The Government Planning Policy guidelines...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: If this disorder continues, I won't be able to go ahead with the business of the House. I will have to suspend the sitting.

(Interruptions)

For the last time, I am....

(Interruptions)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I want some order in the House.

(Interruptions)

Order! Order, please! Order! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, allow the hon. Minister to answer!

(Interruptions)

Yes. I will request the hon. Minister to be as brief as possible!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Of course. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Ribot, please!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: In 2008...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Labelle! Allow the hon. Minister to answer!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: In 2008, the Government Planning Policy guidelines...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, try to be as brief as possible!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Of course, subsequently revised this...

(Interruptions)

... to 60 square metres for each car, thus increasing the car parking requirement by 250%.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Now, as I have said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been an Upgrading Programme Committee which has been set up ...

(Interruptions)

...to review the bus route within the Ébène, forms part of a general programme of upgrading roads that has been approved by Ébène Master Plan Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry comprising...

(Interruptions)

...representatives of Public Infrastructure, the Municipality of Quatre Bornes, Traffic management and Road Safety Unit, National Transport Authority, the Road Development Authority and Police. A one-way traffic for buses has been finalised...

(Interruptions)

...and will be operational after certain works comprising bus lay-by and bus shelters would be completed as listed below.

(Interruptions)

The works under Phase I of Upgrading Cybercity infrastructure comprising the following -

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Construction of roundabout near Cyber Tower I

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Construction of existing lane near The Core.

(Interruptions)

Construction of exit lane near NG Tower.

(Interruptions)

Re-alignment of existing...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Tenders for the upgrading roads were invited through the press in May 2014.

(Interruptions)

Gamma Construction is being awarded the contract for a sum of Rs23 m. and the work will commence in 2014. I wish, at the same time, to point out that...

(Interruptions)

...in 2005, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, BPML was almost bankrupt when they left the Government.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, hon. Li Kwong Wing!

(Interruptions)

Mr Li Kwong Wing: One last question!

The Deputy Speaker: Next question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have not had the chance to put my question. Give me a chance!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Okay!

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has not replied to the question because for a simple shopping mall like Shoppers' Paradise and Jumbo, you have a proper bus station. How come in a cyber zone, with 15,000 employees, so many thousands of visitors coming to visit the different offices everyday; there is no proper bus shelter, no shed. 15,000 people are waiting in the sun and in the rain without any bus station. Is not the cyber hub becoming a dumping hub and a shame to this country?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned, there is...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: ...an upgrading programme committee which has already been set up and, as I have mentioned, all these problems are being looked into.

(Interruptions)

A contract has already been awarded, as I said, to Gamma Company who is looking into it and the work will start as from next month.

**INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES/BUSINESS PROCESS
OUTSOURCING SECTOR – SKILLED LABOUR**

(No. IB/26) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the Information Communication Technologies/Business Process Outsourcing sector, he will state the –

- (a) cost competitiveness of telecommunications of Mauritius as compared with the neighbouring countries, between 2012 and 2014;
- (b) total Government expenditure in Information Communication Technologies training, since 2010 to date, and
- (c) causes of shortage of skilled labour therein.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed as follows as per question put -

In 2012, the Everest Global, INC carried out a study on the attractiveness of Mauritius as a location for the Information Communication Technologies/Business Process Outsourcing services as compared to its competitors. The analysis was based on ongoing costs only and, according to its report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius was comparatively a cheaper cost location than most of its neighbouring peers, including South Africa, Kenya and Tunisia. Further, according to another study carried out by A.T. Kearney, Mauritius ranks 25th in the Global Services location Index 2011. According to the Everest Global 2012, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius ranks among the leading global economies in terms of ease of doing business.

I have been informed by the BOI that it will commission another independent report on the cost competitiveness of Mauritius in respect of ICT/BPO Sector in 2015.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I have to inform that when I took up office as Minister of ICT, I have taken stock of the acute shortage of skilled labour in the ICT Sector. It is in line with this shortcoming that the ICT Academy was set up.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this quest for training of our unemployed youth, an ICT Training Centre was set up for Rodrigues also in November 2012. The Centre is providing technical infrastructure for online learning and ICT Training Courses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, expenditure relating to training in ICT amounted to Rs2.7 million in connection with the ICT Skills Development Programme (ISDP) which was

introduced in 2012. According to the ISDP, Government makes a contribution of 60% of the training costs, the remaining 40% being borne by the private sector. With regard to the stipend payable to the trainees, the contribution is equally shared by Government and the employers for a maximum period of six months. The schemes are conditional to the ICT companies taking a commitment to employ at least 60% of the trainees for a training period of twelve months. As at date, 158 companies and 4,058 job seekers have been registered with the ISDP, that is, the ICT Skills Development Programme. Up to now, some 883 participants have secured training and work placement. A Generic Training Course in collaboration with BPO Certification Institute of India will also be provided under the ISDP and these courses will be run by the ICT Academy. The course will start in September 2014.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, as Members of the House are aware, the ICT-BPO industry has experienced a boom in the number of companies and the number of persons employed. In fact, the number of companies has jumped from 300 in 2009 to 631 in 2013 representing an increase of more than 100%. At the same time, employment has increased from 11,437 in 2009 to 19,242 in 2013. However, the number of students examined in ICT at HSC level is being looked into.

I am further informed that, according to a survey carried out by the HRDC in 2012, it was found that training and education systems do not match the needs of the market and lack of proficiency in ICT was among the main constraints. Similarly, there has been an increase of around 6% in the number of students enrolled in ICT on the ICT- dominated field at tertiary level. With the introduction of the ICT scholarships by the Government last year, it is expected that the number will increase in the coming years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, finally, I wish to point out that job seekers are not willing to adhere to the conditions of work in the ICT sector which normally include odd and irregular hours of work. In addition, the cost of training is relatively high.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Is the hon. Minister aware that the main cause for the lack of competitiveness of our ICT sector is the slow speed and interconnectivity. According to the latest figures available from Net Index, the world average internet speed is 13.7 megabits per second for the world and, for Mauritius, it is only 2.3 megabits per second, that is, six times lower than the world average. In the case of Beau-Bassin, in my Constituency, it is even less than one megabit per second, 0.9, and it is even worse in Rose Hill, the Constituency of the Leader of the

Opposition, where it is 0.84 megabit per second? So, how is it possible to attract more ICT business when you have such low internet speed because of the monopoly of MT, surely?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, there was a workshop which we conducted in the month of September last year wherein all the ICT players were invited and we requested them to name to us what are their main difficulties so that we can address them to make them remain as competitive as their competitors or more. They identified three main problems: firstly, the very high cost of electricity; secondly, the cost of bandwidth, as mentioned by my Friend, and thirdly, the mismatch for skilled labour. In fact, we have applied for and obtained a special tariff...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: ...for electricity. Now they are paying 50% less than what they were paying before. We have addressed the issue of IPLC also. Last year, we had a reduction of tariff by 15% and this year by 16%. ICTA, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which has retained the services of two consultants who will be in Mauritius to look in what manner we can bring down as much as possible the cost of bandwidth capacity in Mauritius.

For your information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have also through the Finance Act amended sections 30 and 31 wherein the ICTA is being given the power to apply for reduction of tariff as and when required.

For your information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have also launched what we call the Quality of Service Regulation which came into effect as from May this year.

As the hon. Member has just mentioned when we say you will have capacity, before it was said up to 2 Mega; now we say there has been a change in it, we will have a capacity for a minimum of 2 Mega, meaning the operator now when he has to give you 2 Mega, he will have to give you 2 Mega and cannot give you less than that. Already, we have made regulations and directives to look into it. I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the situation will improve.

De toutes les façons, comme on a pu le constater, la tendance est à la baisse. Les tarifs sont en train de baisser. Nous sommes sûrs et certains que, d'ici peu, on aura d'autres baisses de tarifs dans le secteur.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: With time running out, I allow a final question to the hon. Member.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Talking about the cost and tariff which the hon. Minister has mentioned, is he aware that, again, according to the latest statistics, the average internet cost per MBPS for the world, is 7.96 US dollars, but for Mauritius, it is almost three times more, 21.25 US dollar. How is it possible that Mauritius is charging more, three times more than the world average and also three times more than in Reunion Island which is nearby and which has a higher cost of living?

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: In fact, *à la Réunion nous avons ce qu'on appelle la continuité territoriale et c'est à cause de cela qu'ils bénéficient du même tarif qu'il y a en France.*

(Interruptions)

This is one thing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, the hon. Member is right. That is why the ICTA has applied from the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation and two consultants will be coming to Mauritius. We want to be as competitive as our competitors and I can assure the hon. Member that the issue of capacity is now being addressed. Before, we had a certain problem, we had only the optic fibre cable, South Africa Far East cable (SAFE) which was coming to Mauritius. Now, we have LION, LION2 and, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have introduced what we call the Open Access Policy to sea cable and with that, we have opened our landing station so that foreign operators can come. We have Belgacom which has come to Mauritius and they are offering capacity at a price which is 45% less than the incumbent operator.

I can assure my friend that all the issue is being looked into and for your information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have the World Economic Forum which, in its Global Readiness Index, has just been launched recently, in 2014. You will see that insofar as affordability is concerned, which will answer the question of my friend, in 2011 we were at the global 49th position, in 2012 we were at 49th position, in 2013 we were at 33rd and for 2014 we are at 29th. So, you can see insofar as affordability also is concerned the situation is improving.

I can assure the House that whatever is being required is being looked into and despite the Euro crisis and the economic downturn, still we have growth in the ICT sector.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that the following Parliamentary Questions have been withdrawn: PQ Nos. IB/41, IB/42, IB/43 and IB/46. Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of 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 -

- (i) *The Professional Land Surveyors' Council Bill (No. VI of 2014)*
- (ii) *The Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (Amendment) Bill (No. VII of 2014)*

Second Reading

THE PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYORS' COUNCIL BILL

(No. VI OF 2014)

(4.43 p.m.)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the Professional Land Surveyors' Council Bill (No. VI of 2014) be read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a very important piece of legislation that we are introducing today in this august Assembly. At the very outset, I would like to mention that for the first time we are establishing a regulatory body under legal provisions to, *inter alia*, control, exercise and maintain discipline in the profession of land surveyors. The reform process has

started some years back with the implementation of the Land Administration, Valuation and Information Management System commonly known as the LAVIMS project.

One of the deliverables of LAVIMS has been the setting up of a digital cadastre at my Ministry whereby every land parcel on the territory of Mauritius is accurately identified in relation to other land parcels and assigned a unique Parcel Identification Number (PIN). The system thus provides for a comprehensive national integrated set of spatial data for the effective land-use planning and valuation hereby offering a secure and transparent framework for land transaction.

In 2011, the Cadastral Survey Act was passed for the continuous updating and maintenance of the digital cadastre to ensure its sustainability. This Act also provides for the establishment of new standards and procedures for the conduct of land surveying coupled with the setting up of a geodetic datum to accurately identify every single portion of land parcel in the country.

Presently, the quality of land surveys varies considerably. To address the issue, the Cadastral Survey (Land Surveys) Regulations 2013 have been made last year to standardise land survey practices and procedures and specify pre-requisite contents of Survey Reports and Memoranda of Survey. The Chief Surveyor of my Ministry has now the authority to verify whether the survey has been carried out in the prescribed manner and the survey report or memorandum of survey has been drawn up and made in their prescribed form and manner.

Originally, land surveys were carried out by Engineers. With the evolution of time, land surveying has become a specialised field of study. Formerly, the Land Surveyors Board was mandated to conduct examinations for the appointment of land surveyors. Since 1982, under the Land Surveyors' Act, the examining body has been shifted to the University of Mauritius. This provision is being maintained under section 19(c) of this Bill. It is worth mentioning that following the recommendation of the Council being established under this Bill, the Land Surveyors' Commission will still be issued by the President of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight the lengthy journey which one has to undergo to finally become a registered land surveyor. Actually it is a bit longer than one takes to become a surgeon, I must admit. The prospective person should, in the first instance, obtain an academic

qualification from the University of Mauritius or other prescribed qualification in land surveying. Thereafter, he should work full time under the direct supervision of a commissioned land surveyor for a period of no less than two years and should provide the Attorney General with evidence of his knowledge of laws pertaining to land matters and obtain a Certificate of Character. He should also provide a cadastral survey plan of an extent of not less than 150 *arpents* assigned to him by the Chief Surveyor.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, members of the public who hire the services of land surveyors for their transactions expect in return a quality service. It is unfortunate that some of the surveys carried out do not meet the required standards and specifications laid down by my Ministry. These surveys are provided at low cost and often by unqualified Surveyors commonly known as *braconniers*. Unfortunately, the survey reports are signed by Commissioned Land Surveyors which is not quite correct as you will imagine.

Furthermore, I would like to mention that there are some unscrupulous so-called “Professional Land Surveyors” who keep making malicious and unfounded allegations against the survey profession of my Ministry. With the coming of this legislation, proper investigation will be legally feasible. Where charges have been proved, disciplinary measures will be taken and may lead even to suspension or cancellation of appointment as a land surveyor.

This Bill provides for a proper mechanism to be put in place to ensure that there is a more professional approach in the handling of land issues by land surveyors. Hence, the establishment of a Professional Land Surveyors’ Council which would have powers to -

- (i) regulate and control the profession of land surveyors;
- (ii) register professional land surveyors;
- (iii) enter in the Register of professional land surveyors, the name, address, qualification and other particulars of a professional land surveyor;
- (iv) exercise and maintain discipline in the profession of land surveyors, with the assistance and support of the Professional Conduct Committee as may be set up;
- (v) disseminate literature on developments in the field of land surveying or any other related matter to land surveyors, and

- (vi) promote advancement in the field of land surveying by continuous professional development courses.

I wish to mention that the Cadastral Survey Act was passed in 2011 in this Assembly as it was observed that the Land Surveyors' Act of 1976 did not meet fully our present day requirements.

The Cadastral Survey Act now caters, *inter alia*, for -

- (i) the allocation of a Unique Parcel Identification Number to every land parcel or unit of building;
- (ii) the setting up of a geodetic datum in order to accurately identify the location of every land parcel, and
- (iii) new standards and rules for the conduct of land surveying as may be prescribed.

As I have already mentioned earlier, the quality of land surveys presently being performed in Mauritius varies considerably. Substandard techniques are often utilized by small operators, very often unqualified, performing a low cost service to provide survey reports.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a matter of great concern because acquiring a piece of land by anybody is perhaps one of the greatest investment of any family. It is important that they get any document which will stand the test of justice and time.

For the building of a reliable cadastre, it is imperative to introduce a survey unit reliability or examination function to test reliability or accuracy of the surveys. Officers of my Ministry are presently carrying out audit of survey plans for the issue of certificates prior to registration. Any survey plan which does not meet the standards established is rejected and the Surveyor concerned informed of its shortcomings accordingly. This is the source of frustration of some who are not following the rule because we want to protect the public against substandard service. This measure will help to track down any land which may be the subject of prescription as its precise location is ascertained before issuing the Parcel Identification Number (PIN).

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Cadastral Survey Act has made provisions for the strengthening of the survey practice in Mauritius and has paved the way for the regulation of the land surveying profession. Accordingly, the Professional Land Surveyors' Council Bill is being

introduced to establish a professional land council to provide for better regulation of the profession of land surveyors, ensure a high standard of the services being provided to one and all and reduce any incidence of unsavoury activities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, part II of the Bill provides for the establishment, objects, functions and powers of the Council which shall be a body Corporate and, *inter alia*, will ensure that the code of practice is complied with by professional land surveyors.

Part III of the Bill deals with the establishment of the Council and its Management. The Council shall consist of the Chief Surveyor, four professional Government land surveyors, four other professional land surveyors, a representative of my Ministry and a representative of the Attorney-General's Office.

Part IV of the Bill provides for the eligibility criteria for a person to be appointed as a land surveyor by the President.

Part V deals essentially with investigation of any complaint received by the Council against a professional land surveyor and the establishment of a Professional Conduct Committee for disciplinary proceedings. I wish to draw the attention of the House that the issue of discipline has never been addressed in the past. It was literally the Wild West. However, professional land surveyors aggrieved by the decision of the Professional Conduct Committee, may apply for judicial review before the Supreme Court.

Upon the receipt of a report from the Professional Conduct Committee, whereby it is stated that the charge has been proved, the Council shall either administer a warning or a severe warning or through the Minister make a recommendation to the President for the suspension of appointment as a land surveyor for a period not exceeding two years or simply cancel the appointment altogether. This decision to control the surveyors is very important so that it will deter anybody from performing things which are not in the interest of the people who are purchasing the land.

Part VI provides for the Council to set up a general fund for its operation. The funds will be generated partly from registration fees collected annually from professional Land Surveyors.

An annual report and audit accounts have to be submitted by the Board for onward transmission to the National Assembly.

Part VII makes provisions for the Chief Surveyor to authorise surveys of State land, failure to get this authorisation will render the Memorandum of Survey or Survey Report null and void.

I wish to mention that with the coming into force of this legislation, the Land Surveyors' Act will be repealed and this will lead to consequential amendments in several other legislations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the initial members of the Council will be appointed by me for a period not exceeding six months, thereafter the members will be able to elect among themselves the Chairperson and its Office bearers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this legislation will be in line with international good practice and will contribute to a delivery service in a professional, transparent and standard manner. The Council will ensure that the rights of every citizen are safeguarded and they are provided with a service of high standard.

I would also like to recall that Clause 52 of the Bill provides that the Professional Land Surveyors' Council Act shall come into operation on a date to be fixed by Proclamation and that different dates may be fixed for the coming into operation of different sections of the Act.

These provisions, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, will ensure that there is enough leeway for the proper establishment of the Council and for the preparation of required rules and regulations. This will also ensure a smooth transition in the conduct of land survey practices and related activities.

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

Dr. A. Boolell rose and seconded.

(5.00 p.m.)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me at the very outset of my speech to state to the House that we are

debating on a non-controversial piece of legislation, and also inform the House that, on this side of the House, we agree on almost all the fundamentals of this piece of legislation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as stated in the Explanatory Memorandum, the main object of this Bill is to provide for the establishment of the Professional Land Surveyors' Council, and at clause 4 of the Bill, the objects of the Council are clearly mentioned, that is, (a) regulate and control the profession of land surveyors, and (b) promote advancement in the field of land surveying. And this is the case for other professions in the country. For example, we have the Council of Registered Professional Engineers, the Medical Council, the Dental Council.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the composition of the Council is found under clause 7, that is –

- (1) The Council shall consist of –
 - (a) the Chief Surveyor;
 - (b) 4 professional land surveyors, to be appointed by the Minister from among Government land surveyors posted at the Ministry;
 - (c) 4 other professional land surveyors, to be elected in the manner specified in the First Schedule;
 - (d) the supervising officer or his representative; and
 - (e) a representative of the Attorney General's Office.

When one looks at the composition of the Council, one will note that we have two categories of surveyors, that is, Government surveyors and private surveyors, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The functions of the Council is at clauses 5 and 6, where it is stated that the Council will have to enter, in the Register, the name, address, qualification and other particulars of a professional land surveyor, and exercise and maintain discipline in the profession of land surveyors, and most importantly ensure that the Code of Practice is complied with by professional land surveyors.

It is true, as it was mentioned by the hon. Minister, that, over the past years, we have witnessed, and he referred to *braconnier* in the profession of land surveying, and it is for these reasons that we have today, in front of us, the establishment of a Council, to mainly regulate and control the profession, and I'll say a few words about the profession later on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the profession of land surveying is today facing fundamental challenges; new technologies, new opportunities have enabled surveyors to broaden their skills and competence. The Minister referred to LAVIMS. Today, surveyors are involved in various activities such as State management, digital image processing, boundary demarcation, engineering design and planning. The changing world and the changing technology have definitely changed the profession.

Having said that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one is under the impression that the surveyors have developed into what I would call a multi-talented professional, but we have to bear in mind that, today, the profession is facing a lot of difficulties, especially in defining what is the core expertise of a land surveyor. We have also noted that the profession is ageing. Do we know, do we have an idea, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what will be the next generation of surveyors, not only in our country, but in the world? Information technology has created challenges to the profession, but also threats to the profession.

Today, one has to agree that we are facing a consumer aware society. Information which was confidential in the past, today is in public domain, that is, it is available to the normal man, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In the past, technology and data required professional knowledge for interpretation. Today, this is not the case. And to me, this situation raises the following questions which would need to be answered by the Council, in order to face future challenges, that is, what will constitute the core skills of professional surveyors in the medium and long term; what does the profession need to do to be better recognised and understood by the community, and lastly, how should education develop to meet the challenges of a changing profession?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think one of the core issues in this piece of legislation deals with the regulatory part of this Council. One will note that other pieces of legislation that are being amended in relation to the Professional Land Surveyors' Council Bill deal with the addition of a professional land surveyor. I think it is important, first of all, to understand the duties of a land surveyor, and also to situate what I would call professional land surveyor, because it is for the first time that we are introducing this concept of professional land surveyor.

With regard to the duties and responsibilities of a land surveyor, one should understand that the main duty of a land surveyor is to demarcate any plot of land, whether it is private or State land, and he is the only person authorised to do so, as per the Land Surveyors Act. Now, demarcating such land enables him to establish the boundaries of the plot of land. As per the legislation in force, he is required to sign, put his seal and date the plans and documents which he hands over to the client.

Now, a legal procedure is imposed on the surveyor to specify, define the land boundaries in order to give more weight when registering these documents. Apart from what I have stated, surveyors also have other jobs, that is, they carry out topographic layouts; they are involved with arbitration and also do division in kind, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Now, what I have stated on the profession and the concept of Professional Land Surveyor, this is directly related to ethical issues concerning the profession. Maybe, it is time to define what a 'profession' is? A profession, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is defined as a vocation based on a long-term specialised training that enables a particular service to be rendered. The hon. Minister mentioned that, he stated in his speech that it takes a long time to become a Surveyor. One has to undergo a minimum standard and rigorous course in a specialised body of knowledge requiring a developed intellect for assimilation. He has to undergo training, acquire knowledge until a defined standard of proficiency is certified and this is important, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The proper conduct of an individual member in the practice of the profession is governed by a code of ethical rules. A profession can be self-regulating, that is, they do their own regulation. But we know that in the case of the profession that we are talking today, this has not worked out correctly. They have not been able in that profession to be self-regulated and I think it is for this reason, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we have in front of us, today, this piece of legislation where Government will ensure that with this piece of legislation the profession is properly regulated. The hon. Minister has also said – and I agree with him – a Professional Surveyor has a responsibility to the client, the public and - also he employs people - to his employees. He must always strive to ensure that the general integrity and image of the profession is protected at all times. He is meant to strictly adhere to the rules and regulations guiding this profession as provided now by the regulatory body, that is, the Professional Land Surveyors Council. I referred to the word 'professional'. A professional, Mr Deputy Speaker,

Sir, is a person who has attained the minimum training and has been certified by a regulatory body to be able to carry out his or her services to required standards so as to protect public interest. This is what the definition is because this is not defined in the legislation. This is the definition of a 'professional'. In this case this should be the definition of a Professional Land Surveyor and it will have to be the role of the members of that Council to ensure that public interest is protected, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having dwelt on the responsibilities and duties of a Land Surveyor, having also said a few words on the role and responsibilities of the Council, I would now wish to raise a point because I heard the hon. Minister stressing on that issue and in that case I am not in agreement with what the hon. Minister has stated, that is, maintaining the Commission in this piece of legislation and I explained myself. Before, we had the Commission which recommended to the President. Let me get it the way it is in the piece of legislation: Commission by President - the role for appointing a Land Surveyor by the President. Before we did not have the Council and I agree because of that that was the role of the President in appointing Land Surveyor. I humbly believe that with a full-fledged Council and having as primary objectives to regulate and register Professional Land Surveyors. It should have been the role of the Council to appoint Land Surveyors and not the role of the President, as it has been maintained in this piece of legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, I think that with time - maybe we can leave it as it is - we have to amend and remove that Section 19, that is, Commission by President, because when the Council will be fully operational and the Council would have gained the required experience, it would be wise for the Council to appoint because it is stated that it is the Council that will take disciplinary action against Land Surveyors when they are found at fault, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

There is another issue which I would like to raise - there are two issues actually - and where I am not in agreement with the hon. Minister, that is, the powers of the Minister. Again, we have a full-fledged Council consisting of members who are going to be appointed by the Minister. We are going to have the Chief Surveyor sitting on that Council. Why is it that we need to have the Minister to give such direction of a general character to the Council? I think that Council should be an autonomous body and function on its own and I don't think it would be correct for the Minister to give directions. I can take an example: in a case there are disciplinary

proceedings against a Land Surveyor and his registration has been cancelled. The possibility of the Minister giving instructions or giving directions to the Council to reappoint that surveyor is there. That's why I am saying we have an independent Council and we have to allow that Council to function on its own, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

With regard to security, I think, it was Rs20,000 before, it has been increased to Rs50,000. From what I hear, most or all the land surveyors are agreeable to that increase in security, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

It is also now being confirmed that - and it was there in the previous legislation, it is there also in this present legislation - Government land surveyors will not be allowed to do private practice, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I will end my speech in saying that, what we are doing, today, with this piece of legislation is rebranding the profession. The profession has been through some difficult times with some - if I can put it this way, the Minister used the word *braconnier*, I will use the word *brebis galeuse*, M. le president.

The first task that the Council will have to do is to set the necessary rules and regulations, to come forward with the code of practice so that professional land surveyors will have to adhere to that code of practice and give quality service to their clients, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Thank you.

(5.22 p.m.)

Mr P. Roopun (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to add my voice to this debate. I'll intervene mainly on two issues regarding, first of all, the qualifications needed to become a land surveyor and the ensuing procedure for the obtention of the Commission. I'll also endeavour to share my experience, if I may say, on the ground; make certain suggestions and talk about the challenges which await this new Council.

I must, just like the previous orators, state that the actualisation of the law was needed since we know that the Land Surveyors Act dates as far back as 1976, but I must add that this process started some years back by the enactment of the Cadastral Survey Act in 2011 which dealt essentially with the technical part, but now we are supplementing it regarding the legal

framework for the practice of land surveying and see how we can better operate and organise this profession.

In this context, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have no qualm. It is a good thing that the Council is being set up. But I would like to remind the House that even without this body under the Courts Act under Section 18, there was provision for the Supreme Court to take disciplinary measures against land surveyors. But I must say that for the 30 years or so, I am in the legal profession, I have not known of any case where surveyors have been reprimanded in some way or another, but I won't say that everything has been perfect. We know that there have been lots of shortcomings, but, at least, it is a step further and we should try to see how to improve.

As regards the qualifications, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I should say that I am a bit puzzled. In 1976, what was needed to become a land surveyor was, I may say, a mere diploma. I see that under this Act also, we are still maintaining the same basic qualifications, the benchmark is a diploma from the University of Mauritius. We heard hon. Lesjongard stating how this profession has evolved. At that time, in 1976, if I am not mistaken, we were using what we call the *jalons*, the measuring tape and, at the most, an apparatus which we used to call the *théodolite*. But now, we have so many new techniques, the total station, the GPS, we have satellite imagery, we have photogrammetry. I doubt whether we can still maintain this diploma as a core qualification. I think that this should be reviewed. Even in Mauritius, today, I understand that we are now doing BSc in Land Surveying and I do not know why this policy of maintaining a Diploma has been maintained. I want to be enlightened on this issue from the hon. Minister.

Regarding now the question of qualification, I think that, at least, we should have, as I stated, a first degree, but now once we have got the basic qualifications, there is another procedure which has to be fulfilled and this concerns the obtention of the Commission. I will tend to agree with hon. Lesjongard about the necessity of going before the President now that we have a full-fledged Council. I think that everything should be done at the level of this Council.

We know that, in addition to the basic qualifications, to questions about character, age and so on, there are two main conditions which a professional land surveyor will have to fulfil -

First of all, the hon. Minister mentioned the question of satisfying the Attorney General about his knowledge of certain legal provisions. These provisions are listed out under the Schedule. It is more or less the same that we had before. But I want to raise the issue of what is

the mechanism which is in place now to satisfy the Attorney General. Is there any mechanism by which anybody – because we know, first of all, that those who have studied in Mauritius do not need to do that, but others who, for example, have studied outside Mauritius, how they can satisfy the Attorney General about their knowledge of the law? If the hon. Minister will inquire, he will find out that there is absolutely no mechanism and each one has to tread his own way, trying, first of all, to learn those legislations, and this is done in an haphazard manner. You know X, Y and Z, you try to gather some information from them, try to learn by yourself and then you knock at the door of the Attorney General's Office and say: 'now I am ready and I want to get this piece of certificate that I have got the necessary knowledge.'

I think that the Council to be set up should try to design a well-established, first of all, course. We have now the Institute of Judicial and Legal Studies which is doing exactly the same thing insofar as prospective barristers and attorneys are concerned. I think that we can emulate what is being done at this level and try to see what mechanism should be put into place for professional land surveyors.

Secondly, I come to the question of Commission. For the obtention of the Commission, the second condition is that you should submit a cadastral survey for a region of not less than 64 acres. Rightly the hon. Minister stated that it comes to 150 *arpents*. I have got some reservation as regards the person who is going to determine this lot. I have no problem against the Chief Surveyor, but just to maintain a certain transparency and something which is harmonised, I think that this exercise should also be left in the hands of the Council. Chief Surveyors come and go, they are civil servants, but, at least, we have got a body with certain clear criteria. If I am not mistaken, in the past there has been a quite large disparity regarding the area which Mr X as Land Surveyor had to do compared to others. I think that it is a good thing that, first of all, we try to harmonise also on this issue because, under the law, it is specified that it should be not less than 64 hectares which means that there is no maximum limit. There have been cases where persons had been given twice the amount given to others and I think that we should try to look into this.

Another issue is with regard to the particulars of the survey work. Here also, under the Land Surveyors' Act we had a specific Schedule specifying what is the technical framework under which those surveys should be carried out. But here the Bill mentions that it should be as

per the survey standards of the Cadastral Survey Act. I think that this is a too vague terminology and it should be clarified and simplified so that anyone can know exactly what are the particulars that will be needed from the one who is applying for the commission.

Another important issue is the ownership of the plans which are submitted. It costs a lot of energy, human resources and time which may take months to complete. I want to be enlightened about who becomes owner of those plans. Is it returned back to the applicant? Does it become the ownership of the Ministry? Are they allowed to use those data? I want to get certain clarification on those issues.

Coming to my second point regarding the main challenges, I fully subscribe to what the hon. Minister stated that there are far too many *braconniers*, as he mentioned. But, in addition to those who are unqualified, we should not forget that there are also persons who are qualified and who are not allowed to do private work. This is also something which is part of the problem. This has been here for far too long. I agree that there is the complicity of a few black sheep within the profession who sign everything that comes their way. This should be dealt with at the level of the Council.

I suggest, first of all, that in the report or memorandum or whatever is done, the Surveyor should state the time the operation starts and the time it ends so that we can have a clear idea. Let us say, somebody, who is doing a work in the south, will not be able to be at the same time in the north. In addition, there should also be a return filed by each land surveyor to know exactly what amount of surveys they have done, for example, in a month. This also can help to contain illegalities which have developed with time. I think that this is the main challenge that the Council will have to cater for. I know that this has been going on for so long that the Council will have to act boldly and for that, I will say good luck.

Lastly, I want to talk about another issue regarding the different types of reports that presently are being prepared. First of all, under the Act, we have the report and I am puzzled when I read under the Cadastral Survey Act that the report is to determine the approximate extent of a land. The memorandum is something more conclusive, it is done after notifying the neighbours. But, the fact that we have got the report and the memorandum, at times it creates confusion in the mind of the public and they do not understand the difference between these two

reports which is barely one thing: a report is prepared without the neighbours being aware and is not binding on the neighbours while with a memorandum they are given due notice and it is binding upon them. I think that there should be clear directives when a report should be done and when a memorandum is needed so that the public can know exactly which is which.

There is also the question of having what we call a site plan for the purpose of selling the land. The site plan is merely a document to know the location of the land. Here also at times there is confusion in the mind of the public as to whether it is, in fact, a survey of the land and I think that we should try to harmonise all these types of different survey works. Over the years, there has also been what is being called *le rapport de constat* which is yet another type of report from the Land Surveyor. I think that we should have two types of report: we have a report specifying that it is done only for the purpose of the owner, it will not bind on anybody and a memorandum. The Council should try to legislate, to specify in which cases a memorandum of survey is mandatory. We should not leave it just for the surveyor to determine depending upon the situation and what he is being told by his client to decide whether he is going to prepare a report or a memorandum.

I know that these are issues which are quite technical but I wanted to raise it here for the sake of the Council which is going to be set up. I will now conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by stating that the success of any law is in the implementation and I just hope for the best for the profession and also for the Council to come. We just hope that the profession of professional land surveyors will now have a good start and will do further in helping the public and also in ensuring that Mauritius which has very small land resources is going to make optimal use of it.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: I suspend the sitting for 40 minutes.

At 5.38 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.23 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to thank Dr. the hon. Minister Kasenally, hon.

Lesjongard and hon. Roopun, who have just preceded me on this technical and very important Bill.

Right at the outset, to set the ambit of my intervention on the Professional Land Surveyors' Council Bill, I will have to quote the third President of the United States, Thomas *Jefferson*, who said and I quote -

“(...) institutions must advance to keep pace with times.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how great is that profession of Surveyors! History will recall that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, the first and third Presidents of the United States respectively, were registered Surveyors in the Crown Colony of Virginia. Their licences as Surveyors in that colony were issued through the office of the Surveyor General. Thomas Jefferson has had a detailed knowledge of surveying and enjoyed a reputation for statesmanship in federal land, policy decisions as reported by Jonathan Hughes in his writing in the American Economic History of 1983.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Surveyors play a major role in the maintenance and development of a country's various maintenance system and related spatial information infrastructure and despite that, the work of Surveyors is not well understood within our society today. Surveying is a great profession and I am glad to witness the initiative of the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands, Dr. Kasenally, to introduce the present Bill to the House today to keep pace with time and moving towards modernisation in the field of surveying, which I do fully support and welcome positively as a qualified Surveyor, myself, but not a registered Surveyor.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are living in an era of huge data and open source policy-making and a key component of this process is the contribution of professional Surveyors by producing and sharing information and knowledge through the right pace while putting them to productive use.

Here, I have in mind some great projects where Surveyors have played and will play major roles, namely, in the SSR new airport development, the various road projects, the Land Administration Valuation and Information Management System (LAVIMS) project, and the

coming Light Rail Transit System debated this morning by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Bachoo.

This Bill provides a high level of confidence and security in the land development process on which our society relies. We will all have in mind the images of our beautiful landscapes, both here in Mauritius as well as in Rodrigues where most of our landscapes were covered with agriculture, plantations and today there are rapid changes and fast land use by sacrificing these limited resources. Our Surveyors are highly implicated in these transformational processes towards societal modernity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, hon. Dato Sri Mohammad Abdul Razak, during the Federation International General Conference in June last said -

“Politicians and Governments can do more to embrace the revolution in data gathering and analysis; to use evidence-based policymaking to design programmes that work.

So too the Surveyors who produce some of the most important data of all (...)”.

Spatial data which are being used to fight against environmental degradation and climate change and highly debated today will be a key component in the next coming 2014 SIDS Conference in Samoa, next month.

Like overall data, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, spatial information are translated into a format that policymakers can understand and use. For example, in the recent outbreak of disease such as dengue fever, surveyor’s technology, models and practices provide Governments with the tools to address the challenges to designing public health campaigns zoning. That was the case in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill repeals the Land Surveyors Act and is replacing it. This is good. This is a step forward. The Repealed Land Surveyors Act was limited in its regulations for Land Surveyors engaged in the survey of land and interest in land. This is because the surveying practice is diverged through various areas such as surveying, mapping, geographic information system, land administration, remote sensing, geodesy, civil engineering, photogrammetry as well as construction, a very progressing industry in our Republic.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Professional Land Surveyors' Council Bill will certainly, over and above its functionality, bring more recognition and mutual reciprocity between the various areas through professional practices. This Bill shall allow Surveyors, not only Land Surveyors, to gain more control of their own destiny and how they should be governed with their freedom as professionals. The Bill is very important with regard to the present shortage of Surveyors.

I am certain the hon. Minister will agree with me. Despite it is stipulated in section 4, sub section 3 of the Repeal and Surveyors Act which stipulated that 'the number of surveyors shall not be limited' and in Rodrigues we are facing problem with limited number of surveyors. The delivery of land leases on State land is delayed as a result of acute shortage of surveyors or survey technicians. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that surveyors themselves are more concerned with the terms and conditions of contract work rather than the licensing system itself as well defined in the Bill which is very good to bring some order with those *braconniers* out there. We should further come with some amendments which concern the fairness in the administration of rates and conditions of contracting; rates, fees and whether it is contract with Government projects or private projects, there is no defined mechanism of how rates and conditions for the work of surveyors are established in the first place, mainly for private surveyors. How many Court cases and disputes we have all witnessed? With at times reasonable while, at the same time, being unfair and this is interchange with the weaknesses of valuation mechanism as well within our system in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with some other shortcomings that exist in the system and, at times, abuse as well, as raised by the hon. Minister himself and the other Members there are *braconniers* out there. Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to refer to what the Truth and Justice Commission Report said and that to substantiate what I've just mentioned above and I quote, the report said -

“There is no justice in Mauritius for those who cannot afford lawyers, notaries, land surveyors and attorneys”.

“The role of Surveyors and Notaries in depriving people of their land was decried.

“Furthermore, the Commission has also observed some disturbing factors which should be highlighted -

“... some Land surveyors, seconded by certain Attorneys and Notaries are rapidly prescribing plots of land which are quickly sold, overnight, to new companies set up with the help of foreigners/investors looking for greener pastures in Mauritius”.

This is also the case in Rodrigues for private land transactions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Many victims are still awaiting the final outcome of the report to regain possession of what they call ‘land lost from sale of stolen land’, ‘private land’, *beaucoup de désordre*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are some damning issues where I am thinking - if I should not come with a private Bill in the House in that regard. It is good and a good move that clause 40 of the Bill has not been modified for the practice of private surveyors in Rodrigues. As in Rodrigues the legal status of land falls under about mainly State land, *domaine public* inclusive of *Pas Géométriques* and only 10% of land or private land, with State land imprescriptible under the law as per section 35 of the State Land Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this present Bill shall bring a new mindset in the profession of surveyors as regards ill-prepared plans of survey, lengthily canvassed by my friend hon. Roopun, which may result in costly and time consuming disputes over land boundaries and substantial, financial losses as well as fishy transactions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is well established as per Part V of the Bill - Discipline that the Council may for the purpose of section 27; ‘set up a Professional Conduct Committee, under section 28, as reinforced by the hon. Minister himself. This section will force surveyors to take into account the relevant, ethical, legal, financial, environmental and social aspects affecting any project that they are involved with.

Coming to the technical information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the major concerns of the Council shall be the management of - I use the technical word ‘spatial information’ despite that this technical term is not defined at all, I believe, in the Bill itself. As clearly defined in clause 5 (c) of the Bill –

« 5. Functions of Council »

“(c) ensure that the Code of Practice is complied with by professional land surveyors”;

However, there is no existing code of practice, at present, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which is imperative and here I have to mention and question I should say – ‘What are the standards of surveys in Mauritius? What is being done for the calibration of technical or surveying apparatus in Mauritius, knowing well the inaccuracies of many surveys carried out nowadays. This is very important, calibration of apparatus and this is one thing that I believe the Council through its code of practice should look seriously into.

The Council of surveying through spatial information application - I used the technical word again - shall advise not only the Minister, but I will say the Government on issues relating to the broadest spatial information industry and its contribution to the economic environmental and social well being of our country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as defined by the *Fédération Internationale des Géomètres* – “A surveyor is a professional person ...” rightly pointed out by hon. Lesjongard.

“...with the academic qualification and technical expertise to practise the science of measurement, to assemble and assess land and geographic related information. To use that information for the purpose of planning ...”

Very important ‘planning’, we’ve just recently listened to the debate on a question with regard to Ébène City, planning the question of parking; it is a question of planning.

Then –

“The surveyors also implement the efficient administration of land, the sea, the structures ...”

I mentioned the sea because we are talking about land surveyors there is the sea.

“There are structures therefore and to instigate the advancement and development of such practices”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir –

“The survey may involve, but is not limited to one or more of the following activities which may occur on above or below the surface of the land of the sea and may be carried out in association with other professionals”.

It is good to mention that because I will come with some other propositions later on. We have not to look only at land; we have to look at the sea. The spaces behind the sea despite we don't have a lot of mines here in Mauritius. This is where, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe the Bill should have catered for a new field of technology advancement of surveying today which is termed as 'geomatics', this is the modern term for surveying.

Today it is worth to note that 'geomatics' is a new term incorporating what used to be called surveying along with many other aspects of spatial data management and here hon. Lesjongard was right in saying what are the future components in that field in Mauritius today and one answer is 'geomatics engineering' or 'geomatics field of expertise' with regard to spatial information management.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for example 'geomatics' engineering is rapidly developing discipline that focuses, as I have said, on spatial information and this is the case for countries such as New Zealand, Canada, Australia. This field of study applies engineering principles to spatial information, and implements relational data structures involving measurement of science, thus using geomatics and acting as spatial information engineers. This is one of the fields which Mauritius should look into.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am raising this technical issue because Mauritius, with rapid development in this field, should ignite the new Council to consider these new areas. We are aware that surveyors amongst others are engaged, as defined earlier, in measuring, controlling, monitoring the shape, size, location and physical features, structures, machines and engineering works, and determine their spatial relationship. They are also measuring, mapping sea beds, tidal movements, current flows, providing information for navigation and maritime developments.

We are talking about Blue Ocean, the ocean economy; surveyors will have to play an important role in that. For example, the recent hydrographic surveys carried out by the Indians

in Port Louis and Port Mathurin; this is part of the work of surveyors. Not only land surveyors, but surveyors, because it includes sea and land as well. Here my question is: how will the Council consider these geomatics, hydrographers, professionals who are qualified but not registered professional surveyors in that connection?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will recall that the *Fédération Internationale des Géomètres* held its 25th congress and 37th General Assembly in Malaysia in June last under the theme '*Engaging the Challenge, Enhancing the Relevance*'. This is what we are doing. This is what the hon. Minister and the Ministry of Housing and Lands are doing. However, if I am not mistaken, - this is important - Mauritius is not an associate or an affiliate of the *Fédération Internationale des Géomètres*, and I do sincerely hope that, after the assent of this Bill, the Council will make its best to affiliate or associate itself with the *Fédération Internationale des Géomètres*. This is important to keep pace and up to date with new trends in the field of surveying. For example, the new vision and the new trend in surveying field today is the vision for a cadastre of 2034. 2034; this is the new vision which recognises that knowledge about land is essential for wise decision, making a modern society, and that this information must endure. It is good we are coming with this Bill today and we are taking this path.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier, geomatics engineering is concerned with the determination and recording of boundaries, areas of real property parcels, and the preparation and interpretation of legal land descriptions. The tasks, however, are more closely related to civil engineering, including the design and layout of public infrastructure and urban subdivisions, and mapping and control surveys for construction project. In these cases, how are the surveys carried out by the construction projects considered by the Council? Shall these be considered as survey and get registered, as fully clearly defined in the Bill, and well canvassed by hon. Roopun?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe that gone are the days when surveying or geomatics professionals would be viewed exclusively as land surveyors, engineering surveyors, *photogrammetrists* or cartographers. Even in India, the dynamics of surveyors; it is worth to note that the surveyors of India were synonymous with the surveying professions in India. Many organisations in India have carved out their own niche in the domain of the surveying and mapping professions. These new entities have been generally propelled either by new

technology, as said earlier, like satellite imagery, GPS, and over a wide range of varieties of new technologies. This is what is making the beauty of this new dynamic of surveying; not only land surveying, but surveying. I will pay particular attention on.

General comments on the Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In the Explanatory Memorandum of this Professional Land Surveyors' Council Bill, the object of the Bill says –

“(..) to provide for the establishment of the Professional Land Surveyors' Council.”

Excellent! And as per clause 2 –

“The Council will, *inter alia* –

(a) regulate (..)”

The word ‘regulate’ is very important, and this is what is needed in that field actually, and I think rightly pointed out by the hon. Minister and others who preceded me.

“(b) register professional land surveyors;

(d) exercise and maintain discipline (..);

(e) disseminate literature (..);

(f) promote advancement in the field of land surveying.”

The very fact that the Bill is limited to land surveyors is subject to some queries that should be addressed to enlighten the House of a more diverse and dynamic nature of surveying today in modern world with the influence of technologies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the new trends in the field of surveying or geomatics, as I call it, in one or all of the applicable branches of geomatics profession, it could be a geomatics practitioner, a geomatics technician, a geomatics technologist, geomatics professionals. How the Council will consider these professionals who are directly related to land surveying today? Will they obtain registration under this present Bill? Shall they sit for special exams to obtain a licence, as is the case in countries like Australia, Canada, and South Africa, where a candidate surveyor is entitled to sit for the prescribed examination to become a surveyor

if he is a financial candidate surveyor, or the holder of a recognised qualification and has obtained the required practical experience and has up to date approved practical experience? Then, he is awarded a certificate of competency. Will that be the case under this Council, under this Bill? Shall a geomatics professional be authorised to practice surveying in Mauritius? I say geomatics, which is the new word for land surveyors, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I believe that Part III Management of Council, clause 7, Composition of Council, shall be amended, and that the Council shall include one of the above mentioned geomatics professionals I have just mentioned. In consequence, clause 18 of the Bill states that –

- (1) No person shall practise land surveying in Mauritius unless he is registered as a professional land surveyor with the Council.”

This consequently has to be amended. Clause 20 as well shall be further amended in that direction. I won't propose any amendment at present, but I leave it for the technical and legal persons to have a close look at this proposal. I will also add that even a representative of the academic or tertiary education shall be a member of the Council to define the type of courses for future surveyors. This is because the surveyors' qualification in Mauritius today shall not be limited to only a Diploma in surveying. I think hon. Roopun also raised that issue. There must be a full Bachelor Degree in surveying or geomatics engineering for local surveyors or geomatics professionals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the President of the *Fédération Internationale des Géomètres*, Chee Hai Teo, in Malaysia FIG Congress, under the theme '*Engaging the Challenge, Enhancing the Relevance*' said that –

“The surveying profession is a real world, people centric, solution-oriented profession. It is a creative and constructive profession engaged in idea generation, conceptualization and constructive development, engaging in the creative and innovative processes that generate new approaches and opportunities, including that which has never before existed.”

This is what we also need here, in Mauritius, as queried by other hon. Members.

In addition, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, there is the Code of Ethics, which is a central component of the Bill. That is through discipline, ethics, central and very appropriate to standards of the profession, as I queried earlier, and this is where all the professionals must comply with.

A surveyor or geomaths shall act with fairness, honesty in good faith towards all in the community, including clients, employees and colleagues and encourages subordinates to do likewise. This is very important. It is also a very important clause in this Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the discipline and ethics of a professional, as a noble profession, surveyors or geomaths.

Coming to the continuous progress development, a very important issue for those professionals, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is another fundamental function of a Council which is to provide Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for surveyors. This is to preserve and enhance the high standard of the professions, the professional performance by surveyors throughout their career. This is to increase an individual surveyor's capabilities as a contribution, not only to the survey practice or to surveyor's exercise, but also to our nation, the national sustainable development of our Republic.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another issue that the Council should look into is the number of women in the surveying profession. In an era when women are increasingly prominent in medicines, law, businesses, why are there so few women surveyors or engineers or geomatics professionals in our Republic. I believe that the Council shall consider more incentives, for example, like scholarships to encourage more female as professional surveyors or geomatics professional.

While concluding, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our surveyors are called to perform with excellence in the field of surveying and spatial information. I will have to thank the Minister of Lands and Housing, hon. Dr. Kasenally, for his commitment as well as the personnel of his Ministry in that direction to introduce this Bill in the House by showing that Mauritius is also committed towards continuous progress development for surveyors as well, as has been widely canvassed by the *Fédération Internationale des Géomètres* recently.

I am done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I thank you for your attention.

(5.53 p.m.)

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am absolutely enthralled by the welcome this Bill has got. I thank and congratulate all my colleagues, mainly hon. Lesjongard who gave us a geospatial trick just now, hon. Roopun and, not the least, hon. François who has got a tiger in his tank and said almost everything he had to say and he has worked, as I can see, fairly extensively on the Bill.

This Bill gives *les lettres de noblesse à cette profession des arpenteurs. Malgré le fait que j'ai dit qu'il y a certains braconniers*, but in every profession there is, even in – I won't say my old profession - my previous profession, we had a lot of problems, as hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee may know. This reminds me, when I was speaking about Council, professional misconduct, that I was also registered with the General Medical Council of Scotland and UK and where some people have sweated and seen fire and some people have had to abandon their profession, because they had been sanctioned for serious professional misconduct. I think in every society you have to have checks and balances, because nobody is perfect and society being such we have all lot of characters, people of high integrity at one end of the spectrum to the people with doubtful intentions.

Before I forget, I must thank all my officers who have been here to support me and especially the members of the State Law Office, namely Mr Ramloll and Mr Seetaram who have been working on this Bill together with my colleague, the Attorney General. I thank, as I said, all the Members who have expressed support and made critical review.

As I said, this Bill will definitely help to enhance the profession of land surveying as well as to bring recognition to one of the key shareholders in the administrative management. It also regulates the practice of land surveying and provides greater protection to our citizens when effecting land transaction, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

This legislation proposes establishment, a body to regulate the surveying profession. It has been the policy of this Government to ensure that the interests of the public, big or large, are protected and this forms the springboard of attention of the hon. Prime Minister who has always helped us to make sure that things are done properly in a very regulated manner.

Land surveyors have now been given the title of professional; they are known as full-fledged professionals, thus recognising that the practice of land surveying as a specialist job, among others, along similar lines, as I have said, of doctors, engineers, architects and lawyers most importantly, because they are very important people, they are the people who defend or can sink you, and this has been extensively canvassed during the debates.

I will now refer to some contribution made by some of my colleagues, whom I have said I appreciate very much. First of all, hon. Lesjongard mentioned that the land surveying practice is facing challenges in terms of techniques and new technologies and that the profession has to be properly equipped and trained. I wish to reassure the House and my colleague that this Bill makes provision for the Continuous Professional Development Programme.

Furthermore, new techniques like the establishment of the geodetic points are already being put in place. A code of practice will be prepared in consultation of all stakeholders. The Commission by the President has worked very well up to now. It is in the best interests that it is being maintained. However, clause 20 provides for the Council to appoint a professional land surveyor after obtaining a Commission, that is, he gets the Commission and then he is appointed. It is the Council that regulates everything, like in every other profession. But, eventually, maybe it has been a tradition; the President will probably give up this part of his duty, because he has got so many other important duties.

I want to reassure my colleague that the Minister will only give instructions of a general nature and not of a specific nature. The direction shall be not inconsistent with the Act. I can speak for myself, but not of people who will come after me. I think it would be foolish and unprofessional for a Minister to try to undermine the authority of the Council. The next generation of surveyors will mostly manage the huge amount of digital special data that are being collected easily with the advent of technology. My Ministry has already invested a lot in new technologies. Also, I give the assurance that the Ministry - and I hope we will continue - will work closely with the Professional Council of Engineers for continuous professional development.

I wish to point out to my colleague that recently we attended the Geospacial World Forum where this Ministry, this Government, this country won a prize for its contribution to

world technology by our project, the LAVIMS. It was hailed as one of the greatest achievements in the Third World and Mauritius should be proud of it.

As far as hon. Roopun is concerned the qualifications are in line with new technologies and ways of understanding surveys. The contents of the Diploma course have already been completely changed and it will continue to be changed as technology develops and becomes applicable to our work in Mauritius. The knowledge of laws also has to produce a certificate from the Attorney that he is conversant with the law. But this will probably change and be a more formal or it is even self-learning. We can prescribe a certain curriculum content which will take over. Of course, we will help out as the Ministry has got a duty to ensure that the surveyor has got the highest standard of training.

As far as particulars of survey are concerned, as per Survey Regulation No. 119 of 2013, there is a set of specific guidelines for the production of a plan. The plan is kept at my Ministry for record purposes and filed at the archives at the Ministry for general consultation. The Cadastral Act has been amended to remove the words 'approximate extent' which I think the hon. Member quite rightly mentioned as there is no place for approximation here. One can be an approximate surveyor but it is even worse if one is an approximate surgeon! This Act has been amended to remove 'an extent for the purpose of survey report.'

Hon. Roopun also mentioned about site plan and this is the site plan *devente* which will soon be repealed with the proclamation of other actions of the cadastral survey.

In respect of qualifications, the basic qualification of Diploma will be maintained. As regards the certificate of character, an approximate regulation will need to be prescribed. But like for every Degree, there is a review each year or every five years as new scientific facts become available and technologies are developed, especially in Mauritius nowadays we have some geospatial technology which is being applied to surveying.

As regards reports and memorandum of survey, the suggestions of hon. Roopun have been noted.

The proposal of hon. François for affiliation to the international bodies is very important and I am pleased to say and hon. Members will be pleased to learn that action has been initiated in this direction.

I think most of the points have been covered and, again, I will end to thank all the hon. Members who have been listening and hon. Members of the Opposition who have contributed significantly, the State Law Office for their input and especially the staff of my Ministry, my Chief Executive and my colleagues. I stand down after this very exhaustive but very useful and informative debate on a very important piece of legislation.

Thank you, 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 Professional Land Surveyors' Council Bill (No. VI of 2014) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Professional Land Surveyors' Council Bill (No. VI of 2014) was read the third time and passed.

Second Reading

THE MAURITIUS CANE INDUSTRY AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. VII of 2014)

(7.09 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney-General (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (Amendment) Bill (No. VII of 2014) be read a second time.

Members of the House will recall that at the sitting of the National Assembly on 13 December 2011, the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority Bill was passed. Subsequently, the Act was proclaimed on 19 March 2012.

The objective of the Bill was to merge the six service providing institutions, namely the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute (MSIRI), the Cane Planters & Millers Arbitration & Control Board, the Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool Corporation, the Mauritius Sugar Terminal Corporation, the Mauritius Sugar Authority and the Farmers Service Corporation into an apex body, namely the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority, (MCIA) in short. The merger was necessary in the wake of drastic cut of sugar price on the EU market whereby CESS used for funding the six SPIs had to be reduced to enable an increase in the planters' revenue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Indeed, we have reduced CESS from Rs590 m. to Rs287 m. for crop year 2012 and further to Rs276 m. for crop year 2013. It is further expected that it will go down to Rs247 m., representing more than 50%, this crop year. This, in fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, represents an additional revenue to the planters in the tune of Rs700 per ton of sugar or if we look at it from an arpent point of view, it is equivalent to Rs2,010

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must emphasise that all the functions and activities of these SPIs in support of the planting community have been maintained, but only in an efficient and more cost effective manner. The MCIA has now been operational for more than two years. In the course of its operations, certain issues have emerged and need to be addressed, thereby necessitating these proposed amendments. Moreover, the proposed amendments aim at enabling the MCIA to operate more effectively.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would now elaborate on the amendments that are being proposed.

- (i) Section 2 of the Act is being amended to redefine "crop year" as being the period extending from 16 January in a year to 15 January in the following year.

Under the current definition which is drawn from the ex-MSA Act (Mauritius Sugar Authority Act), a crop year starts on 01 of July to end on 30 June the following year. Factories starting their milling season, say in June 2014 like in the case of Omnicane and Alteo would be falling within crop year 2013/2014, when, in fact, it should have been 2014 and 2015. While, at the same time, the case of Medine and Terra, which start in July would be falling in the 2014/2015 crop year. So, we are having two different crop years for different milling factories, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are correcting this anomaly. In fact, this interpretation which is opened to two different years has an impact when interpreting various sections of the MCIA Act, in particular, sections 22, 28 and 41. It implies that disputes which arise during one crop year can span over two harvest seasons.

In fact, harvest of canes takes place between the months of June and December of the same year. Before the enactment of the MCIA Act in December 2011 and the proclamation of the Act, the term “crop year” was defined in the ex-Control Board, as starting on 16 January of a year to end on 15 January the following year. This ensured that any dispute arising in a particular harvest is resolved within the specific crop year.

Hence, the definition of the Crop Year as defined under the ex-Control Board is being maintained to satisfy the specific needs of arbitration by the MCIA and to ensure that disputes arising in one specific harvest season are not carried over to the next one, i.e., the dispute is resolved during the same harvest.

- (ii) Section 5(1) of the Act is being amended to allow the MCIA to undertake such other activities as the Minister may determine.

This amendment will enable the MCIA, and in particular the MSIRI, to undertake such activities beyond the realm of sugar cane. These include analytical services in chemical, environmental and microbiological fields, Geographical Information System (GIS), pest and disease diagnostics, tissue culture, DNA fingerprinting for plant varieties, DNA bar coding of insect pests, GMO testing of products, agronomic services and testing of agro-chemicals. Hence, the competence and knowhow of the MCIA, especially the MSIRI, will be extended to the benefit of not only Mauritius, but also to the region. This will help the MSIRI obtain additional

revenue and ensure its financial sustainability and also enhance its programme of research not only in sugar but also in other fields.

- (iii) Section 24 of the Act is being amended to regulate the following -
 - (a) the use of cane for the production of cane juice for direct consumption, and
 - (b) use of canes grown by planters for feeding livestock kept for research purposes.

Section 24 of the Act deals with delivery of canes to factories and there is no provision to regulate supply of cane for production of juice for direct consumption. At present, there are 10 planters who are authorised by the MCIA to supply canes to operators producing cane juice for direct consumption, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This amendment is proposed with a view to regulate this activity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in addition, we are also now making provision to regulate the supply of cane for livestock feeding. I stated earlier, an amendment is being made to the Act, as an exemption to the rule, to regulate the production and supply of canes for feeding livestock kept for research purposes only. Thus the livestock researcher will have to grow his own canes. Canes cannot be supplied for that particular purpose from any other source; the livestock researcher will have to produce its own cane for that particular purpose. My Ministry will come up with the necessary regulations on proclamation of the Act in this connection, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

All sections in respect of Middleman are being repealed from the Act for the simple reason that middleman does not exist anymore. In the past, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there were middlemen who acted as intermediaries between the planter and the miller, in supplying canes to the mill and providing credit facilities to planters. Their activities were similar to those of Credit Cooperative Societies. Today, there is no middleman operating. Planters consign their canes directly to the mills in their own names or through Credit Cooperative Societies. In fact, since the 1990s the ex-Control Board took the decision not to deliver any new permit to middlemen as they were phasing out. As there is not a single middleman in operation today, the different sections relating to Middleman and Middleman Permit in the Act are no longer relevant. They are thus being repealed.

- (v) Section 33 of the Act which pertains to control of canes is being amended. The post of Senior Area Superintendent no longer exists on the establishment of the MCIA and as such all activities related to the control of canes and cane quality will be assigned to any suitable officer possessing the right qualifications as assigned by the MCIA.
- (vi) Section 40 of the Act which deals with the transport of canes is being amended to provide for a cane transit site.

With the closure of sugar factories as per the provisions of the blueprint on centralisation, as we know, we are today operating with only four sugar mills in the whole of the island. We have completed the process of centralisation. Planters continue to send their canes to those closed factory cane delivery sites, which is a condition of closure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. To ensure that these facilities are continued to be made available to planters, they are now being given a legal status.

A “cane transit site” is being defined as a factory which has closed down but which contains fully operational infrastructure with regard to cane sampling, cane storage facilities, cane unloading facilities and weighing of canes.

I wish to add that if these sites are in excess of 4 miles or 6.4 kms from cane fields, owners of these canes are entitled to a refund of transport cost which is determined and approved by the MCIA every year.

This refund is paid by millers once the new rate is approved normally in February after the crop.

- (vii) Section 52 of the Act pertaining to annual report is also being amended to enable the MCIA to prepare its annual report together with an audited statement of accounts in accordance with the Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act.
- (viii) Section 66 of the Act pertaining to Transitional Provisions is being amended to provide for employees of the MSIRI who have retired pursuant to the Voluntary Retirement Scheme and who are today deprived of their retirement pension in accordance with the National Pensions Act as they have not reached their normal retirement age of 60.

Following representations made by the Unions and after consultation with the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions, section 20 of the National Pensions Act is being amended to allow these employees to earn their retirement pension as from the date they reach the age of 55 years in the case of male employees and 50 years in the case of female employees.

- (ix) Section 66 of the Act is also being amended to provide for any proceedings, whether judicial or extra-judicial, started by or against a former organisation, that is any of the six SPIs, and pending at the commencement of the Act to be deemed to have been started by or against the Authority, that is the MCIA.

Since the establishment of the MCIA, all legal proceedings related to the six ex-SPIs have so far been postponed at the level of the Court as the proceedings have to be made for or against the MCIA. This shortcoming is delaying hearings at the Court level. In fact, section 66 of the MCIA Act does not make any provision for any legal proceeding for or against the six service providing institutions to be taken over by the MCIA. This amendment will now allow all legal proceedings for or against the six ex-SPIs to be taken over by the MCIA.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall be moving for some amendments, in fact, three small amendments, as circulated at Committee Stage.

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

Dr. A. Boolell rose and seconded.

(7.22 p.m.)

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to make a few remarks on the Bill which the hon. Minister is presenting to the House today. The provisions seem to be non-controversial and I would like to make a few remarks and ask a few questions to the hon. Minister. As the hon. Minister has explained, clause 3 of the Bill is, in fact, defining the Crop Act. He has explained the reasons why now this amendment provides a new definition to crop year. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Control Board Act did define “crop year” differently to what has been provided for in the MCIA Act. The MCIA Act which came into force in 2011, as the hon. Minister reminded us, defined “Crop Act” differently.

Now, we are reverting back to the definition in the Cane Planters and Millers Arbitration and Control Board Act which was, in fact, repealed, by the MCIA Act where “crop year” was defined as the period beginning on 16 January of any year and ending on 15 January of the following year. This was the definition of “crop year” in the old law, in the Cane Planters and Millers Arbitration and Control Board Act. Today, the amendment is providing that we should revert back to this old definition of “crop year” and the hon. Minister has explained the reason why this should be so, that is, to ensure that any dispute arising out of any particular harvest could be resolved within the specific definition of a “crop year”. Therefore, this new definition of “crop year”, that is reverting back to the old definition, is to make good the discrepancy between the definition of crop year, as described in this Cane Planters And Millers Arbitration And Control Board Act, and therefore, to coincide the crop year with the financial year of the MCIA.

The second important amendment which this amendment provides for, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is with regard to clause 4 of the Bill which amends section 5 of the Principal Act. Section 5 of the MCIA Act of 2011, dealing with functions of the authority is now being amended and the amendment is providing that now, the authority shall have a new function, that is, to undertake such other activities as the Minister may determine. There was no such power in the Original Act, and today the Bill is proposing to add this new power into section 5: the Authority therefore shall have this function, that is, to undertake any such other activities as the Minister may determine.

The hon. Minister has elaborated and I was going to ask him a question about the activities which he is contemplating. He has already answered in his speech what are the activities which the MCIA, and in particular the MSIRI, will undertake now by way of this new amendment.

I come to clause 5 of the Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Clause 5 -

“Section 24 of the principal Act is amended (...).”

A new amendment has been circulated to the Bill with regard to clause 5. I understand that the MCIA is presently already allowing a few planters to deliver canes to persons who are producing cane juice for direct consumption. The question I would like to ask the hon. Minister is: can he give an indication to the House as to the number of such beneficiaries at present? The new amendment talks about –

“No planter shall deliver canes to a person for the production of cane juice for direct consumption.”

Unless with the authorisation of the Ministry. I am sure the House will be interested to know the number of such beneficiaries at present.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I come to clause 10 of the Bill. Clause 10 talks about the “cane transit site”. Section 40 of the Principal Act is being amended -“(…) by inserting, after the word “factory”, the words “or to a cane transit site”.

As the hon. Minister has explained, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after the closing down of factories, planters have continued to send their canes to the close factory cane delivery sites and, therefore, what we are doing today is to legalise a situation. This practice within the landing zones situated near the ex factories is already an ongoing one. This is already being done today. Factories which have been closed down received canes from the planters and we are, today, regularising the situation. But we need to ensure that these zones – and this is the question I would like to ask the hon. Minister – can also be shifted in case the need arises. For example, in case there is a new *morcellement* around the new transit zone and if the authority decides to transfer this new transit zone to a different area, we need to ensure that this shift can be done and in case any better alternative which can procure benefit to the stakeholders especially the planters. But I don't quite understand the motivation behind this particular amendment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, given that in case of closures, conditions of the closure have been in anyway discussed with the MCIA and the Control Board in particular. Maybe the purpose of the amendment was because there was no recourse against those who choose not to procure transit zones continuity in case of factory closure. This could be the explanation, I suppose, why we had to amend the law, to bring this amendment today.

Clause 11, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Section 52 of the principle Act is being amended. Here again I would like to ask the hon. Minister one question. I understand that this amendment is being brought to section 52 to remove any time frame to the Board because the law, as it is now, says –

“provides that the Board shall not later than four months after the end of a financial year”

These provisions are being done away with, that is, now the amendment reads as follows –

“The Board shall, in accordance with the Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act, prepare an annual report and submit it to the Minister (...)”

Therefore the time frame of not later than four months has been done away with, but in Section 52 (2) I can read that –

“The Minister shall, at the earliest available opportunity, lay a copy of the annual report and audited accounts of the Authority before the Assembly”

I understand that this has not been done so far. It is two years now that the MCIA has been set up, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and it would seem the copy of the Annual Report and Audited Accounts of the Authority have not been laid before the Assembly. I have had a chance to check with the Library and I haven't seen any copy of the Annual Report and Audited Accounts of the Authority before the Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my last remark would concern Section 66 of the Principal Act which we welcome. I think it is a positive amendment since this it provides that –

“(...) an employee of the former MSIRI who has not opted to be transferred to the MCIA and has retired will now be eligible to an actuarially calculated contributory retirement pension (...)”

Since we are on this point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to just make a comment with regard to VRS concerning 30 employees of one of the former service providing institutions namely the Control Board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Minister has reminded us, it was in the wake of the reforms of the European Union Sugar Regime and the drastic cut in the price of sugar that we know that these service providing institutions were merged into the apex body; the MCIA. In fact, true it is that this merger was an important one. It was a prerequisite in our sugar sector reform programme. As we remember, a restructure exercise was carried out with regard to the future of the employees. This restructured exercise was carried out in consultation with the platform of several trade unions. As far as I know, all went smoothly except for the case of some employees of the Control Board.

In this very House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many PQs have been asked concerning the VRS of the employees of the former Cane Planters Millers Arbitration and Control Board and the hon. Minister had, on a few occasions, informed the House about the process that was going on. In fact, all employees including those of the Control Board were asked to make a choice. They were asked to fill in the option form. Regretfully about 100 of these employees, as far as I know, have never been granted any VRS. They had to go to Court and the hon. Minister, I am sure, will enlighten the House about what has happened in the case of these employees of the Control Board who have been waiting for long time, for years, to be paid their VRS as it was agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding. These employees have toiled during a whole lifetime. They were expecting this compensation during their old age. To them it has been an injustice, they have been denied of this VRS.

As I said, unfortunately, Government has decided the other way and these employees have had to go to the Supreme Court. I understand that the case is still pending before Court. The question they asked themselves is: if they were not to be granted the VRS, why were they given these – what they call – false hopes and they were made to sign the option form. They have been requested, in fact, to sign these option forms which were submitted and they were asked to sign them before April 2012, which they did, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would ask the hon. Minister to enlighten the House on this particular case. As I said, this is the case which, unfortunately, has not been able to be solved in the whole restructured exercise which took place when the platform of trade unions was negotiating with Government. Say for that issue, as I said, it would seem to us that this Bill is not controversial and this is why we fully agree with the amendments brought before the House today.

Thank you.

(7.38 p.m.)

Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you can rest assured that I will be very, very brief; in fact, maybe less than ten minutes because I don't have many comments to make on this Bill. It is not a controversial Bill and it is meant only to make few adjustments with the actual situation. Yet, I have few points to raise where clarification is required and Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will go straight to some of the

clauses of the Bill. Clause 10, Section 40 – I don't have any problem with this Clause. It is and has always been a usual feature in cases where factories close down and their operational infrastructure continues to be used. These sites continue to service planters with regard to sampling, cane storage facilities, weighing of canes, etc., and once planters leave their canes on these sites, their canes are transported free of charge to the sugar estates. So, the practice was there, but I understand the Minister is now including it in the legislation. The practice now becomes law. So, I do not see any harm in this being included in the Act. However, I need some clarification on clause 4, section 5 of principal Act amended, where I see a subsection (s) has been added to allow the Authority to –

“(s) undertake such other activities as the Minister may determine.”

The Authority has already a Board, and on the Board there is already a representative of the Ministry. So, why is it that the Board cannot decide on activities which the Authority should engage? I understand that there is a representative of the Ministry, and that the representative of the Ministry is there to see that all decisions taken are in line with Government policy. So, once again, we note that the Minister wants to decide, to take decisions – I do not know whether on behalf of the Board –, but it is high time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that Boards be given *l'espace nécessaire* to operate. As long as there will be these sorts of clauses in the law, *il y aura toujours une ingérence au sein des Boards des corps para-publics. Je pense que les Boards peuvent travailler en toute liberté.*

Regarding clause 5, section 24 of principal Act amended, in the first draft which was circulated, the Minister, I believe, had the intention to prevent a person to –

“(aa) use canes grown by him, or deliver canes to a person, for feeding livestock for research purposes;”

But, this morning, the Minister has circulated an amendment, whereby it is now the responsibility of the Minister to, firstly, approve delivery of canes to a person engaged in the production of cane juice for direct consumption, and secondly, to use canes grown by a planter for feeding livestock kept for research purposes.

Let me take the first part of the amendment dealing with the cane juice. The Minister has just said that he wants to regulate this activity, but frankly, I do not understand the rationale

behind this amendment. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was just wondering how many persons in Mauritius are producing cane juice for direct consumption. Not more than three or four! I heard the Minister saying that there are 10 planters who sell their canes for production of cane juice. This activity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *c'est une activité artisanale*, and it is very much appreciated, by Mauritians, yes, but mainly by tourists. I have myself several times witnessed in Caudan Waterfront, for example, tourists queuing up for cane juice. In India, for example, in every corner of the street, you see this activity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wonder how many tonnes of canes these cane juice sellers would deprive the sugar estates. Much less than a tonne, I believe. But these people are earning their livelihood out of this activity. They did not ask any job from anybody. They showed creativity on the contrary. Moreover, I think they work maybe for six months a year. So, I cannot understand why the Minister wants to regulate this activity. Maybe the Minister fears that there may be other people who want to engage in this activity on a bigger scale. If he has the information - I do not know - maybe it is for this reason that he wants to regulate this activity. With this amendment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, things would become more difficult for the small entrepreneurs, for those engaged in this trade.

Now, on the issue of using canes for feeding livestock for research purposes, there also, if I am not mistaken, I heard the Minister say that the livestock researcher will have to produce his own cane. I do not whether I am right. But, if that is so, it is totally two different fields. The livestock researcher is in another field, and somebody who produces cane is in another field. So, maybe, we will get some clarification again, much more than what has been said in the Second Reading Speech. Also, if the Minister can tell us on what basis he would take this decision, and what are the elements that he would require to be able to take a decision on the question of the livestock researcher. If it was for controlling the quality of the cane, I would have understood, but I cannot understand why he is coming up with this issue.

Now, on clause 3, section 2 of principal Act amended, the definition of crop year, I see the Minister is now reverting to the old definition of the crop year. In fact, crop year was already defined in the Control Board Act, but when the Minister came to his House with the MCIA Bill, then he changed it. Formerly, it was extending from 16 January in a year to 15 January in the following year. The Minister chose to change it in the last MCIA Act, and defined it as extending

it from 01 July in a year to 30 June in the following year. I am glad that now he is correcting this issue and that he is coming back to source, because, as he mentioned himself, there were different crop years for different factories, and it was obvious that when the crop year starts in January of a year and ends in January of the following year, the Control Board has the leeway to solve all the disputes in one crop year, and does not have to tackle problems in the second crop year, which made things more complicated. So, I am glad that the Minister *est retourné à de meilleurs sentiments là-dessus*.

With regard to clause 13 - Consequential amendments, where the National Pensions Act is being amended, I'll take this opportunity to mention - I do not know whether the Minister is aware - that there are about 60 employees of the former MSIRI, 60 manual grade workers who never had any pension plan. In fact, they never had any pension plan, which is illegal. They have worked for about 25 to 30 years without contributing to any pension plan in spite of their request. So, when MCIA was being set up and negotiations were on with the respective trade unions, they made this point and a Memorandum was signed between the parties.

Section 66 of the Act also clearly states that all employees are entitled to a statutory pension. The MCIA has been set up since two years now, and the manual workers are still waiting to get a pension plan. So, I was wondering why the amendment which is being brought today does not make any mention of a pension plan for these manual grade workers. I am, therefore, appealing to the Minister to see to it that the Memorandum which was signed is being respected, that the Act itself is being implemented, because section 66 is clear on this, and that the request of the manual workers for a right to a pension plan is acceded to as early as possible.

That was my last point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I do not see any other controversial issues. So, I am done.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I suspend the sitting for 1 hour 15 minutes for dinner.

At 7.51 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.21 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to thank hon. Ganoo and hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee for their interventions on the present Bill before this House. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who would have thought that in a span of slightly more than two years, we would merge six historic institutions which have been giving service to the planting community for years into one apex body. This is a historic step, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Within one mandate and a span of two years in the same mandate, merging two institutions is practically - I will not say difficult - impossible in the context of Mauritius. But, merging six institutions, one cannot imagine how this could have been done in a span of two years! The Bill on the MCIA was passed on 13 December 2011, as I said earlier. It was proclaimed on 19 March, 2012, MCIA was set up and we managed to reduce the number of employees from 908 in all the six institutions to merely 472. At least 436 employees were either redeployed or they took their VRS and some of them retired on normal retirement because they had attained the age of retirement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we managed to reduce cess and for this crop year it is going to be decreased by Rs343 m. This amount of reduction will go directly to the benefit of planters, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I said, Rs700 per tonne of sugar and Rs1,010 per *arpent* of land which is a big support to the planting community, especially the small planters and the *métayers* who occupy marginal land for the production of sugar cane and whose survival is very important in the present difficult context prevailing in the sugar sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

We have always seen parastatals increasing but not decreasing. With the merging of six SPIs, we have only one Board instead of six Boards. We have only one Chairman instead of six Chairmen. We do not have to appoint and pay members for six boards. We have only one single directorate; we do not have six directorates. We have only one with one Administrative Cadre, one Accountant, one Human Resource Manager instead of six, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, it is a big step! Within the two years, as I said in my main speech, MCIA is fully functional. It is operating well and giving the same services or, I must say, better services today in a more effective manner to the planting community. We are coming up with lots of new programmes to help the small planters and the *métayers*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Today, in less than two years, because of the experience we have gathered in the functioning of MCIA, we have seen that certain issues have to be addressed again and this is why we are before this House with the present Bill where we are trying to amend some of the

provisions. As I said, the first provision which we are amending, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and this issue was raised by both hon. Ganoo and hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, is that we are redefining 'crop year'. Why are we redefining it is because there was a confusion after the enactment of MCIA. There were two definitions, as rightly pointed out by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. There was one definition of 'crop year' under the Mauritius Sugar Authority (MSA) Act and another definition under the Control Board Act and they were not in harmony. We have seen that the definition that we retained does not work in practice. I confess today that we should have retained the definition of the Control Board, but somehow this was not done and the definition found in the MSA was retained and this does not work. I explained the reason in my speech and this is why today we are coming to redefine 'crop year'. As I said, we are now harmonising to enable the settling of disputes as there are disputes during a crop year. So, it is the settling of disputes of one crop year within the same crop year. This is the motive behind this particular amendment.

There was another point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which was raised by hon. Ganoo regarding Clause 4 section 5 of the Act on the scope of activities. We are today extending the scope of activities. The scope of activity was defined in the MCIA Act, but it was limited to the sugar cane sector because the resources were limited and they were not in a position to carry out other activities. But, today, there are certain activities which can be extended and which will bring further income to the institution, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If I may mention a few of the activities -

- (i) the analytical test;
- (ii) diagnostic test for main pest and diseases;
- (iii) DNA finger printing (not for humans but for plants and varieties);
- (iv) tissue culture;
- (v) air monitoring of stack gases, and
- (vi) Geographical Information System (GIS).

Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee raised the question 'why should the Minister be involved and why it should not be left to the Board of the MCIA to decide.' Of course, what we are doing today is that we are extending the mandate of MCIA. It is a statutory body and it is bound, the hands of the MCIA are tied by the statutory provisions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are

extending that statutory provision to allow the Board to decide on its priorities and on which activity to choose, which one will be in the benefit of the institution and for the planting community. They will decide, of course. But, they will have to refer whatever decision to the Minister so that we can be sure that it is in line with the Government policy and that, at least, the resources which are being provided to the institution are being judiciously utilised. These are the reasons, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The third point which was raised again by hon. Ganoo was regarding Clause 5 which is amending section 24 of the Act. In fact, this was also raised by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. It is in regard to supply of cane for cane juice and fodder for livestock. There are two sections in that particular Clause 5 (a) & (b) and this is a new section.

In fact, when we listened to the intervention of hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, I thought she had prepared a speech before the amendment because she is all for it and this is exactly what we are doing. In fact, in the first version, we were not allowing the trade of cane juice. We have come back to it. I must inform the House that there are ten operators who are getting the livelihood out of this business. There are ten suppliers of cane, but this is being done administratively. We are laying a legal basis for this trade. We are regulating this trade. Same applies for producing cane for fodder, for livestock, which is being kept for research purposes.

Today, we have a company, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Aadicon, which is keeping around 200 heads of genetically improved breed, imported from South Africa and other parts of the world. They are doing research. They are producing bovine semen for artificial insemination, not only for the local market, but also for the region for export. They are, at the same time, producing cane for the purpose of fodder to feed these animals, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, we are only legalising what is being done in practice. We are laying a basis for these companies who are involved in research and they are keeping animals, livestock, they can produce. What exactly are we doing by regulating these activities, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? In fact, it is ensuring that cane is produced enough for the sustenance of the sugarcane sector. This is the main priority, but, on this side, if there are other businesses which are coming up, like I say, keeping livestock for research purposes and if they are also interested in producing fodder, but what is important to us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the cane industry has witnessed very serious unprecedented challenges in the recent past. We are still going through so many challenges after

the abolition of quota from September of next year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, a critical mass is absolutely necessary for the sustenance of the industry. This is why we are today defining that the main purpose of growing canes is for the production of sugar, and also, for the production of energy and ethanol. So that what we define in the MAAS, the concept of a flexi factory is complete. This is exactly what we want to see happening in Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Another point which was raised by hon. Ganoo is clause 10, which concerns the amendment of section 40, cane delivery sites, a concept which exists for so many years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. All the milling factories also had several cane delivery sites at different locations for the benefit of planters to ease delivery of canes, so that it does not go to long distances. But now with closure of factories, we have put in conditions of closure of factories because so many factories have closed down. We are left with only four factories. We have centralised the business of milling today in line with what was recommended in MAAS Report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So, today we are giving the cane delivery site, a legal status, the same as it is for a factory. This is what we are doing. It was not recognised. So that planters are protected, it will be recognised, so that they are compensated in the same way as they are compensated when they deliver canes to the factory. They can deliver to the cane delivery site and then the difference, they are paid out. This is what we are doing.

There was a question which was asked by hon. Ganoo, whether these cane delivery sites can be shifted, if ever, there is a development which is coming up, close to or next to the cane delivery site. There is a case where this has been shifted; in the case of BelOmbre, on the demand of planters, on the demand of the sugar factory in question. But this can only be done by keeping the interests of the planters in mind. This is the priority. It can be done in accordance with the MCIA, the planting community of the region and also the factory. So, the site is not a barrier to shifting the cane delivery site. This can always be done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Another issue which was raised by hon. Ganoo regarding clause 11 which amends section 52 of the Bill. Section 52 requires that the authority - meaning the MCIA - submits its Annual Report within four months. I had put it because I was minded since it was a new institution coming up, I said, in all transparency, they have to be accountable, the sooner the better because

I, myself, have been a Member in this House for so many years. When we are in 2014, we get the report of 2010 which is being laid on the Table. So, I had this in mind. I said: “no, I am going to give four months.” But this is not workable in practice. It does not work. So, what we are doing? Through the amendments, we are aligning it to the normal practice which exists in all other parastatals, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is being done under another statutory Act, not the MCIA. We are amending the MCIA to bring it under the Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act and within the timeframe which is prescribed under that particular Act. So, it’s nothing new. They are only changing from MCIA to the requirement of Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act.

It was also rightly pointed out by hon. Ganoo that he has not seen any report since the law, MCIA, requires the report to be ready and submitted in four months to the Minister and subsequently to be tabled in the Assembly. He has said that he has not seen any report, neither have I. I have not seen any report. No report has been submitted so far to me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But I have been advised that the report ending December 2013, meaning last year, is ready. From the beginning, it covers for 21 months. It has been prepared. It is ready and it has been submitted to the Director of Audit as per the MCIA Act because it has to be audited by the Audit Office. So, it is being audited. Once the report is back to MCIA and they submit it to me, in due course, I will be tabling a copy of the report.

Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee raised the question of some employees of the MSIRI not under any pension scheme. In fact, it only concerns some employees who are either casual employees or employees who are retained seasonally on contract. So, they could not be because there was a break. This was on purpose. They were casual, not permanent. What we did, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Over and above when we are structuring the MCIA, when we were merging all the SPIs, as far as possible, most of those casual workers, we have put them on establishment. There were some cases; you might not believe, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My friend, hon. Arvin Boolell will be happy with it. Some people who were given VRS, land, pension and lump sum, they were also happy, but they were taken on seasonal, on contract or casual. They have also been put on establishment. So, we have gone very far in this regard, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I think, I have tried to answer all the queries which have been raised. Having said what I had to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I, again, commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

(9.40 p.m.)

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

THE MAURITIUS CANE INDUSTRY AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL (NO. VII OF 2014)

Clauses 1 to 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5 (Section 24 of the principal Act amended)

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

Mr Faugoo: Mr Chairperson, I move that clause 5 be deleted and replaced by the following clause -

“5. Section 24 of principal Act amended

Section 24 of the principal Act is amended, in sub-section (3) –

- (a) by deleting the word “or” at the end of paragraph (a);
- (b) by inserting, after paragraph (a), the following new paragraphs –
 - (aa) subject to the approval of the Minister, deliver canes to a person engaged in the production of cane juice for direct consumption;
 - (ab) use canes grown by him for feeding livestock kept for research purposes; or”

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 6 to 13 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 14 (Transitional provision)

Motion made and question proposed: "that the clause stands part of the Bill".

Mr Faugoo: Mr Chairperson, I move that clause 14 be deleted.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 15 (Commencement)

Motion made and question proposed: "that the clause stands part of the Bill."

Mr Faugoo: Sir, I move that clause 15 be renumbered clause 14.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 15 renumbered 14 accordingly.

Clause 14 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, 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 Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (Amendment) Bill (No. VII of 2014) was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 07 October 2014 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

SSS GOODLANDS – WORK SITE - ACCIDENT

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): M. le président, je voudrais attirer l'attention du ministre du Travail au sujet du triste décès d'un habitant de Palma qui se trouve dans ma circonscription alors qu'il travaillait sur un chantier de construction de l'Etat, le SSS Goodlands. En effet, M. le président, M. Jacques Profire, un jeune maçon, a été une autre victime de la négligence et de l'insouciance de son employeur. Ce malheureux accident de travail a été répercuté dans la presse d'aujourd'hui et le malheureux a péri quand des blocs mal sécurisés se sont affaissés sur lui.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one is too many. In this case, we have been informed that the main contractor had already been sanctioned by a Prohibition Order on the part of the Ministry of Labour since April of this year. The inspectors of the Ministry of Labour had effected several visits of the site and had, in fact, drawn the attention of the contractor and prohibited him from using tubular steel scaffold in certain areas of this building as this represents risk to the employees at work. I would appeal to the hon. Minister of Labour to urgently conduct a full-fledged enquiry into the matter so that justice be done and the matter be brought to Court so that those responsible for this accident be brought to account.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Mr S. Mohamed): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for raising this matter. I can assure the hon. Member that we have already started looking into this very sad fact. True it is that my Ministry has ever since the 22 of April 2014 carried out an inspection on that particular site, referred to by the hon. Member. A Prohibition Order was issued on the 23 of April 2014 and, in spite of the Prohibition Order, visits were carried out on the 08 of May, 18 of June and 10 of July and on the 18 June, a contravention was established for failing to comply with the Prohibition Order. The file has been referred to the Prosecution Unit already for an Information on several Counts: violation of the Occupational Safety and Health (Scaffold) Regulations as well as the Occupational Safety and Health (Work at Height) Regulations and each of those offences bear approximately one year imprisonment or Rs75,000 fine.

However, having looked at the Criminal Code, I am wondering whether section 239 of the Criminal Code - Involuntary homicide - does not fall on all folds with regard to this

particular offence, and I can assure all the hon. Members of the House and the public at large, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that a lesson must be shown here for the negligence and imprudence having been caused by the contractor and a loss of life having ensued is very sad and unacceptable.

MONT ROCHES - VERGER BISSAMBAR – SEWERAGE

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise an issue addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister concerning waste water problem in my Constituency in a particular region called Verger Bissambar, Mont Roches.

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank the Deputy Prime Minister for his continuous support trying to alleviate the environmental problems facing the inhabitants and the more so that sums have been budgeted for the implementation of this sewage network.

Can I make a request to the Deputy Prime Minister to see to it that tenders are floated as urgently as possible in order to prevent further degradation of the environment and the hardship of the people, and also to make an appeal to the Deputy Prime Minister with the coming of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival. If the Wastewater Management Authority could send their tankers to empty the cessful pits during the period of festival. Thank you.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are being attended to and I'll make sure that it is being followed up.

ST JOHN STREET – WALL - RECONSTRUCTION

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central): Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to draw attention to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure following the flash floods in Port Louis, considerable amount of work has been done by the NDU. There is one street St John's Street where there was a wall in what used to be the Immaculée Conception RCA and then Prevoc. The wall which was threatening to fall down, has been pulled down, but for the past one and half year, it has been standstill. All the debris and everything are still there, so, we will have to clear it and then rebuild another wall to avoid any case of damage if there is a flood.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will look into the issue as early as possible.

JUDICIARY – RIGHT OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will address the hon. Prime Minister who is responsible for the Judiciary. I intend to raise the issue regarding a fundamental right, the right of access to justice.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Rules Committee of the Supreme Court has just come out with an increase of 700% in fees that we have to pay to the administration, I mean Court fees. This excludes the fees that we have pay to Barristers and Attorneys. We are talking about Court fees. I am appealing to the hon. Prime Minister to look into the matter. I will give a few examples. Today, if you enter a case of injunction - we all know, the hon. Prime Minister is a lawyer himself - before the Judge in Chambers, you have to pay Rs10,000 for fees and you can't enter an injunction case if you don't enter a main case. For a main case as well, it is another Rs10,000. We are talking about Rs20,000 just for the Court fees, excluding the lawyer's fees. For a case of alimony, for custody, for immediate care and control, now it is Rs350 and they are proposing Rs10,000. This will deprive many people from going to ask for the custody of their children. I am appealing to the hon. Prime Minister. I won't go into the details. There are so many increases. The fees for an action in the District Court is Rs2,000 and for an action in the intermediate Court, they are proposing Rs3,000 as court fees. The question is whether the 700% increase is constitutional. We know in the case of UDM v.s the Governor General, the question was asked - that was an increase for the deposit for an election – as to whether an increase of up to Rs10,000 does not give it to the nature of an additional qualification relating to property which cannot be allowed to stand on the face of section 1, section 33 and section 34 of the Constitution.

I am appealing to the hon. Prime Minister to use his good office as Minister responsible for the Judiciary, and as a Government who believes in the democratisation of the economy, we have to believe in the democratisation of access to justice. Financial means cannot be barred to a justice. If one has his fundamental right which is guaranteed under the Constitution and is being

deprived of, his only avenue is to the Court and money cannot be a bar. So, I am appealing to the hon. Prime Minister to look into the matter so that we can have equal access to justice.

Thank you.

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Member. In fact, he had asked a question this morning on the same issue. From what I understand

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is the Rules Committee who decides this, who made the proposition. They argued that the Court fees were last revised in 2000, that is, 14 years ago, that administrative costs have gone up, that there are lot of cases which are submerging the courts, because they are, in fact, devoid of merits, but people just come and put cases, and also, they say that the cost of living has gone up, whatever inflation and the administrative cost. That is why they think it is nearly impossible for them to avoid long delays if they are inundated by Court. That is what they have said. That is why I was listening very carefully to the hon. Member. He did say that this is a proposal. It is not final from what I understand. I believe they said that they are still in consultation with the parties and they will make recommendations, eventually, to the Chief Justice, and I understand it is the Chief Justice who consults whoever stakeholders, but also the Judges, and then he makes a final decision. I am sure he will take this on board. But, what I could do is ask my good friend, the hon. Attorney General to pass these views on to the Chief Justice, rather not myself directly be involved, but he could pass the views to the Chief Justice and see. At least, he will have all the facts before he does. But, 700% I agree it is a sudden big increase. No doubt, it sounds like this, but I can't. I will let it to the Chief Justice to decide. But, I should point out also that legal aid has been extended as the hon. Member knows. This, we should not forget. For what I understand, the criteria were changed.

(Interruptions)

No, it hasn't. The eligibility had - I think we brought it ourselves in 2012, if I am not mistaken, so that people who are in financial difficulties don't have to pay the Court fees. I will ask the hon. Attorney General to pass it on to the Chief Justice.

TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION – INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to draw the attention of the House to the chaotic and dramatic situation which is prevailing at the Tertiary Education Commission. Due to time constraint, I will focus only on two issues: firstly, the industrial relations between the Director and the staff and foreign students. Regarding industrial relations, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have presently a case of alleged sexual harassment against the Director, and he is still in post.

Secondly, we have complaints from members of staff to the effect that they are under surveillance. Camera recordings are being put on CDs for personal and particular use of the Director. Recordings of who talks to whom and how long the conversation last are being effected. This morning, *la cerise sur le gâteau*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we read in a newspaper that Mr S. B. *démis de ses fonctions* as Secretary to the Board. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was preparing my PQ yesterday, I went to the website and realised that there was a change in the title of that officer. Instead of Secretary and Head Administration, it was only Secretary. At night, when I checked again, it was back to Secretary and Head of Administration. I was just wondering: what is this yo-yo game with the title of an officer! This morning, it was back to as I said: Secretary and Head of Administration. With such an article, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, we can all imagine the effect that this can have on the officer and his family.

Quickly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I leave this question of industrial relations right now and I come to foreign students. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some institutions are recruiting students on false promises of well paid internship. Due to this state of affairs, we have a group of Nepalese students who have been living a dramatic situation during the past eight or nine months. They have paid for courses which are not being run and when they asked for refund, of course they don't have. They have been knocking for doors to have refund either to pay another course or to go back home. Of course, they are not receiving any refund and they are doing petty jobs to earn a living in dramatic situation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these young men could have been your sons, could have been my sons and we can't keep silent in front of such a dramatic situation. *Et de grâce*, don't come with the excuse that they have filed a case in Court because we know that they have been pushed to do so. We also know that some meetings were scheduled, but have been cancelled at a particular point in time by the actual Director.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my request is to ask the hon. Minister what measures are being contemplated to remedy the situation that the staff is living regarding the recruitment of foreign students and the monitoring of these institutions that bring students on false promises, that do not run courses and do not refund the money of these poor students. They are not rich students from India or Nepal who come here for these studies.

And more so my third request to the hon. Minister is that the hon. Minister stated in a reply to PQ B/962, I quote –

“I suggested that we appoint the person – the Director – subject to a quarterly review to assess his performance.”

He even added –

“I wrote it in the file that I want to have a person whose work is assessed on a quarterly basis.”

May I request the hon. Minister to inform the House whether he has received these quarterly assessments – by now, he should have received at least two – and to tell the House who is responsible for these assessments?

I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are three points raised.

With regard to the alleged sexual harassment, I take this very seriously and I would like to invite the person that has been harassed to do the needful, to go to the relevant authority, that is, the Police. I would do that if I was the person who has been harassed. I also understand that, I think, there has been a meeting with the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment who has held a meeting with all the parties concerned, but I am still waiting for the report at the Police or wherever.

Secondly, with regard to changes in the appellation of the Secretary of the Board, I have taken notes of the comments.

Thirdly, with regard to the plight of foreign students, it is not only Nepalese students, I must say. There have been some cases of abuse with regard to foreign students by unscrupulous

agents in their own country. My Ministry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has taken action in order to tighten the state of affairs and we have taken steps that are required to make sure that we do not have such cases.

Thank you.

MORCELLEMENT GOOLAMALLY, ROSHAN LANE - SEWERAGE SYSTEM

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): M. le président, le problème que je vais évoquer concerne le ministère des utilités publiques et je m'adresse directement au ministre responsable.

C'est un problème concernant l'accumulation des eaux usées dans les environs de la mosquée de Quadri Goolamally à Roshan Lane, Morcellement Goolamally, Phase 1. Cette eau usée produit, M. le président, une odeur nauséabonde qui incommode grandement les habitants de la région et cela dure depuis pas mal de temps. M. le président, en cette période du Ramadan, les habitants de cette région souffrent terriblement de cette situation. Je fais un appel pressant à M. le ministre de faire diligence afin d'abrèger la souffrance de ces familles. Je sais, M. le président, qu'en cette période de grand jeûne, le ministre fera le nécessaire au plus vite possible.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, yes, certainly, my attention has been drawn to it. But, I would also make an appeal that the inhabitants also participate in this so that they do not block the sewerage system; they do not use it for other purposes as well. I will attend to it and make sure. But the problem is not just during Ramadan, but after as well.

YOUTH CENTRES - OPENING HOURS

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, ma requête, ce soir, s'adresse au ministre de la jeunesse et des sports et concerne les heures d'ouverture des centres de jeunesse.

J'avais, moi-même, adressé une question parlementaire en début d'année au ministre concerné - la question B/71 - par rapport au même problème et aussi concernant le paiement demandé aux utilisateurs après 18 heures. Je dois dire, M. le président, que je comprends parfaitement que ceux qui donnent des cours payants doivent payer pour l'utilisation des centres. Mais, ce que je n'arrive toujours pas à comprendre, c'est comment peut-on fermer les centres à

18 heures, alors que c'est généralement à partir de cette heure que les jeunes viennent dans les centres pour pratiquer les jeux tels que carrom, domino, tennis de table, entre autres. Donc, malheureusement, depuis la fin de janvier de cette année, et je le redis, les centres ferment dorénavant à 18 heures et les jeunes se retrouvent pénalisés.

Je fais, donc, aussi ressortir qu'il y a un manque d'activités dans certains centres de jeunesse à Beau Bassin/Rose Hill tels que Barkly, Mont Roches et Trèfles. Je demanderais au ministre de revoir toute l'organisation de ces centres. Pourquoi aussi ne pas appliquer un système de shift pour les employés si on veut réduire les heures supplémentaires. Donc, je dirai, M. le président, fermer les centres à 18 heures est un mauvais signal qu'on envoie à la jeunesse et je pense qu'il est grand temps à ce que le ministère de la jeunesse et des sports rectifie le tir. Je suis persuadé que le ministre ne préfère pas voir les jeunes s'asseoir à côté des boutiques consommant de l'alcool ou se droguant, etc. Donc, je fais un appel pressant, au bon sens du ministre, afin qu'il remédie à la situation. Merci.

The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr S. Ritoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, usually, for the youth centres, the opening hours is up to 18 hours, but, however, it depends upon the demand of the public, mainly of the youth.

There is a policy at the level of the Ministry of extending the opening hours till 20 hours. But, in that case, the resource person or the coach has to take the responsibility so that he can be in charge of closing the centre. But, we have a policy at the level of the Ministry to leave it open up to 20 hours. However, regarding the roster, actually, the workers at the level of the Ministry, when you change the system of working hours, you go to the roster system, they are not much agreeable because they may be deprived of overtime. So, we are actually working on a policy how to help to get – I mean on a roster system - on an overtime basis, but anyway, depending upon the demand, the youth centres remain open up to 20 hours.

1. UPPER CHOISY – WATER SUPPLY

2. CHAMAREL - LANDSLIDE

Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy

and Public Utilities to the access to unsafe water prevailing in the region of Upper Choisy, Constituency No. 14.

I am sure that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister may be well aware of, as the inhabitants have been, on many occasions, voicing this problem on the media and the press, to the CWA and I, myself, have once raised this issue in the House. This said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to reiterate my request that the inhabitants have access to safe drinking water. As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this situation is against the realisation of human rights as described by the UN Resolution 2010 recognising human right to safe water and sanitation. I am appealing to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to address this situation, as early as possible.

Also, allow me a few words to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping. I have been made aware of a landslide where the construction of the road in Chamarel is being undertaken. So, I am appealing to the hon. Minister to take appropriate measures.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, certainly, I will ask the CWA to look at alternate sources of water if they cannot provide clean water at that site.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport & Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding the landslide at Chamarel, I have to announce that a Consultant has already been appointed to look into the issue, because that is a very dangerous situation and we are going to see what actions can be taken.

CUREPIPE – TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Dr. S. Boolell (Second for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I invite the attention of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping to route Frédéric Bonnefin in Curepipe, Forest Side where there are some problems, one at the T-junction with the Royal Road and one at the cross-roads with Gabriel Froppier.

Both need traffic lights, there have been some accidents. I have raised the matter in the House before and in the absence of knowing who is the PPS in charge of the area, I better address the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and try to get traffic lights there.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport & Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would request the hon. Member to bear with me a little bit, because it is not available actually with us and we have already ordered a few traffic lights. Once they are made available, I am going to do the needful.

GLEN PARK - SPORTS COMPLEX - FOOTBALL PITCH

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Merci M. le président. Dans ma circonscription, l'utilisation de tous les terrains de football est gratuite, à l'exception du terrain qui se situe au complexe sportif de Glen Park qui est géré par la MSC. Je fais une requête au ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports pour confier la gestion du terrain de foot et pétanque de ce complexe sportif à la Municipalité de Vacoas, afin de mettre tous les footballeurs de Vacoas sur le même pied d'égalité.

Je vous remercie.

The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr S. Ritoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have no problem to vest the football pitch with the Municipality, provided we find a modality regarding the maintenance and payment of the electricity bills.

RIVIÈRE DES GALETS - INHABITANTS - RELOCATION

Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will raise an issue which concerns both the Minister of Housing and Lands and the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment.

In fact, inhabitants of Rivière des Galets are being penalised unduly for the time being since, apparently, Government has decided that these people should move to another location, in view of the high risk when the sea is very rough, or if, unfortunately, it happens that there is a tsunami one day.

In fact, it is true that, in spite of the wall which has been erected, several times the houses of inhabitants, especially those on the seafront, are being flooded, and these people suffer hardship. I am given to understand that no lease whatsoever is being renewed for inhabitants of Rivière des Galets since Government has decided that they will move elsewhere. Consequently,

none of them can bring any improvement to their houses in the absence of a concrete lease, and there is a feeling of insecurity.

Second, there are those who live on the seafront and whose situation is deplorable. They live in deplorable conditions. Their houses leak, and you will be surprised, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that some of them even have to sleep under the table when it rains. They have been asking for iron sheets and wooden poles from the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, but their requests are not entertained.

So, pending the decision of Government to find a suitable location to relocate them - we do not know how long it will take -, I do not think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that these inhabitants should continue to live in deplorable conditions and should be penalised.

So, I am appealing to both Ministers to consider urgently the cause of the inhabitants of Rivière des Galets and find an urgent temporary solution, so as to enable them to live decently.

Thank you.

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Dr. A. Kasenally): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have first to go on the site and see whether these people are there as lessees or they have been squatting on their own. I will have to check, and then take appropriate action.

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr S. Dayal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the same problem has been raised by my colleague, hon. Aimée, and the matter is being looked into.

At 10.13 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 07 October 2014 at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

HARBOUR BRIDGE PROJECT – COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

(No. IB/27) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the Harbour Bridge Project, he

will state the number of land owners whose land have been compulsorily acquired, indicating in each case, if compensations have been paid thereto and, if not, why not.

Reply: I shall reply to both PQ No. 1B/27 and PQ No. 1B/30 as they relate to the same subject.

In regard to the proposed Harbour Bridge Project, compulsory acquisition has been resorted to in respect of 64 plots of private land. Notices under Section 6 of the Land Acquisition Act indicating Government intention to acquire the plots of land were published as from 20 August 2011 and served on the respective owners as from 7 September 2011. Notices under Section 8 of the Land Acquisition Act indicating Government decision to compulsorily acquire the plots of land were published as from 14 April 2012 and served on the respective owners as from 19 April 2012.

Out of the 64 plots, compensation has been effected in respect of two plots only. For the remaining 62 plots, acquisition procedures have been completed, but no compensation has yet been paid, as discussions had then started regarding the advisability of implementing the project.

In view of the fact that the project is now being put on hold, arrangements have been initiated for the sale back to the former owners at Government's cost in accordance with the provisions of Section 31 of the Land Acquisition Act.

POINTE AUX SABLES - LOW HOUSING PROJECT

(No. IB/28) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the project for the construction of low cost houses at Pointe aux Sables, he will state the number of housing units proposed to be built, indicating if soil tests have been carried out onsite prior to the start of construction works therefor.

Reply: The low cost housing project, presently being undertaken at Pointe aux Sables to relocate the squatters who are occupying land on the alignment of the Ring Road (Phase II) project, comprises the construction of, *inter alia*, 82 housing units.

I am informed that all the necessary clearances required have been obtained prior to the start of construction works on site. These include -

- (i) Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Licence;
- (ii) Building and Land Use Permit from the Municipal Council of Port Louis,
and
- (iii) Percolation/soil Test clearance from the Wastewater Management Authority regarding septic tank effluent.

I have been reassured that all the conditions set out in the EIA Licence are being followed.

CHILD ABUSE - SEXUAL RISK ORDER

(No. IB/29) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, Attorney-General whether, in regard to child abuse, he will state if consideration will be given for the advisability of introducing a Sexual Risk Order, as proposed by the Director of Public Prosecutions to better ensure the protection of abused children, having regard to the number of reported child abuse cases, pending the enactment of a Comprehensive Children's Bill.

Reply: (The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare): Presently, the Child Protection Act provides for protection of children victims of abuse including sexual abuse. In the event a child is likely to suffer significant harm, the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry applies for an Emergency Protection Order and where warranted, a Committal Order to have a child placed in a place of safety under the Child Protection Act. In addition, my Ministry provides a number of support services including psychological assistance to child victims.

I am informed by the Attorney General's Office that there is need to carefully assess the benefits of implementing Sexual Risk Orders. All implications which guarantee an individual's fundamental rights, including the constitutional aspects of introducing such orders in Mauritius have to be thoroughly analysed.

I am informed that the Office of the Attorney General and the DPP have already started discussions on the exact nature and scope of the Sexual Risk Order as well as the advisability of including it in the Children's Bill.

HARBOUR BRIDGE PROJECT – COMPULSORY ACQUISITION - COMPENSATION

(No. IB/30) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the former Harbour Bridge Project, he will state the number of persons whose property have been compulsorily acquired, indicating in each case –

(a) when they were officially informed thereof, and

(b) if compensations have been paid out thereto.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. IB/27)

SUBRAMANIAN BHARATI EYE HOSPITAL – PATIENTS – AVASTIN INJECTION

(No. IB/31) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Subramanian Bharati Eye Hospital, in Moka, he will state if four patients who recently attended thereto for treatment have each lost one eye after having been administered with the Avastin injection and, if so, indicate in each case –

(a) the date on which same was reported thereto, and

(b) if the patients have thereafter been sent to Chennai for treatment and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. IB/19)

JUVENILE PROSTITUTION - MEASURES

(No. IB/32) 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 juvenile prostitution, she will state the number of cases thereof detected by the social workers employed by her Ministry, since January 2013 to date, indicating in each case, the actions taken to protect the juvenile.

Reply: In regard to juvenile prostitution, I am informed that since January 2013 to date, eleven(11) alleged cases have been reported to my Ministry, out of which six (6) have been detected following social enquiry by officers of my Ministry, as victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). All cases have been referred to the Police for further investigation.

In all the six cases, my Ministry provided Protective and Support Services which comprised the following -

- Joint interviews by the Police and CDU officers to avoid repeated narrations of incident;
- Assistance for medical and Police medical examinations as well as HIV testings, and
- Psycho-social counselling to victims and their families.

Alternative placements in respect of two (2) cases have been made. Four (4) victims have been referred to the Drop-in-Centre, managed by the Mauritius Family Planning and Welfare Association for additional support and counselling sessions to facilitate their rehabilitation.

Specialised services that have been provided to them comprised, *inter-alia*, the following -

- Therapeutic and rehabilitative activities such as group counselling and focus group discussions;
- Monthly medical sessions/examinations;
- Contraceptive counselling, and
- Parental counselling.

In addition, where the juvenile victims have remained in the family, ongoing home visits are arranged on a regular basis.

MV MAURITIUS PRIDE - REPLACEMENT

(No. IB/38) 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 MV Mauritius Pride, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed replacement thereof to operate on the Mauritius/Rodrigues route, indicating if a report has been submitted in relation thereto and, if so, table copy thereof.

Reply: In December 2012, the Strategy Networking Partners and Consulting Consortium Maritime Group (Int) Limited of London was awarded a Consultancy Services contract to undertake a feasibility study to look into the need for replacement of the M/V Mauritius Pride and to address and advise on related issues. The Consultants submitted their report in October 2013. A copy of the Executive Summary of the report will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly for consultation.

The M/V Mauritius Pride was built in 1990 and has outlived its economic useful life. The vessel has become too costly to repair, maintain and operate and it has difficulties to comply with the new International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Regulations and other maritime Conventions.

The Consultants conducted a condition survey of the M/V Mauritius Pride in order to assess whether it would be economically feasible for the vessel to be replaced or refurbished. In April 2013, they submitted an interim report wherein it was estimated that repairs and refit of the vessel would cost some Rs125 m.

Subsequently, the technical team of the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd recommended that it would not be worthwhile to repair the M/V Mauritius Pride as it would have to pass its 25 year special survey for the renewal of its Passenger Safety Certificate and undergo several stringent inspection convention which may be very different test for the vessel to clear.

In order to take an informed decision, the Shipping Division of my Ministry was also requested to carry out an inspection of the M/V Mauritius Pride to verify whether it complies with the requirements of the applicable Conventions and Regulations and to give an exact opinion on its seaworthiness and safety. The report concluded that most of the deficiencies found on M/V Mauritius Pride during the Flag State Inspection are in breach of Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and load line Conventions which are detainable ones.

Thus keeping the M/V Mauritius Pride in operation will not be financially sustainable for the Mauritius Shipping Corporation Ltd.

Based on the recommendations of the Consultants, Government has as an interim measure, decided on -

- (i) the immediate disposal of the M/V Mauritius Pride taking into consideration the heavy costs of repairs to be incurred to renew the passenger certificate of the vessel, and
- (ii) the replacement of M/V Mauritius Pride by a second hand container vessel as a back-up for the M/V Mauritius Trochetia to operate on the Mauritius/Rodrigues route.

The tender notice for the sale of M/V Mauritius Pride through an open bid advertisement has been issued on 09 July 2014 and the closing date is 11 August 2014.

As regards the purchase of a second-hand container vessel to replace the M/V Mauritius Pride, the Public Procurement Office is finalising the bidding documents and the Central Procurement Board will be responsible for the purchase of the vessel. The procurement exercise is expected to be completed by November 2014 at latest.

BLACK RIVER DISTRICT COUNCIL - VACANCIES

(No. IB/40) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the posts of Handy Worker, Refuse Collector (Roster), General Worker, Handy Worker (Special Class) and Burial Ground Attendant (Roster) in the district of Black River, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the number of vacancies that exist in each grade, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) number thereof that will be filled;
- (b) qualification requirements therefor;
- (c) number of applications received following advertisement for the filling thereof, as at to date, indicating when the vacancies will be filled.

Reply: On 15 June 2012 the District Council of Black River has sought the authorisation of my Ministry to put an end to the outsourcing of refuse collection services and to carry out these services in-house. The District Council of Black River at the same time sought approval

for the acquisition of scavenging vehicles and to make arrangement with the Local Government Service Commission for the recruitment of appropriate staff for the in-house Scavenging Services.

In order to ensure the economic and financial viability of the request, my Ministry conducted a comparative study in collaboration with officers of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the District Council of Black River. The study concluded that it will be more cost-effective to carry out the refuse collection service in-house and that the Council would be spending about Rs7 m. less each year than with outsourcing.

My Ministry conveyed approval to the District Council of Black River to carry out the services using in-house resources and in April 2014 the Council recommended that new posts in some grades and additional posts in some other grades be created on the Councils' establishment as from the fiscal year 2015.

The Unified Local Government Service Board also approved the recommendations of the District Council of Black River and the Local Government Service Commission was requested to proceed with the recruitment of the additional required manpower resources.

With regard part (c) of the question, the House may wish to note that I have absolutely no access to such information as same is under the sole jurisdiction of the Local Government Service Commission which is an independent body.

I am placing a copy of the scheme of service in respect of the above grades setting out the qualifications requirements therefor in the Library.

CEB – GENERAL MANAGER - APPOINTMENT

(No. IB/41) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the name of the General Manager thereof, indicating-

- (a) his qualifications;
- (b) his terms and conditions of appointment, and
- (c) the mode of recruitment used for the appointment thereof.

(Withdrawn)

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS – VIOLENCE MEASURES

(No. IB/42) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the primary and secondary schools, he will state the –

- (a) number of reported cases of violence thereat, since January 2014 to date, indicating in each case, the actions taken in relation thereto and
- (b) measures that will be taken to deal with the problem of violence thereat.

(Withdrawn)

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AUTHORITY – BOARD COMPOSITION

(No. IB/43) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Information and Communication Technology whether, in regard to the Information and Communication Technologies Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the composition of the Board thereof, indicating –

- (a) their respective
 - (i) qualifications and
 - (ii) terms and conditions of appointment, including the salaries and allowances drawn and
- (b) cost of the laptops and mobile phones provided thereto.

(Withdrawn)

ALBION - BELLE VUE PHARE - SOCIAL MULTI-PURPOSE COMPLEX

(No. IB/44) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a social multi-purpose complex in Belle Vue Phare, in Albion, he will, benefit of the House, obtain from the Black River District Council, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Black River that it is not in a position to construct a social multipurpose complex in Belle Vue Phare, Albion due to unavailability of land and funds.

NHDC – GREEN SPACE - HOUSING UNITS –

(No. IB/45) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to the number of plot of lands region-wise intended for green space or any other leisure activities which will be or have been used for the construction of additional housing units.

Reply: Since the setting up of the NHDC Ltd in 1991, some 12,000 housing units have been constructed on 117 housing estates across the island under various schemes and programmes.

During implementation of these projects, plots of land within the different sites were also earmarked for green space, leisure facilities and for other community development.

In 2013 a survey was carried out by the NHDC in 41 housing estates, especially where Firinga type housing units have been constructed. The survey revealed that in 23 housing estates there were vacant plots of land, including those which were earmarked for green spaces and other leisure activities which have either remained undeveloped or unattended. As a result, these plots of land are overgrown with wild vegetation and in some cases are being used as dumping ground. This situation is causing nuisance to the residents of the housing estates and is a high health risk.

In view of demand for housing facilities, these plots of land, which are of varying extent cannot be left in abandoned state. My Ministry has, therefore, decided to construct on some of these plots housing units more or less similar to the Firinga type. In the process, care and precaution have been taken to ensure that sufficient land is still available for green space and other leisure activities. In addition, adequate space is available on most of the housing estates for the purpose of putting up green space and for leisure activities.

329 additional housing units are thus being constructed on the 23 identified housing estates. This is in line with the measure announced in the budget speech 2014, where it was mentioned that housing units will be constructed on existing NHDC estates.

The details on the extent of land available for green space and/or leisure facilities and the number of housing units being constructed on each of the 23 housing estates are being placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -
APPOINTMENT**

(No. IB/46) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the Executive Director of the Tertiary Education Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain –

- (a) from the Commission, information as to -
- (i) his terms and conditions of appointment, including the salary, allowances and other benefits drawn;
 - (ii) his experience in quality assurance and regulatory framework, and
 - (iii) the total cost incurred in connection with the appointment exercise therefor, including the fees paid to the members of the selection panel, indicating the experience of these members in the field of research, academia and quality assurance and
- (b) information as to if a disciplinary committee has been set up by the Delhi University, in India, against the latter.

(Withdrawn)

STANLEY & ROSE HILL – WATER SUPPLY

(No. IB/49) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to water supply in the region of Trèfles, Camp Le Vieux, Plaisance, Roches Brunes and the National Housing Development Company Housing Estates, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority and the National Housing Development Company, information as to –

- (a) when the old water pipes will be replaced and
- (b) if the Authority is contemplating having a bypass to serve the NHDC Housing Estate of Camp Le Vieux, in Rose Hill.

Reply: I am informed that water is supplied to the region of Trèfles, Camp Le Vieux, Plaisance, Roches Brunes and the National Housing Development Company housing estates from Stanley reservoir.

Under the ongoing Plaines Wilhems Sewerage project, some 25km of old pipeline have been/are being replaced in that region. Moreover, an additional volume of about 2,000 m³/day from Palma borehole will supplement Stanley reservoir as from November 2014. Accordingly, it is expected that the hours of supply in the regions of Stanley, Plaisance, St Anne, Camp Le Vieux, Roches Brunes, Nouvelle Ville and adjoining areas will improve once this project is completed.

Following representations received regarding irregular water supply to the NHDC complex, the CWA is constructing a dedicated pipeline to directly feed the complex from Stanley reservoir. The works, which started on 05 July 2014 for a duration of one month, comprise the laying of some 2.1 km of pipeline. This project will bring a general improvement in water supply to the NHDC complex. Once the work is completed, there will be no need for CWA to have recourse to daily valve operation at Corner Madras and Ratsitane and this will also improve water supply in the region. However, it should be emphasized that for a sustained improvement in the water supply to the residents of NHDC Complex, it is imperative that the storage tanks, pumps, internal water reticulation within the NHDC buildings at Camp Le Vieux be rehabilitated and properly maintained by the syndic.

COMPREHENSIVE CHILDREN'S BILL - INTRODUCTION

(No. IB/51) 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 proposed introduction of a Comprehensive Children's Bill, she will state where matters stand.

Reply: I would like to invite the hon. Member to refer to my reply to PQ B/74.

The Children's Bill is currently being processed at the level of the Attorney General's Office.

ASSISES DE LA FAMILLE

(No. IB/52) 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 *Assises de la Famille*, she will state where matters stand as to the submission of a report in relation thereto.

Reply:As announced in the Budget Speech 2014, my Ministry organised *Les Assises de la Famille* from 28 to 30 April 2014.

A first draft of the Report of *Les Assises de la Famille* was submitted by the Consultants on 20 May 2014.

The draft Report has been examined by my Ministry and views and comments thereon have been forwarded to the Consultants, for subsequent submission of an updated report.

TOURISM AUTHORITY - RESTAURANTS - CEASED OPERATION

(No. IB/53) Mr A. Gungah (First Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the restaurants, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, information as to the number thereof having ceased operation, since January 2012 to date, indicating in each case the reasons therefor.

Reply: I am informed by the Tourism Authority that since January 2012 to date, 17 restaurants have ceased operation. I am tabling the list.

I am further informed that 260 new licences for the operation of restaurant have been issued during that same period.

BAGATELLE DAM - DESIGN MODIFICATION

(No. IB/54) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Bagatelle Dam, he will state -

- (a) the additional cost incurred following the modification of the design thereof, indicating the estimated percentage increase thereof, and
- (b) if an Environment Impact Assessment Licence was required therefor.

Reply: The contract for the construction works was awarded to M/s China International Water and Electric Corporation, CWE, in June 2011 for the sum of Rs3,332 m. including 2.5% discount, 10% contingencies and 15% VAT. Mobilisation started in July 2011 and the actual construction works on 01 December 2011. The project was initially expected to be completed by December 2014.

However, due to poor foundation conditions identified by the then Consultant during the construction of the dam, two major design changes were brought to the initial design of Bagatelle dam namely -

- “Ogee” spillway replaced by a ‘Morning Glory’ type, and
- Grouting works for dam foundation treatment to be replaced by a concrete Cut-Off-Wall.

These two major changes led to a change in the scope of works and partial suspension of some works with major financial implications.

On the “*principe de precaution*” so as not to compromise on the safety aspect, the grouting works have been replaced by a cut-off-wall as a continuous underground physical barrier to safeguard the safety and integrity of the dam especially given its location.

The replacement of grouting works by a cut-off-wall of an average depth of 30 metres and 80 centimetres thick along the entire foundation of dam of 2460 metre long has led to an increase in the contract price by around Rs 1.7 billion (excluding VAT). This complex work, to be carried out by a specialised sub-contractor, Bauer, from Germany, has been awarded as a variation to the main contract. The cost for the “morning glory” spillway is almost offset by that of the ‘Ogee’ type spillway.

There are other increases in cost due to escalation, variation orders and increase in quantities (excluding claims from the Contractor) which is estimated to be around 15% to the contract price.

With these changes the project is now estimated at around Rs 4.9 billion, excluding VAT and contractual claims.

The Bagatelle dam project has been considered as an “*Exempt undertaking*” as per Section 28 of the EPA (2002). Following this process and a public consultation exercise, the EIA Licence was issued on 07 September 2010 and subsequently amended on 30 October 2011 to include the quarry operations with a number of conditions.

The conditions of the EIA Licence have been implemented and are being monitored by the Consultant through regular Environmental Monitoring Plans, (EMP’s), submitted by the

Contractor. Further EMP's will also include the implementation of the measures related to the safeguard of the environment as a result of the cut-off wall works.

COROMANDEL - MORCELLEMENT HERMITAGE - LANDSLIDE & SOIL EROSION

(No. IA/5) **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 landslide and soil erosion problems at Morcellement Hermitage, in Coromandel, he will state the urgent actions his Ministry proposes to take in relation thereto, if any, to ensure the safety and security of the inhabitants thereat.

Reply (The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands): I am informed by the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill as follows -

- a case has been lodged at District Council since September 2012 against the owner of the properties whereat rockfall has occurred, for having illegally undertaken development (terracing) on the site without obtaining a Building and Land Use Permit;
- it has erected hoarding on the site in order to protect private properties from falling rocks and boulders as well as a trench to divert overflow of water;
- several road signs have been fixed to inform the neighbours and the public at large of the risk of falling rocks;
- it is working in close collaboration with the Landslide Unit of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre on this issue, and
- the Police Department has conducted a simulation exercise on site recently.

I am further informed that the Council is facing a serious problem to have access to the private lands with consent of its owners to carry out tests/survey. The Legal Advisers of the Council and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre are looking into this issue.

BEAU BASSIN & PETITE RIVIÈRE - SILWF CENTRES - UPGRADING

(No. IA/6) **Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the Community and the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Centres, situated in Constituency

No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, she will state the actions taken by her Ministry in each case to upgrade the buildings and other infrastructure found within the premises thereof.

Reply (The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare): I am replying this question given that the Social Welfare Centres are under the responsibility of my Ministry while the Community Centres are under the responsibility of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund (SILWF).

There are two Social Welfare Centres and six Community Centres in Constituency No 20.

A copy of the actions taken in respect of upgrading buildings and/or other infrastructure found with the premises of each Centre is being laid in the Library.

TAMARIN - MARTELLO TOWER - REPAIRS

(No. IA/8) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the Martello Tower, in Tamarin, in Constituency No. 14, Savanne and Black River, he will state if he is aware that the roof thereof is leaking and, if so, indicate if remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

Reply: There is, in fact, a leakage problem through the roof of the Martello Tower at La Preneuse. Martello Tower, which is a listed National Heritage building, houses a museum and is being managed by the National Heritage Fund (NHF).

The leakage problem was brought to the attention of an Architect, expert in the field of heritage from United Nations, who was in Mauritius in June 2014 in the context of a training programme on “Traditional Building Techniques and Craftsmanship” partly financed by the US Embassy.

The expert has proposed that the stones on the roof of the Tower have to be removed to detect the exact cause of the leakage problem and to verify the existing pipe from the roof to the basement from where normally the accumulated rain water on the roof travels to the basement.

The NHF is liaising with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, NDU, Land Transport and Shipping in this respect, and its Technical Committee will be meeting shortly to address this issue.

SOUILLAC - OLD FRENCH KITCHEN BUILDING

(No. IA/9) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the old French kitchen in Souillac, he will state if consideration will be given for the restoration thereof and, if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed that the Old French Kitchen building found in the compound of the new Souillac Hospital dates back to 1880's and it was used as the hospital kitchen. Whereas its interior is in a deplorable state, its architecture is still in good conditions.

I am further informed that the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has a project of constructing a parking space within its compound. However, the Old French Kitchen building will not be demolished.

The National Heritage Fund is proposing to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life on the renovation of the kitchen.