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REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER 2015

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 36 of 2015

Sitting of 23 October 2015

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis at 3.00 p.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. <u>Prime Minister's Office –</u>

The Annual Report and Accounts of the Lottery Committee for the year ended 31 December 2014.

B. <u>Ministry of Tourism and External Communications</u> –

The Annual Report 2014 of the Mauritius Ports Authority.

C. <u>Ministry of Arts and Culture</u> –

The Consolidated Annual Reports of the Mauritius Telegu Cultural Centre Trust for the financial years July 2009 – December 2013.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE – MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS – RECRUITMENT

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) *(by Private Notice)* asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the recent recruitment of 60 medical practitioners as Medical and Health Officers at the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and to the national stir caused by the exercise, he will –

(a) state if –

(i) his Office is in presence of complaints in relation thereto, and

(ii) consideration will be given for the recruitment exercise to be cancelled and for a fresh one to be carried out by the Public Service Commission, and

(b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the –

(i) Equal Opportunities Commission, information as to if it is in presence of complaints in relation thereto, and

(ii) Public Service Commission, information as to –

(A) if it is in presence of complaints in relation thereto, and

(B) the reasons why it had delegated its recruitment powers to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life for this exercise.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I have indeed received complaints addressed to me from candidates who have not been selected following the selection exercise in question.

I have also taken note of complaints which have been addressed to the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Independent Commission against Corruption and copied to the Prime Minister's Office.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life that as at August 2015, there were 119 permanent vacancies and 60 temporary vacancies for the post of Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers in that Ministry. Temporary vacancies arose as a result of doctors proceeding on leave without pay for further studies. The permanent vacancies were reported to the Public Service Commission on 05 March 2015. The vacancies were advertised by the Commission on 07 April 2015 with closing date 27 April 2015. I am informed that interviews will be conducted by the Public Service Commission during the period November 2015 to January 2016.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the recruitment of Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers on a month-to-month basis**,** the Public Service Commission has delegated its powers since October 1997 to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, under section 89(2) of the Constitution, and regulation 29 of the PSC Regulations, to employ Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers on a purely temporary and month-to-month basis so as to palliate shortages of staff in critical areas and pending recruitment exercises being completed by the PSC.

Several conditions are attached to such delegation of powers, namely that the employment is made against vacancies and that candidates should have the required qualifications as laid down in the Scheme of Service. They should also not have retired in the interest of the Public Service or on medical grounds.

I am informed that the interview exercise was carried out based on the conditions as set out by the PSC under delegated powers, which include the following –

(i) Medical practitioners may be employed only if vacancies exist in the grade of Medical and Health Officer/Senior Medical and Health Officer;

(ii) The candidates should possess the qualifications laid down in the approved Scheme of Service;

(iii) The employment is purely temporary, on a month-to-month basis, subject to termination at any time. Remuneration is at the initial salary of the post, and

(iv) Should vacancies be advertised, the doctors must apply if they wish to be considered for regular employment and will have to compete along with other applicants.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that there are precedents in that a first selection exercise was carried out as far back as 1998 under such delegation. Thereafter, several such selection exercises have been made as follows –

Year		Selected Candidates
2004	:	7
2005	:	63
2006	:	30
2007	:	133
2008	:	12
2009	:	173
2010	:	84
2011	:	69

With regard to the present selection exercise, the post of Medical and Health Officers/Senior Medical and Health Officers on a month-to-month basis was advertised on 24 June 2015 and closing date was 08 July 2015. 445 applications were received. Interviews

were carried out at the level of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life under delegated powers from 11 to 21 August 2015.

Sixty candidates were offered employment as Medical and Health Officer/Senior Medical and Health Officer on a month-to-month basis. They assumed duty on Monday 12 October 2015.

Madam Speaker, the House will agree that in any selection exercise, it is difficult to satisfy all candidates, the more so when there is a large number of eligible candidates.

I also wish to inform the House that it has become a common practice for the PSC to delegate its powers for speedy filling of vacancies across the public service under specified conditions.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b) (i), I am informed by the Equal Opportunities Commission that three complaints were received thereat last week. These complaints have already been registered on the database of the Commission as per its complaints handling system and will be considered at the level of the Commission as from next week.

Madam Speaker, regarding part (b) (ii) of the question, I wish to highlight that the Public Service Commission is a Constitutional body established under section 88 of the Constitution with the power to appoint persons to hold or act in offices in the public service. The exercise of the powers of the PSC cannot be called into question by any Minister and I cannot exercise any control regarding appointment exercises carried out by the Public Service Commission.

Regarding part (b) (ii) (A) of the question, I do not propose to reply to any further question in relation to the operation of the Public Service Commission save for the factual matters raised in this question.

Madam Speaker, I am therefore informing the House that the Public Service Commission has not received any complaint in relation to the recruitment exercise.

Regarding part (b) (ii) (B), the Public Service Commission has delegated its powers, as it is empowered to do so, under section 89(2) of the Constitution. I cannot seek to question the Public Service Commission regarding the reasons for which it decided to delegate its powers.

Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, health services are very critical and it is imperative that we have the adequate manpower at different levels to provide medical services round the clock.

Moreover, as the Public Service Commission is currently looking into the matter, it would not be appropriate for me to substitute myself for the Commission.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he is fully aware that, on the basis of information widely available these days, it is widely felt that meritocracy has not prevailed in that exercise and that there has been *ingérence politique* throughout?

The Prime Minister: Well, I am not aware of this thing, whether it is a fact as rumours go round, but we know people are never satisfied even when the Commission does its work. So, we expect people to grumble - those who are not recruited.

Mr Bérenger: The PSC has delegated its powers in that case as in others. Can I know from the Prime Minister, being given this hue and cry that has arisen, whether he has tried to find out - the Board that has exercised those delegated powers - what criteria have been used? Because it is clear that it is neither experience nor qualification that has prevailed. Just to take one example, half of those recruited have been registered with the Medical Council over the past year whereas a lot of others had years and years of work experience and have not been recruited. So, can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he has tried to find out what criteria have been used by the Board that has exercised those delegated powers of the PSC?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have been told that the same criteria which would have been used by the PSC have been used.

Mr Bérenger: Has the Rt. hon. Prime Minister tried to find out whether the Board that had exercised those delegated powers was constituted as it should have with top officers from the Ministry concerned and not much more junior officers, as I am given to understand took place in that case?

The Prime Minister: The panel consisted of the –

Chairperson	Dr. Mrs M. B. M. Timol, Director, Health Services who was acting as Director-General, Health Services from 03 August to 28 August 2015

Member	Mr S. K. Sobee, Assistant Permanent Secretary, who was acting as Deputy Permanent Secretary from 19 June to 23 August 2015
Member	Mr Z. Bhugelloo, Manager Human Resources

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister if he has taken the trouble to check whether this composition is in order? I am given to understand that in the past it was the most senior officer of the Ministry that chaired with other Medical Officers, whereas in this case it is not a top Senior Medical Officer and two civil servants. Has he tried to find out whether this is normal?

The Prime Minister: Well, at first sight, when I look at the names, it seems they are qualified people capable of doing the job for which they were assigned.

Mr Bérenger: I asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister the reasons why the powers were delegated and he told me that this is a current practice going back a long time. In this particular case, it has been widely reported in the Press - I would wish to clear the point - that supposedly the PSC delegated its powers because there is a case before the Supreme Court. Another Medical Officer in the former recruitment exercise has challenged in Court and, therefore, because of that, the PSC has delegated its powers. Is that a fact?

The Prime Minister: Well, I don't know whether it is a fact. But I cannot see why, because there is a case in Court, the PSC is paralysed and cannot keep on proceeding with its duties. I don't see why it should be like that!

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Joomaye!

Dr. Joomaye: Can I know from the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether, among the candidates whose services have not been retained, there were some who had postgraduate degrees, that is, they were already qualified specialists and they were applying for the post of Medical Health Officer?

The Prime Minister: I do not know; I cannot answer this question.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the Prime Minister whether he has been made aware and whether he could enquire as well if whether interviews were carried out in a rush manner – in a *cuit vider* manner, as we say - even at night, calling candidates to come at the last minute, and that caused a lot of frustration and even doubts in the mind of the public?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of this and I have not inquired into it.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware if this panel which carried out the interview took into consideration any reserved list that had been prepared by the PSC following interview exercise for recruitment of doctors in the past?

The Prime Minister: I cannot answer this; I do not know.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since the hon. Prime Minister is now aware - after having a first sight, now that he has a second sight - that there is a lot of people who were on a waiting list prepared by the PSC and those people have not been taken into account for the recruitment exercise, now that he is aware that people have made complaints at the Equal Opportunities Commission, now that he is aware that the Board that was set up is not in the normal process as far as the composition is concerned…

(Interruptions)

… now that he is aware that there are clearly some *zones d'ombre* - serious - following certain Press reports of this morning, does he not consider that it would be in the interest of justice that he puts a halt to this whole exercise of recruitment and that there is an enquiry that is carried out in order to render justice to all those people who have been waiting for years as opposed to people who for a few months only have come in, in the interest of justice now that he is aware?

The Prime Minister: The PSC is continuing with its exercise of recruitment.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Not from a sitting position, please! Allow the hon. Prime Minister to reply then the hon. Member will have time to ask questions!

The Prime Minister: Well, if these people are qualified, they are on a waiting list, I am sure they will get their chance to be recruited by the PSC!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: Madam Speaker, some time back the hon. Prime Minister, in this very House, said that he had no objection that the list of these new recruits as public officers should be published officially by the PSC or by the Ministry concerned. Does the hon. Prime

Minister have any objection that, in this case also, the names of those who have been recruited be published officially?

The Prime Minister: Well, insofar as I am concerned personally, I have no objection that once people who are selected will be recruited that the names will be made public. What is wrong with it?

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jhugroo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether the same exercise had been carried out in the past years and this year it had been chaired by someone very professional, Dr. Mrs Timol, who is a consultant, I think, in Psychiatry and also has the same exercise not been carried out in 2012, 2013 and 2014?

The Prime Minister: Well, I have already answered this in my answer. For years, this has been going on and it has become a practice for PSC to delegate its powers and make such appointment, of course, on a temporary basis.

Mr Bérenger: I have just heard the Rt. hon. Prime Minister say - and it is a good thing - that he has no objection as far as he is concerned - and he is the Prime Minister, we are all aware - for the complete list of those 60 who have been recruited to be made public. I am sure he doesn't have any objection for the date on which they were registered with the Medical Council to be also attached to that piece of information.

The Prime Minister: Well, as far as I am concerned, I have no objection that the names be published because all the names are already well known in the public. It was published, I hear, in the papers.

Mr Bérenger: My last question. As you are aware, I asked whether consideration will be given for the recruitment exercise to be cancelled and for a fresh one to be carried out by the Public Service Commission. It is the prerogative of the Prime Minister to cancel that exercise and have a fresh exercise? Is he prepared to exercise his prerogative in that case?

The Prime Minister: I do not see any need to do that.

MOTIONS

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(3.25 p.m.)

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE LIVE BROADCASTING OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE - REPORT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name and which reads as follows -

> "*This Assembly resolves that the Report of the Select Committee on the Live Broadcasting of the Proceedings of the House and Matters Ancillary Thereto which was laid on the Table of the National Assembly on Tuesday 29 September 2015 be approved.*"

Madam Speaker, it is with a deep sense of pride and satisfaction that I rise today to move this historic Motion in this august Assembly. Madam Speaker, the presentation of this Motion today is the next logical step in our attempt to bring Parliament nearer to the people and broaden our democratic space. We have, after all, made a pledge to the nation to strengthen and modernise our parliamentary democracy.

This Motion, Madam Speaker, marks the final and decisive step in the fulfilment of our pledge to open up Parliament to the public and give them free and full access to the debates and other activities in Parliament which affect their lives.

As you are all aware, the relationship between Parliament and the people is an issue of growing importance everywhere, and it is now generally agreed that there is only one way forward for democracies: and that is to work for greater openness and transparency.

In fact, many modern democracies have already introduced live telecast of Parliamentary proceedings. It is a matter of regret that in a society as lively and politically literate as Mauritius, we are lagging behind in this respect.

And the reason is that the former Government never showed any genuine desire to pursue the project in spite of the fact that there was a general consensus in favour of live broadcasting. The matter was periodically raised in this House by way of Parliamentary Questions, but each time it was met by empty promises, with the result that the project never materialised.

Madam Speaker, the House will recall that, on 28 April 2015, I presented the Motion for the appointment of a Select Committee of the Assembly to consider the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House and matters ancillary thereto and make such recommendations as it deems fit.

The Motion was approved and the Select Committee was subsequently constituted on 05 May 2015.

The Committee held its first meeting on 07 May 2015 and hon. Nandcoomar Bodha was elected as Chairperson. The Committee has completed its assignment and submitted its Report on Tuesday 29 September 2015. I understand that a copy of the Report has already been provided to each and every hon. Member.

I would like to exPress my gratitude and thankfulness to the Chairperson and Members of the Select Committee for the excellent piece of work and the celerity and diligence with which the Committee has discharged its mandate.

The House may recall that while presenting the Motion in April last for the setting up of the Select Committee, I highlighted the fact that the introduction of live broadcasting raises certain important questions and issues. Those same issues and concerns have already been underlined by some hon. Members who intervened during the debate.

I am glad to note that the Select Committee has examined all those issues and apprehensions in the light of the experiences in live broadcasting in foreign legislatures, including the United Kingdom, India, Canada, Trinidad & Tobago, New Zealand, Portugal and the European Parliament, amongst others. The Select Committee also exchanged views with stakeholders and sought expert advice before framing its recommendations.

After carefully assessing the pros and cons of live broadcasting, the Committee has concluded that the advantages thereof far outweigh its disadvantages and recommended that the National Assembly should proceed to introduce live broadcasting of its proceedings. Moreover, the Committee has proposed a model that suits the local context.

Madam Speaker, I would like to briefly mention the following salient features of the Report of the Select Committee -

(i) <u>Responsibility for Broadcast, Production and Editing</u>

The Select Committee has recommended that the Mauritius National Assembly should itself be entrusted with the responsibility for ensuring that the proceedings of the

House is captured and distributed live through proper implemented platforms and, eventually, to archive same for later use. The Committee accordingly recommends the setting up of an in-house Production Unit, fully controlled and staffed by the legislature, in order to take ownership of the feeds that are produced and for the copyright thereof to be fully vested therein. Moreover, no editing should take place. However, the coverage should strictly adhere to the Rules of Coverage to be prescribed by the Standing Broadcasting Committee.

(ii) Regulatory, Procedural and Legal Aspects

The Select Committee has recommended that in case an hon. Member or any other person feels aggrieved by anything said or done in the course of the proceedings of the House which is broadcast, the hon. Member or person ought to be given the right to make an application for redress or right of reply, as the case may be, in a manner as may be prescribed within the least delay and which would be placed on the parliamentary record.

The broadcasting agencies should be required to report the rebuttal if they have reported the incident. Sanctions should be imposed for not abiding by the Guidelines for Use of Signal, as prescribed, which may include, amongst others, cancellation of license to broadcast. Moreover, an amendment should be brought to section 24 of the Information, Communication and Technologies Act to provide for the Mauritius National Assembly to be exempted from the requirement to be issued with a licence to be able to broadcast or streamline the proceedings of the House.

The Third main feature of the Report is: Rules of Coverage and Guidelines for use of signals.

In order to uphold the dignity of Parliament as a working body and, at the same time, ensure a full, fair, balanced and accurate account of the proceedings of the House, the Select Committee has elaborated the Rules of Coverage containing specific guidelines for picture direction, treatment of disorder, privilege and right of reply and sanctions for breach of the rules.

The Committee has also proposed draft guidelines indicating the circumstances in which extracts from the signals may or may not be used.

I now come to the Fourth point which is: Monitoring

Madam Speaker, the Report has recommended that Standing Order 69 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly be amended to provide for the setting up of a

Sessional Select Committee, to be known as the "Broadcasting Committee", whose main function will be to -

(i) monitor the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House;

(ii) prescribe such additional rules and guidelines as may be necessary, and

(iii) look into all matters incidental thereto.

Furthermore, in most legislatures, breach of rules and conditions may be treated as contempt and this has been dealt with through the exercise of the Speaker's power to withdraw the privilege of being able to broadcast. The Select Committee is of the view that this may be included in the Standing Orders/National Assembly (Powers, Privileges and Immunities) Act as being a further example of contempt.

The Standing Broadcasting Committee will have the power to decide that the Production Unit will provide the signal to the public service broadcaster, that is, the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation and any other broadcaster, if any, and the private radios or any other television or radio, on such conditions as it may prescribe, on application.

Finally I come to the recommendations on the: Administrative and Technical Arrangements and Broadcasting of Signals

The Select Committee has also made appropriate recommendations in regard to the administrative and technical arrangements that will have to be made in terms of staff and equipment for the successful implementation of the project. In so far as broadcasting of the signals is concerned, the Committee is of the view that it would not be cost effective to have a dedicated Parliamentary Channel and has consequently recommended that a collaborative approach be engaged between Parliament and the MBC for a dedicated channel to be provided to the National Assembly on the days on which Parliament sits. A collaborative approach should also be engaged with the private radios for live broadcasting for such proceedings as Private Notice Questions, Prime Minister's Question Time, Parliamentary Questions and other major events. In order to bring Parliament nearer to the people, the Committee also recommends that all avenues of transmission of information be explored and used, including webcasting and podcasting of the images of parliamentary proceedings.

Madam Speaker, the framework for live broadcasting proposed by the Select Committee has not only been benchmarked against the best international practices, but it also takes into account our local context and realities. I would again like to thank and congratulate the Select Committee for the excellent job. I believe we can now proceed in the

direction indicated by the Committee. Of course, one can always raise other issues, but I think it is time to walk the talk. We cannot go on discussing endlessly.

We have to start somewhere. Any upcoming issues may be addressed as we go along.

Madam Speaker, Government has pledged to govern for the people, with the people and conduct business on the principles of discipline, transparency, accountability and exemplary governance.

This Motion today bears testimony to our deep respect for the rights of the citizens to watch Parliament in action, live and direct, and form their own opinion, without any media interference. And this will be yet another meaningful change that we have promised to the nation.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I commend the Motion to the House.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Mr Bérenger: Right at the outset, I would wish to congratulate the Select Committee that has produced this report and made those recommendations, starting with the Chairperson of the Select Committee and all the Members of the Select Committee who have done a marvellous job. So, congratulations. It is a fact that the report was unanimous. It is not often that we have *unanimité* either in Select Committees or here in the House. Therefore, I would wish to doubly congratulate the Select Committee. I wish also to place on record my appreciation of the fact that the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has lost no time in coming forward with a Motion, as it was apt to have this august Assembly adopt the report and get going with its implementation. Therefore I can exPress the hope - hopefully - that the implementation will go as fast as the bringing of the Motion for approval of the report. There is no reason to waste time, as the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has said. Let's get going, and then, whatever there is to be corrected, completed and to be amended will be done as we will go along. But I don't think there is a lot to be corrected, amended, and so on, because my third reason for satisfaction is that –

(i) the Select Committee has done a great job;

(ii) *unanimité,* and

(iii) a very complete report

Except on one point, on which I shall labour later on, that is, the setting up of the Sessional Broadcasting Select Committee. On that, we will have rather to complete the work that the Select Committee has started.

Having said that, I would wish to stop on what is said in the report and was picked up by the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, that is, at page 16, where the Select Committee recommends, I quote -

> "6.11.2. After extensive consideration, Your Committee is of the view that it would not be cost effective to have a dedicated parliamentary channel in view of the number of hours of parliamentary proceedings.
>
> 6.11.3. Accordingly, Your Committee recommends that a collaborative approach be engaged between Parliament and the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (…)."

Mauvais goût. I have a bad taste in my mouth, but a collaborative approach is recommended -

> "(…) between Parliament and the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation for a dedicated channel to be provided to the Mauritius National Assembly on the days Parliament sits."

Being given what the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation has become these days, worse than ever, I would wish that we could cut all links with the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation and get on with the work ourselves. But all things considered, I agree that it would not be cost effective, being given the number of hours that we work, even at Budget time. Therefore, I can go along with that recommendation, but I am not happy at all about having to try and work out a collaborative approach between Parliament and what the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation has become those days.

The big issue is the setting up of this key Select Committee of the National Assembly, the Broadcasting Committee, whose setting up is recommended at page 12, as the Rt. hon. Prime Minister quoted -

> "6.6.2. Your Committee therefore considered that, it is of paramount importance that Standing Order 69 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly (1995) be amended to provide for the setting up of a Sessional Select Committee to be known as the "Broadcasting Committee". (…) to monitor the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House, prescribe

> such rules and guidelines as may be necessary and to look into all matters incidental thereto (…)."

This Committee - it's clearly the case - is the key element for the success of what we are going to do, and on that score, let's say that the Select Committee - out of due respect for this House, because we will be amending the Standing Orders to provide for that - has not recommended the composition of that Sessional Select Committee called the "Broadcasting Committee" and, even more importantly, the Chairperson. Who is going to chair? To me, that is *la clé du success.* Who is going to chair and what is going to be the membership of that Broadcasting Committee? *C'est la clé du succès*.

I have discussed with people. We have some time, because we will have to amend the Standing Orders, we will have to go through the procedures; there will be a motion to amend the Standing Orders. So, we have some time, but I think it is good to get the debate going. I have done as much thinking as I could on that. I see five possibilities as far as the Chairperson is concerned. Five possibilities! We follow the example of the PAC, with somebody from the Opposition chairing. Okay, we are, for the time being, in the Opposition, but even that being the case, I am not *trop enthousiaste* that it should be like the Public Accounts Committee. I say it is a possibility; if it is proposed, we will go along, of course, but I am not really *enthousiaste*.

Second possibility, that thing that was proposed by the previous Government in the case of the Independent Commission against Corruption, where, as we know, there is a Parliamentary Committee. I don't go along with that, I must say. I am not happy at all that in that case - I quote from memory - the hon. Prime Minister appoints so many Members, the hon. Leader of the Opposition appoints so many Members, and they get rid of and replace as they choose. I am not happy with that solution either - nothing personal coming into consideration, of course - the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker. I don't think it would be good to burden the Speaker with that responsibility being given we have enough reasons for *polémique* apart from that one. Maybe, the Deputy Speaker! I am quite interested by the proposal that it be the Deputy Speaker. Then, there is a fifth - I can't see any other -, that the Chairperson would be appointed by the hon. Prime Minister after consultation - real consultation; of course, we all agree that consultation is consultation - with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Maybe, finally, out of those five possibilities, I would go for the last one but, as I said, I am quite happy if it is proposed that it is the Deputy Speaker who chairs the Broadcasting Committee. I don't think we will have a quarrel on the membership, because

there are plenty of Select Committees, plenty of precedents. So, I don't think we will have a problem. We have a problem with the Chairperson of that key committee, the Broadcasting Committee. Once we sort that, I am sure we will agree easily on the composition of that committee.

Why I say that it is *la clé du succès,* because the idea is to monitor; things will go wrong, there will be members of the public that will complain about the way the live broadcasting takes place, and it must be like that. Not only Members of Parliament, but even people outside, people in the Press will come forward, will offer comments and this key committee, the Broadcasting Committee, will monitor and will propose changes, including to the Standing Orders if there is need to propose changes to the Standing Orders.

My fourth point would be - there is also the tricky issue, but I don't think it is a big issue - the recruitment of the Director/Manager, because even if we have to collaborate with this thing called MBC for practical purposes, financial reasons, we must be our bosses, it's Members of Parliament that must run this through the Broadcasting Committee. Therefore, we - I mean the House - will to recruit a Director/Manager, operators, and staff for a full-fledged - from the MBC - independent Production Unit. And, again, the question will arise: will be recruited by whom? I suppose it is automatic that it would be recruited by the Broadcasting Committee. I suppose, that key committee, the Broadcasting Committee, should be responsible for the recruitment of that Production Unit.

There has been issue taken outside that we are protecting ourselves because we are putting restrictions - that is at the back, at page 22 - in case of disorder, which, of course, rarely happens here. So, it has been recommended at the back, at the end of the report, what should take place. It is not restrictive; we don't want to frighten kids who happen to look at television at a given point in time, and it can be disorder from the public also; both from the public and hon. Members. But what I would wish the Press and everybody to keep in mind, we have to start somewhere, but if we are overprotective, if we act, I mean all, the House, if we overprotect ourselves in cases of disorders where certain restrictions have been proposed, of course, the Broadcasting Committee will monitor. And as I said, members of the public, members of the Press will say, "this is not fair". This is what has taken place. The Press is always present, so they will witness whatever disorder takes place. And if the live coverage does not do justice, without having all the juicy bits out in terms of vocabulary and otherwise, I am sure the public will protest, the Press will protest. The Broadcasting Committee will

monitor, and if there is need to restrict the restrictions or to amend the restrictions, I am sure that we will all do it.

I will conclude by saying that I find it very sad. I find it very, very sad that the MBC has become what it has become on the eve, now that we are taking a historical step to have live broadcasting. I find that very, very sad, because history will record that there has never been so much awful manipulation of what takes place here.

(Interruptions)

It is awful. I don't know how many of you take the trouble to look. It is absolutely awful, shameful.

(Interruptions)

And I find it very sad…

(Interruptions)

I find it very sad that the MBC and those responsible for the MBC allowed the MBC *de tomber si bas* at a point in time when we are taking a historical step to have genuine live broadcasting come into operation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

(3.55 p.m.)

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs A. Perraud): Madam Speaker, I feel very honoured to stand in this House today to add my voice to a historic moment. Today, we are making history, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all hon. Members of this august Assembly.

First of all, allow me to congratulate my colleague, the hon. Minister Nandcoomar Bodha, Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, for the remarkable way he chaired the Select Committee. I would also wish to congratulate the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who, almost one year after the landslide victory of *'Alliance Lepep'*, is once again making history by presenting the Motion to adopt the report of the Select Committee.

Madam Speaker, providence has it that, despite my young and burgeoning career as a Member of the National Assembly, I was destined to be part of the Select Committee that

would work on an issue that would make history; broaden and enlarge our democratic landscape. I thank the House for the trust placed in me.

The broadcasting of the proceedings of Parliament has been the subject of intense debate around the world, and our country is no exception to it. If we go back memory lane, we can find that, as far back as 1926, the British Broadcasting Corporation asked for permission to broadcast Winston Churchill's Budget Speech in the House of Commons. In the recent past, the House of Commons debated the subject repeatedly and extensively in the 1960s and 1970s. Opinions were divided and, at a division of votes in the House of Commons on 24 November 1966 regarding a closed-circuit experiment in sound and vision, the Motion was defeated by 131 votes to 130. A vote on the same subject in 1975 had a similar outcome with 275 votes to 263. It was only on 21 November 1989 that they started the first television broadcast from the House of Commons. In Mauritius, likewise the debate has gathered momentum and is a live issue for many years now. Each time the MBC, which is the public service broadcaster, is criticised for alleged partiality, the issue of live coverage of parliamentary proceedings comes back like an incoming tide.

Madam Speaker, despite all the reticence that may characterise the live broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings, we must all admit that the world has undergone and will continue to undergo major changes. The explosion of the Internet, its accessibility and the level of IT penetration has made information available at the click of a button. With this backdrop and notwithstanding the fact that parliamentary proceedings are preserved in the Hansard, related in the Press and other platforms, partially broadcast either on television or through the radio, there is need for this august Assembly and its Members to realise that we need to embrace the pace of change. We must join the League of Nations that have crossed the Rubicon and allowed cameras inside the walls of the National Assemblies; to mention a few, UK, Canada, India. If we want to be recognised as a truly modern and democratic society, it is our duty to use every means available to open up our National Assembly to the public. There is only one way we can use to go about this, and that is to work for greater openness and transparency.

The basic idea of a live coverage of the parliamentary proceedings is to give the public free and full access to debates and other activities in Parliament. In working towards this, we show that we respect the citizens' right to see for themselves what is going on inside Parliament. However, we must be ready to accept that this will not necessarily lead to a better understanding of or greater public interest in politics. Confidence in politicians is not built solely on the debates in the National Assembly. It depends first and foremost on the

commitment of the individual parliamentarian. Live broadcasting will nevertheless certainly enable more people to watch and listen, allowing them to form their own opinions without media interference.

In this context, this is an advantage. There will be no criticism of alleged partiality, no allegation of misreporting and similar issues. Hon. Members' performance will be assessed by a wider audience. Ministers' mastery of their files and portfolios will be broadcast live and a public performance appraisal will take place. This being the case, I sincerely believe it will contribute significantly to lift and raise the level of debates and interventions.

Madame la présidente, la diffusion des travaux parlementaires à la télévision apportera une meilleure compréhension de ce qui se passe au sein de l'hémicycle. La vie de tous les citoyens est régie par rapport aux lois et décisions prises par le gouvernement. Les plus petites décisions au plus importantes passent par le parlement et sont votées par les élus. La diffusion des travaux parlementaires va créer un lien direct entre les citoyens et leurs élus. Si aujourd'hui les travaux parlementaires sont suivis intégralement par une centaine de personnes, parlementaires, membres de la Presse, invités, membres du public et autres, avec la diffusion des travaux parlementaires à la télé, c'est 300,000 foyers, 300,000 familles qui auront accès aux travaux parlementaires. C'est ce qu'on appelle la démocratisation de l'information ; donner l'accès à la démocratie suprême à un très large public. Ceci forcera, motivera, on l'espère, le public à s'intéresser davantage aux travaux parlementaires. Nous souhaitons que le public puisse mieux comprendre les *Standing Orders*.

Madame la présidente, souvent, nos mendants, ne comprenant pas les procédures, les *Standing Orders*, critiquent les secrétaires parlementaires privés (PPS) et les ministres, parce qu'ils ne posent pas de questions au Parlement. Or, avec l'introduction de la diffusion des travaux parlementaires, nos mendants sauront et comprendront quel est le rôle de chacun au sein de l'hémicycle. Nous aurons un public averti. Les mendants pourront jauger la performance et la qualité de leurs représentants et porte-parole au sein de l'hémicycle.

Madame la présidente, de ce fait, les parlementaires seront obligés de respecter le décorum en tout temps, de se comporter avec respect, élégance et professionalisme, le professionalisme d'un parlementaire, maîtrise du dossier, connaissance et maîtrise du *Standing Orders* et l'art oratoire.

La diffusion des travaux parlementaires à la télé motivera les parlementaires à s'améliorer. Mais, Madame la présidente, il y a aussi le risque que certains parlementaires

fassent le show, d'exagérer dans leurs gestuelles et leurs discours dans le but d'attirer la caméra et d'attirer l'attention sur eux.

Madame la présidente, aujourd'hui est une date historique. Ce gouvernement marque l'histoire avec l'introduction de ce projet de loi de la diffusion des travaux parlementaires à la télé. Je pense que…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker : Hon. Shakeel Mohamed !

Mrs Perraud:…nous aurions pu rendre cette date doublement historique en introduisant la langue Créole au Parlement. Le gouvernement de l'Alliance Lepep, pour Lepep et avec Lepep, ferait honneur au peuple mauricien en permettant aux Mauriciens lambda de pouvoir suivre et comprendre les travaux parlementaires dans une langue qui leur est accessible.

Madame la présidente, comme je l'ai dit plus tôt au sein de cette Chambre, nous prenons des décisions importantes qui affectent la vie de tous les Mauriciens, et c'est normal que tous les Mauriciens puissent comprendre les décisions qui sont prises pour eux.

En attendant que le Créole fasse son entrée au Parlement dans l'avantage de Lepep, permettez-moi, encore une fois, de dire que la date d'aujourd'hui est à marquer d'une pierre blanche, car elle est historique et que les Mauriciens accueillent favorablement la diffusion des travaux parlementaires à la télé, et je réitère mes félicitations au comité.

Merci beaucoup pour votre attention.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(4.06 p.m.)

Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Madame la présidente, ce vendredi 23 octobre est un jour historique pour notre pays car nous franchissons une étape importante pour notre démocratie.

Je tiens à féliciter chaleureusement notre Premier ministre qui a, encore une fois, démontré qu'il est un homme de parole *and that he means business*.

Madam Speaker, we are embarking on the project of live coverage and broadcasting and we feel very proud and happy to be called to vote for this motion. Il n'aura fallu que cinq

mois au Premier ministre pour proposer la constitution d'un *Select Committee* à cet effect, et ensuite promptement soumettre le rapport dudit comité à cette auguste Assemblée.

Je tiens également à féliciter et rendre hommage au président du *Select Committee,* mon ami, l'honorable ministre Nandcoomar Bodha, ainsi qu'aux membres pour l'excellent travail abbatu en si peu de temps. Mes remerciements vont aussi à vous, Madame la présidente, et au *Clerk* et le personnel de l'Assemblée pour tous les conseils avisés et contribution à l'avancement de ce projet.

La présente motion, Madame la présidente, *is yet another milestone in the continuum of achievements of the actual Prime Minister, that is, the reinforcement of democracy in Mauritius, namely by reinstating by-elections, the compulsory holdings of general elections every five years*, l'autonomie de Rodrigues, l'élévation de Maurice au statut de république - *but not* pour la deuxième république, Madam la présidente - et finalement la libéralisation des ondes qui a permis la création de radios privées.

Today, Madam Speaker, we are once more writing history with a golden pen by the introduction of live coverage. Needless say that this would never be possible under the previous Government, because the former Prime Minister was never keen to make this happen! Do you know why, Madam Speaker? For the past two mandates that I have been in this House, I can say, as a witness, that the former Prime Minister was rarely present in this House, as compared to you, hon. Prime Minister, the Leader of the House.

(Interruptions)

Je pense qu'il avait d'autres priorités, comme vous le savez déjà avec la série de scandales.

Ayant franchi ce pas historique, nous devons maintenant réfléchir à la possibilité d'introduire - tout comme l'honorable Ministre Perraud - la langue Créole au Parlement, Madam la présidente. Cela se fait couramment dans plusieurs pays que les parlementaires s'expriment dans leur langue maternelle ou dans une langue commune, à l'instar de l'Inde. Je fait un appel, donc, au Premier ministre de considérer l'opportunité de constituer un comité ministériel ou des parlementaires de haut niveau pour se pencher sur la question du Créole au Parlement. L'exemple est bel et bien présent aujourd'hui avec des radios privées, où les internautes sont à l'aise pour s'exprimer en Créole.

La retransmission des débats parlementaires en direct sera une occasion pour les mandants de chaque circonscription de constater la performance de leurs élus au Parlement. *People like seeing their MPs intervening on their problems, be it local or international ones.*

Dans le passé, les Mauriciens n'avaient pas les moyens d'avoir accès aux délibérations des travaux parlementaires car seulement une partie des travaux était rapportée dans la Presse écrite et parlée.

Madam Speaker, the world today is a global village. With the globalisation of the world, Mauritius cannot lag behind. This motion will make our country take a bold step forward and allow our democracy to become more modern and more transparent.

Last but not least, Madam Speaker, I firmly believe that live broadcasting of the sittings of the National Assembly will act simultaneously as a tool of democracy by bringing elected Members to the home of each and every one of their electors and also act as a deterrent to the regrettable incidents that we have witnessed recently, *avec pour toile de fond l'insatisfaction déclarée de certains de mes honorables collègues quant à la qualité des reportages de la MBC.* We expect the MBC to use this opportunity *pour remet zot mem lor rail* because, on our part, *Madame la présidente, ce gouvernement tiendra toutes les promesses faites durant la dernière campagne électorale par l'Alliance Lepep.*

With this assurance, Madame Speaker, I thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister Gayan!

(4.13 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr A. Gayan): Madam Speaker, today really marks a significant milestone in the life of this august Assembly, and this milestone would not have been possible without the unshakeable commitment of the hon. Prime Minister in consolidating the democratic system of our country.

We are here debating this report of the Select Committee. The report deals with the live broadcasting of proceedings of this House. This House, Madam Speaker, is the mightiest symbol of democracy. The authority of this august Assembly is derived from the Constitution, which is the supreme law of our land. In fact, section 1 of the Constitution provides that Mauritius shall be a sovereign and democratic State. Section 45 of the Constitution confers upon this National Assembly the power to make laws for the peace, order and good governance of Mauritius. This National Assembly also has its Standing Orders which are borrowed from the pure traditions of Westminster, the mother of parliaments.

By debating the report of the Select Committee on the live broadcasting of Parliament proceedings, we are, in fact, putting additional flesh on the democratic state which our country takes pride in being. We are leapfrogging into a qualitative improvement of democracy and, as the Rt. hon. Prime Minister said, we are in the same league as the United Kingdom, Australia, France and India. This reform is long overdue and it is our responsibility as the first Members to benefit from live coverage, once this Select Committee is approved, to set the stage for those who will be sitting in the House in future.

What we do today, Madam Speaker, will impact on what happens tomorrow. This is why we must live up to the expectations of the electorate and show to the people that we are being faithful to our mandate and that we are going to leave this country in a far better state than the state in which we took it over last year. This consolidation of democracy is a far cry from what had been intended for the country by those today who are sitting in Opposition.

But, before I proceed, Madam Speaker, I must congratulate my good friend, hon. Minister Bodha, who chaired the work of the Select Committee. He steered the process in such a way that a consensus was reached very fast, and the broad principle which the Select Committee adopted was to cover the business of the House with an aim to make parliamentary debate more accessible to the public and to improve public understanding of this parliamentary process. I was proud to be a member of that Select Committee and together with all the members of the Select Committee, from both sides of the House, we were prepared to look at it dispassionately, objectively, and to do something worthwhile for the country.

Your Select Committee, Madam Speaker, proceeded on a work that had already been done by a previous Select Committee which, by a happy coincidence, was also chaired by hon. Minister Bodha. In fact, in the country at large and in this House, there has always been a very keen interest in uninterrupted live broadcasting of its proceedings. I believe that it is right that we implement the principle that the people have an interest in what their representatives are doing in Parliament. This goes a long way towards consolidating the principle of democratic Government.

The Select Committee was preoccupied with the absolute necessity of preserving the dignity of the House, and all measures have been taken to ensure that any live broadcasting will not hinder the normal workings of the House. The fact of bringing the work of Parliament in the living room of our citizens bridges the chasm between Parliament and the

people. Already - and we heard a lot about what the hon. Leader of the Opposition says of the MBC - the MBC covers the proceedings of the House, but they are not live, and whatever qualms the hon. Leader of the Opposition may have on the MBC, the live coverage will be able to deal with that aspect of his qualms. We have invited the MBC exceptionally in the House to cover special events, but once this report is adopted and once it is implemented, we will all be under the glare of TV coverage. The MBC will simply provide a medium for coverage.

The Rt. hon. Prime Minister spoke about the advantages of live broadcasting. But while we are convinced that live broadcasting will be beneficial, we must also ensure that the House does not become too conservative and too formalistic. The presence of the camera will certainly get Members to conduct themselves in a parliamentary way, hopefully, but there is also the risk that Members will want to be on their best behaviour during the proceedings. This is fine, because this House is not a place of entertainment. This is the forum where serious decisions are taken in the interest of the country, and we must make sure that the cut and thrust of parliamentary life does not suffer as a result of the presence of cameras in the House. We must have that lively exchange between the Government and the Opposition. This is what makes Parliament what Parliament is.

But I must also say that when we are looking at the live coverage of parliamentary proceedings, we must ensure that the coverage does not get into political satire or ridicule. That is, the dignity of the House and the dignity of the Members also have to be preserved when proceedings are covered by live coverage. The coverage of our proceedings must give a fair, balanced and accurate account and should be free from any subjective commentary. This is so because the dignity of the House has to be preserved at all times.

There are, of course, disadvantages, as has been mentioned by previous orators. We can always play to the camera, play to the gallery, and we can divert on the issues that are being debated. We will certainly score political points. But, maybe, scoring political points with live coverage may not be a good idea at all because this may not go down well with the electorate, and the people are very smart. The people will recognise that conduct which is unbecoming of hon. Members will damage the aura and the dignity of the House.

I am sure also that the quality of the debates with live coverage will improve. We will be assessed, whether we like it or not, on what we say and how we say, whatever it is that we

say. We must, and I say it in all humility, get used to making our interventions to the point and relevant to the matters under discussion.

As we embark on this reform, Madam Speaker, we must be conscious of the need to sustain public interest in our proceedings. We assume that there will be public interest, but we have a duty to sustain that public interest throughout the proceedings. As reasonable people, we can always disagree, we can agree to disagree, but we do not need to be disagreeable.

As part of the report of this Select Committee, we have the parts that go towards the implementation of the live coverage. There will be a Broadcasting Committee that will be looking at the mechanics and operations of the system of live broadcasting. This Broadcasting Committee will be under the control of the House. Of course, there will be certain matters that will have to be looked into. The details of what, in fact, will be done by the Broadcasting Committee are given at page 20 of the report of the Select Committee. But what is also important, Madam Speaker, with live coverage, is that there can be some *dérapages.*

So, it is important that shots which are likely to embarrass unsuspecting Members should not be broadcast. For example, Members yawning or dozing unless they happen to be within the frame behind or beside the Member who has the floor, how disorderly scenes will be treated has also been addressed in the report of the Select Committee and when there is any disorder in the House, the shots will be on you, Madam Speaker. But I hope that we do not reach the stage like in the Lok Sabha where whenever there is disorder in the House, all those who are creating the disorder move to where the Speaker is sitting. The same should happen in cases of unparliamentary behaviour. An unparliamentary behaviour, Madam Speaker, is intended to signify any conduct which amounts to challenging the authority of the Speaker or acting in defiance of the rulings of the Chairperson. I am sure that we would be careful in not defying the authority of the Chairperson because the Chairperson represents the symbol of authority in this House.

There is another point I would like to raise. It is with regard to persons who can be aggrieved by whatever is said or done in Parliament. In fact, this matter was discussed at length in the Select Committee and we had a very serious look at it because I think it is important that whoever feels aggrieved by what a Member says in the House must have a redress, and that redress has to be effective. The redress that will have to be available to any

person who is aggrieved must be within a very slight delay. We must make sure that we do not adopt the practice of the written media. For example, we can have in the written media an article on the front page that is damaging and offensive. You send a right of reply, *a mise au point.* That *mise au point* will never be in the same spot where the damaging article appeared originally. It gets lost in the middle of the pages in an inconspicuous corner. I think this is not how we, as a House, must treat any person who is vilified or who is offended by whatever takes place in the House. Fairness is what matters.

It is also important that we bear in mind that if there is a cause for grievance and if a remedy is available, and if the broadcasting agency does not provide the remedy, then there must be sanctions. And the sanctions will have to be decided by the Broadcasting Committee or by the House, but there must be sanctions. Because the effectiveness of the remedy and the compliance with the rules will depend on how everybody plays the game. We are embarking on a new venture. It is going to be something new for us, for the public, for the written media, for everybody, and it is very important that we try, as far as possible, to strike the right balance between fairness and accuracy. I am sure that from the list of orators I have seen on this issue, there will be other things that will be said in the course of the debates on the report of the Select Committee. But I do not want to see a situation in the House where there will be no drama. There has to be some drama in the House because Parliament without drama is not good. There has to be…

(Interruptions)

There has to be some theatre. I can count on hon. Bhagwan to provide the drama at all times.

(Interruptions)

But I think it is good that we have a vibrant democracy, and with live coverage we will be able to have this particular vibrancy in our democracy. The live coverage will help in getting people to understand what happens in the House, and I am sure it is going to be something great for the country. As I said at the beginning of my intervention, this is a significant milestone, and I am sure that we are on the right path.

I thank you for your attention, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour.

At 4.29 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.05 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus.

Mrs R. Jadoo-Jaunbocus (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it is indeed a privilege to add my voice to all those who have spoken before me on this really historical event that is going to happen today. This Government, as rightly said by our Rt. hon. Prime Minister last Tuesday, in response to PNQ on electoral reform, is the voice that echoes throughout; this is our responsibility and we assume it fully.

Indeed, *l'Alliance Lepep*, Madam Speaker, *a mis la barrière très haut, et nous assumons*. Even though it was thought that we are going to put back down on this issue and keep the Select Committee Report on Live Broadcasting of the Proceedings of the House and ancillary matters thereto on the back burner, we have indeed just proved that this is not the case; quite the contrary. What we are about to do, Madam Speaker, is momentous. We are about to open a window onto this House not only for the whole of Mauritius to see, but also for the whole world to behold. The behaviour and countenance of our parliamentarians will be yet another way in which the outside world will assess Mauritius nationally and internationally.

We are now being given a tool through live broadcasting on the TV, on the net, and it is a tool that we must know how to use. We must be able to use it well and not to abuse it. By abusing, I am sure everybody will recall the incident that happened in this very House, where matters which were broadcasted utterly shocked and shook the whole of Mauritius and indeed, through this incident, I have to pay tribute, Madam Speaker, to the calm and stoic manner in which you had dealt with that incident. This is why I stress that we are being given a tool that we must be able to use and not abuse.

I must commend the Chairperson, hon. Nandcoomar Bodha, for chairing this Committee and, of course, all its Members, and no doubt the background, the experience and the wisdom of the Chair has led to a wide range of consensus to reach that report; a very thorough and analytical approach in the report. There is indeed, Madam Speaker, a felt need to create a direct link between citizens and the media and to narrow the gap between the people and their elected representatives in Parliament. The basic idea of parliamentary broadcasting is that the public will be given full and free access to the debate and other activities in Parliament, so that they feel part of it. The people have a right to be informed and

they must be kept informed, and Parliament must be able to reach out to them. The question is: how willing are we to do this without interference?

Let us look at the issue of democracy. In any democracy, public institutions must be transparent and accountable to the people; two characteristics that public broadcast of parliamentary proceedings can help foster with. There is the need to give greater visibility to parliamentarians in a manner which is unbiased, unaltered, unedited, and not a manner which is seeking to influence the mind, in any way, of the viewers, and especially influencing it to the tune of the broadcaster.

When we look at the report and particularly at recommendation 6.6.4, it is clear why the Committee has made such a recommendation, that is, signals of the proceedings may be transmitted to private radios and other public broadcasters upon application.

I commend the Committee for that because this is very important. This, in fact, makes balance within the complex relation between media public broadcasters and the Parliament. Media outlets are independent institutions that are used to exercising editorial control over the contents of their broadcasts, whereas, us, parliamentarians, we have a legitimate interest in allowing broadcasters to inform the public about our work and a need that has to be respected.

The backdrop to all this and the culmination of all that we are about to do are debates, in that we, parliamentarians, will now have to adapt ourselves to this new era of our history. Today, we mark history, but, tomorrow, if we do not abide by the rules and standards set by ourselves, as has been said by the other speaker so gracefully before me, we are going to be the sad victims of our own decision, because we can either be the villains or the heroes of this playing field. For us parliamentarians, if we want to be the heroes in this broadcast, we have to adopt a countenance, a manner and a behaviour *digne des* parliamentarians.

Parliamentary broadcasting is our destiny, but we have to be mindful of standards that we set. Every little gesture, every little word, be it parliamentary or unparliamentary will be the gage by which our performance will be judged by our electors. I do hope and urge that we maintain our standard. Tomorrow, we will be seen by the world at large. We might even be subject matter of law students or other students of universities where they will come and see us, scrutinise us, assess our behaviour, and we have to tread very carefully and aspire to an affinity never seen before. The issue of what is ‘parliamentary’ and what is ‘unparliamentary’ has become very much the flavour of parliamentary matters lately. So, I have to address my

mind to this, Madam Speaker. The question that often arises is what words, what behaviour, what aspects of event in Parliament are deemed “unparliamentary”, and we must always remember it is the Speaker of the House, the Leader of the House, who will determine what is “unparliamentary”. The Standing Order is very clear.

Now, when we look at the draft rules of coverage of proceedings of the House, which are found at section 3 sub section 2, dealing with the issue of ‘Treatment of Disorder’ within the Parliament, it prescribes that in cases of unparliamentary behaviour, the Director or Manager should normally focus on the occupant of the Chair, and it goes on. What I already foresee - and with much humility I suggest it - is that we might have a slight issue. Before a motion comes as to whether the Speaker of the House determines that this particular behaviour or this particular gesture is unparliamentary with live broadcasting, the broadcaster will have to determine whether to focus the camera on the Speaker or on the person who is actually addressing at that time and behaving in what a few minutes later will be determined, will be ruled to be unparliamentary. Afterwards, the Speaker will rule. What happens is, at the end of the day, the broadcaster will, in a way, usurp the role of the Speaker, in a manner of speaking, of course, by deciding where to put the camera. So, what I humbly suggest – it might be taken or might not be taken into consideration - is that we have a few minutes gap; we have a few minutes delay as we have with live broadcast, as has been imposed by the IBA on radios, so that by the time that this is fed through live we will already have determined through the Speaker of the House what behaviour is or is not unparliamentary. Then, the broadcaster will have clear directions through the ruling where to focus his camera. In that way the broadcaster will comply with section 3 sub section 2 of the recommendation and not fall foul of it.

On the issue of broadcasting of signals, we have to acknowledge that the Committee has reached to what we call a *juste prix*. As conceded by the Leader of the Opposition and as set out in the report indeed, to have a dedicated parliamentary channel as our Parliament sits on certain days will not be cost effective. Therefore, to have such a channel provided by way of a collaborative approach between Parliament and the MBC and for providing us, the Mauritius National Assembly, with a dedicated channel on these days that Parliament sits does strike the right chord.

However, we must pause here to reassure the existing media outlets which are growing. We do want to foster these media outlets, and these dedicated parliamentary channels should not be perceived as a threat to them. That is, the MBC is not going to

completely - and I am sure this will reassure the hon. Leader of the Opposition - usurp the role that media outlets and the media in general has.

In fact, similar views were debated upon and reached in October 2006 at the Geneva Conference on Broadcasting of Parliamentary Business through dedicated TV Channels and Public Broadcasting Systems, as this was organised jointly by the IPU, the ASGP and the EBU.

That is why the collaborative approach I see is extended and at section 6.11.5 the committee has recommended for engagement with private radios and live broadcasts for such proceedings as the PNQ, the Prime Minister's Question Time, the PQs addressed to other Ministers, other than the hon. Prime Minister and other major events.

Of course, as I had said earlier, this has to be done with special authorisation, but what I urge humbly is -

(i) that we ensure whenever such broadcasts are made they cover the whole of the events, that is we do not pick and choose as we do have the highlight of the day, the football highlights. We only see the footballers scoring the goals and we do not see the prelude to it. What I mean is that when such broadcasts are being made, they should be made in the entirety, that is, the questions, the answers, the counter questions, the supplementary questions and all the replies, and not just pick and choose certain highlights so that this will portray the parliamentarian either in a positive or a negative way and the very evil that the parliamentary channel is aimed at counteracting. The whole world has to see the full picture.

(ii) I know hon. Mrs Perraud and hon. Gayan have talked about the possibility of Creole language. That is another debate in itself. But what I would humbly ask this House to address its mind to is to define parameters for live and direct translation of debates because it is often the case that radios always have been broadcasting extracts and now, if we are going to enable them to broadcast big chunks, we have to ensure that when there are editorial comments and when there are translations, especially in Creole, as would often be, simultaneous translation, that we set the parameters and clear guidelines how we do that.

We must determine that, first of all, we will allow translation or not in Creole. And if we are, how it is done, in what manner it is done, so that a particular

meaning is not ascribed and exactly what is being said is done, that is, a faithful translation. And we must be able to set parameters and framework to control that. I use the word “control” in a positive manner, Madam Speaker.

One more aspect: Mauritius, Madam Speaker, is a diverse and multicultural society and has so strived and has been able to maintain that stability and our well-balanced strata. Despite attempts by certain, I will say *pouvoirs occultes* to destabilise this harmony, we have so far maintained it. The incident of late has been an example of it. We are about to take a major leap forward and, whilst doing so, we must ensure even more safeguards.

Here, Madam Speaker, I make a very humble - as a junior Member of this House - appeal as to whether it won’t be wise for us to provide for - as the Criminal Procedure Act provides - certain in-camera sessions where certain very sensitive issues relating to national security or sensitive matters dealing with minors or even other matters dealing with national or social harmony. There are provisions for the Courts sometimes to deal not in public but in-camera, and maybe we can take a leaf and certainly we may consider having such in-camera sittings. Of course, if we even consider that, it will have to be very extreme circumstances and it will be applied only after consensus is reached amongst parliamentarians and, of course, it will be after a motion has come and has been debated and scrutinised by this House.

Today or in the days to come, Madam Speaker, we will be opening the doors of Parliament to TV and to the web. For us, in Mauritius, it is a huge step, a quantum leap forward, and it is one of the promises set out in our political manifesto of *l’Alliance Lepep*. Under the leadership of our Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, we are now moving a step forward in our democracy to join countries such as India, UK, Canada, and many other African countries.

Through the net, the web, our Parliament would be heard and will be seen by the whole world. We, therefore, need to keep the international standard. Once this process has started, we will have to continuously adapt and improve - adapt to a fast changing technology and a fast moving media. So as not to lag behind, we must be able to continuously share our experience with and take from the experience of other Parliaments that have this aspect, that is, live broadcasting to the media. For instance, we should foster exchanges with other existing parliamentary channels and we must be able to encourage the participation in multinational seminars where experiences are exchanged with other Parliaments. We must also be able maybe to see whether we can develop a website function that would allow

Parliaments to interchange and compare their respective broadcasting rules, because at the end of the day it is those broadcasting rules and the Broadcasting Committee that would be the ones that will be the watchdog, if we say, of this Parliament and that will guard this Parliament from the whole world.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Boygah!

(5.20 p.m.)

Mrs D. Boygah (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): Madam Speaker, this House is called upon, on this historic day, to adopt after debate, a motion of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, to henceforth allow the live broadcasting, throughout the Republic of Mauritius, of our parliamentary proceedings. This is indeed a huge step in the consolidation of democracy in our country, Madam Speaker. All credit goes to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, a living legend, a man of honour, courage and wisdom, to whom this population will eternally be indebted to.

Many, Madam Speaker, not so long back, lamented that our country is sliding towards dictatorship. Lately - unfortunately, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not here…

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Boygah, please come straight to the Report.

Mrs Boygah: Lately, the hon. Leader of the Opposition even went further to accuse this Government of having recourse to a *complot* to supPress the voice of the skeletal Opposition. The Opposition parties in and outside, Madam Speaker, this House are thereby proved completely out of tune, wrong all the way. Henceforth, the population will judge them live and direct.

Madam Speaker, I would like to put on record my appreciation for the excellent job accomplished by the Select Committee under the chairmanship of hon. Nandcoomar Bodha. His report has been unanimously acclaimed. This is not an easy feat. In the past, such committees have witnessed the Opposition leaving the committee halfway or even, at times, refusing bluntly to participate at the eleventh hour. Congratulations to you, dear colleague!

Madame la présidente, en ce jour solennel, je m'étais promis de ne pas faire des remarques embarrassantes à l'encontre de l'opposition, mais en tant que femme, je ne peux passer sous silence le comportement indigne du Leader *de l'opposition à votre égard.*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Boygah, I am sorry, we are discussing the report of the Select Committee, please, come to the point.

Mrs Boygah: Do you know why I am saying this, Madam Speaker? It is because when all these works of broadcasting live and direct will be directed to the entire population, all these should be eliminated.

Madam Speaker, there are some apprehensions regarding the telecast though. How about the immunity that characterises our parliamentary actions and speeches within the House, now that these will be telecast beyond Parliament? The hon. Members should be free to speak within the existing parameters. Madam Speaker is the sole *garde-fou* of any '*dérapage*'. This immunity should be preserved, at all cost. The question is: how to conciliate this immunity with the provisions of law regarding defamation?

In my opinion, Madam Speaker, the recourse to initials, as it is now the practice, will be proved insufficient. Hopefully, a *juste milieu* will be found, but, in all cases, the freedom of speech in this House should not be restricted or tampered on.

Members have a tendency to speak in a sitting position, Madam Speaker. Should such statements made in a sitting position also be broadcast? The Broadcasting Committee is called upon to address such issues.

This Committee will, I am made to understand, include hon. Members of both sides of the House. Hopefully, the team chosen to conduct this broadcast will comprise of a bunch of professionals in their respective fields. We must end up with the manipulation of images we have witnessed during the last nine years of Labour, Madam Speaker.

Swear words, foul language are been uttered by accomplished hon. Members of this House. These will reach an audience comprising of children and women among others. Hopefully, hon. Members of this august Assembly will henceforth mind their language. As far as I am concerned, I will personally stand as a shield against all those misbehaving towards women, Madam Speaker.

All said, Madam Speaker, this Motion is a landmark in our history. It is, in fact, a major achievement of this Government. This is yet another promise fulfilled. *Parole donnée, parole sacrée!* This is Sir Anerood Jugnauth's Government, *Madame la president;* it cannot be otherwise! Through the forthcoming telecast of parliamentary sessions, Mauritius will make a major leap forward in terms of democracy.

Madam Speaker, I am sure that many women will shake off their timidity and apprehension and will join politics with the upcoming telecast. This exposure of Parliament will, undoubtedly, revive their interest because politics in itself is noble; it handles a unique opportunity to men and women alike to serve our Motherland. I thereby make a strong appeal to the folk women to follow the debates in Parliament, to take inspiration from the great leaders like Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and the way a lady like Madam Speaker is conducting this Assembly should, indeed, be a source of inspiration to all women. What to say about hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun, who holds the future of our children, via a much awaited education reform, in her hands. Hopefully, with the live telecast, more women will come up in the open and participate actively in helping to shape the future of Mauritius by joining politics. This Government has a very profound respect for women, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this telecast will be a golden opportunity for the constituents to judge the performance of their elected representatives. The population will thus be in a better position to make their choice for the next elections. Public will also come to know how Parliament operates. Many out there will now be in a position to measure the load of work we put in as Members of Parliament.

Politics in Mauritius is unique, Madam Speaker. We have to conciliate our time between fulfilling our duties towards Parliament and our demanding electorate. Expectations are high, but we will live up to the challenge, Madam Speaker. Mauritius is firmly embarked in realising the much-awaited second *miracle économique*. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth and the hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo, have called upon the whole population to help to the shaping of tomorrow's Mauritius. The telecast will hopefully inspire positively towards a nation *prise de conscience* and to have a more active participation of the citizens and stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, recent political gathering organised by the Opposition parties have not drawn many people.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Boygah, you can't talk generally about politics. I have told you that we are discussing the report of the Select Committee. So, your intervention should be confined to the context of the report.

Mrs Boygah: It is, Madam Speaker. I hope that this telecast will not be misused to make '*politicaillerie'*, that is, *une politique basse et mesquine,* as they will now have access to the whole nation live and direct. The temptation will be great but, hopefully, they will

refrain from taking undue advantage of this public exposure. I appeal to hon. Members of this august Assembly to make good use of this opportunity. *Rien n'empêchera le TGV de 'l'Alliance Lepep', sous la conduite de Sir Anerood Jugnauth de nous mener vers l'Eldorado promis,* Madam Speaker.

May God continue to shower its blessings on our beloved Motherland!

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(5.30 p.m.)

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity of listening to quite a few interventions in this august Assembly over the years on this particular issue of broadcast of parliamentary proceedings. I recall, at one point in time, many years back now - for some it will be only recently, but I considered it to be many, many years back, in 2009; hon. Bodha would still remember that - there was a Motion that was put on the Order Paper of this august Assembly, if I am not mistaken, on 21 November 2009, and that Motion was in the name of the then Prime Minister, precisely to create and to set up the Select Committee in order to come up with proper directives and guidelines as to how to televise, to broadcast by various means, the proceedings here, in this Parliament.

I also recall many questions that occurred here, in this Assembly, put by various hon. Members. I remember hon. Bhagwan many a time came up with questions to try to push the former Prime Minister into agreeing to set up this committee. I remember questions also on the part of the MSM, be it in substantive or subsidiary questions. I remember that myself, as backbencher, had come up with many questions, asking that we indeed go ahead for public broadcast.

So, to try to rub off what happened in the past and try to say that history with regard to parliamentary broadcasting started only in 2015 would be totally incorrect, because this is basically the imPression I have ever since I have been listening to everyone: ...

(Interruptions)

…that, as far as Parliamentary broadcast is concerned, it only started in 2015! And if we are to say that, Madam Speaker, we are saying that hon. Bodha who chaired the first Select Committee on parliamentary proceedings to be broadcasted, that they never existed. Of course, we all do remember the excellent work of hon. Bodha, as he was then Minister; and

not only Minister, let me point that out. Even when he was no longer Minister, he was chosen to continue chairing that Select Committee. Let me put it clearly on record today that he did it in a marvellous manner, and I would like to congratulate him on that.

(Interruptions)

I was but a little Member there, following his chairmanship, and I must say that he directed proceedings in a marvellous way, in a masterfully way.

We were helped in this first Select Committee. As I say again, that did not start in 2015. We were helped by the Members of the National Assembly, the staff, the Clerk, the Office of the Clerk. They were all there to help, because they had done a lot of reading, a lot of work had gone into preparing the ground work, into preparing what exactly would that report be about. Not only is this, in 2015, the first time that there has been consensus from all Members of Parliament, all political parties concerned, that we should, indeed, have public broadcast for our work.

We should invite, in other words, members of the public into this august Assembly for them to look into this House and see what exactly we are up to or what are we not up to. There was also a consensus in the first Select Committee and even in that report that was written because, indeed, there was a report that was written, there was consensus there as well. That report, together with this report, allows me to say that: why has today's report gone faster? Because the Chairman of that Committee has experience in the matter. Not only does he have experience in the field of *l'audiovisuel;* we all know his career! Not only has he had a first bite at the cherry when he was chairing the first Select Committee, but he has had a second bite at the cherry by chairing the second Select Committee. So, yes, true, there is consensus! But where I hesitate, Madam Speaker - and allow me to say, yes, I agree that we should go forward and yes, it is always the words of those that could have no explanation to certain interrogations. They come up and say, 'we have to start somewhere'. I tend to agree, we have to start somewhere. The only thing is that I had expected us to start better, differently. And one of the reasons why we should have parliamentary proceedings televised, broadcasted, is precisely because we are all subject - when I say all of us, I also mean the Chair, I also mean the Speaker - to a filtration process.

Whatever happens here, - forget about Hansard - whatever is reported about the workings in Parliament, we go through an appreciation process or filtration process. Call it as you may! Sometimes you have members of the Press who would write what they believe to

be important. They would write what they believe to be newsworthy and they would write about it. Sometimes you have members of the Press who believe that something is not newsworthy and would not write about it. Sometimes you have the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that believes that - at the time when we had the former Government - everything that the Opposition said is not important. That was true! What is funny about this whole thing, I have the advantage, I have not been in this august Assembly for many years as others, but, at least, for the few years that I have been here, it has given me the opportunity, Madam Speaker, to see that whenever you have one party in power, the Opposition always complains about the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation and then whenever you have another party who is in the Opposition, they complain about it, they say: "when we come to power, we will ensure it does not happen." But what happens is exactly the same!

(Interruptions)

Now, I am not laying the blame at any party's feet. I am saying that every single political party that has been in power, every single one of us, at each and every time in history, we have had to face serious demons and those demons – I am not talking about the demons in the Ministry of Arts and Culture. I will leave them to him; his demons, let him deal with them! I know you have read something more interesting…

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please refrain from making comments on your colleagues. Please!

Mr Mohamed: But that was done in a very friendly way, Madam Speaker, I can assure you, and we feel sorry for him. But what I am saying here is, we have all had to face our demons with regard to broadcasting and the ability or lack of ability of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation in doing what is a fair job. We all had to face it.

True it is now that this hot potato is in the hands of the Government of the day. How do they deal with it? In my humble view, Madam Speaker, the very fact of coming up with this Motion is also confirmation and admission on the part of the Government of the day that the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation *est un échec lamentable*. That is the fact!

I am happy to say that, because I am comforted in the words of the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Collendavelloo, who, during a Press conference, had the guts to say clearly: "Yes, at the MBC, things are not going right." And he had the courage to admit it, that even when, today, the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation is here in this august Assembly, trying, supposedly, to be fair in their coverage, hon. Collendavelloo clearly stated he believes that

they are not doing a good job. Will what we are doing today sort out matters? Will this report of the Select Committee really sort out matters if we approve it? Will what has been provided for by the Members of that Committee, in any way, if implemented, will that sort it out? I am afraid that I have no confidence whatsoever in the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation. I never did; before 2015 also. In fact, I never did.

So, I remember that myself, as former Minister of Labour, I decided to ask my Permanent Secretary in those days to report a matter against the MBC, Dan Callikhan precisely. And I am happy to see that the new Minister of Labour is following, which is good. And I am happy we are on the same page. The thing is, not only are we on the same page, we read the same books, we are both lawyers and we both happen to be Ministers. So, the good part is that I do not change my tune because I happen to be on the other side of the House. I am constant. I have always stated that the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation is not fair in its coverage and it is time that things do change. But I do not believe that simply because we are doing something historical and, nowadays, it seems as though there are lots of historical things happening. Each and every time I hear a Press conference, this is a historical day, a historical move! Very good! Let's talk about history. History has shown us that when we come up with good intentions, very often they end up being simply intentions. They have to be transcribed into actual acts. What do we do about it? If we are to say that the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation is going to be *l'organisme* that will take the signal, the feed and broadcast it out there, even if we are to say that there is going to be a committee in charge of the rules of coverage, even if we are going to have a Director that is going to be recruited, and for that matter if we are to believe that he is going to be someone who is going to be fair and *impartial*, I still have a problem because I do not believe that it is in the near future that we will find that in the DNA of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, that they will be able to be fair! It is impossible for them to understand the concept of fairness. What do we need, therefore, to ensure that they understand the concept?

We need a purge; a purge in the mechanisms of appointment of people. We need a purge in the people who are there; we need a purge in the manner that people relate to Government. It is impossible, therefore, that if they are to be chosen as the ones to be in charge of the broadcasting, they would be the one showing it. I would not be surprised, Madam Speaker, that they would have the introduction of that programme with Press cuttings that would suit the Government of the day. I would not be surprised that they would have, as an introduction, beautiful pictures lambasting the Opposition that was once upon of a time

the Government of yesterday, simply because it is in their DNA to please the Government of the day, because they cannot operate otherwise than to be subservient to the Government of the day. They have done it in the past, they are doing it today, they will do it tomorrow! They are experienced and excellent at it! True! So, what do we do?

(Interruptions)

What do we do about it? And here, let me give you an example. Just now, I listened to hon. Minister Gayan with a lot of interest. I listened to him, and one of the things that he said, Madam Speaker, struck me. It struck me and it almost woke me up. He said, and I quote –

> "We can agree to disagree. We can agree to disagree between Government and Opposition, but that does not mean that we need to be disagreeable with one another."

What he means by that is *qu'on doit être désagréable*! And I remember for that matter - and here what would the rules of coverage say? - it was mentioned in this report of the Select Committee how *désagreable* hon. Gayan was on 01 April 2015! We are talking about the rules of coverage…

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please sit down. You are talking about the rules of coverage, but please don't make comments on your colleagues!

Mr Mohamed: Madam, I am not making comments, I am here referring to Hansard! Not comments! I am referring to 01 April 2015, when hon. Minister Gayan says "*qu'on ne doit pas être désagréable"*, here, from a standing position, speaking - thank God, in Hansard. How would the rules of coverage deal with an hon. Minister standing in this House, saying that he is shocked that someone who is a non-Hindu at the helm of the Labour Party in Parliament!

How does the rule of coverage deal with that particular instance? Here, what is said in the draft, as far as the rules of coverage go, do not mention it! They do not cover that eventuality, that you could have hon. Members of Parliament standing up and making rash, dangerous comments of a nature that would shock the majority of a country, of a nature that would shake the very basis of unity and national unity of this country, that would shock the youth of today and the leaders of tomorrow!

In other countries you have had people who have been removed from office or they have refused to even *leur donner l'investiture;* Nadine Morano *recemment sur un programme télévisé en France*, where Nicolas Sarkozy, the former President of the Republic of France,

decided that he could not tolerate such comments from Nadine Morano that are of a lesser nature in gravity than the comments of hon. Gayan! So, how do we deal with such a comment on the part of a hon. Member? How do we deal with it? That's the question! I am of the view that, yes, any hon. Member who makes such a comment should live or die by his comments. And that is what brings me to the fact that I am sure, even though it was a comment made on 01 April 2015, it was not a *boutade* made on April Fools' Day. Let us, maybe, say - that would be his justification - it was *le 1er avril 2015* and it was a *boutade* on 01 April, on April Fools' Day!

(Interruptions)

Perhaps! But then again, maybe he has chosen the wrong part, maybe he should be a stand-up comedian! Because for more than once he is making so many *boutades* that maybe, he would be excellent on the coverage that will be provided as from next year!

Now, to get to something more serious, I am sure the hon. Prime Minister himself believes that if you have been funny once, you start being funny twice, it is no longer a coincidence. You have a serious problem, Sir! And, maybe, the hon. Prime Minister will try to – I tried to remind him of certain facts and if he wants justification to take action that he should, I am trying to remind him…

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, come back to the rules of coverage! You are talking about rules of coverage, please don't open the debate! Come back to your rules of coverage!

Mr Mohamed: Obviously, I have to close the chapter on this sad day, which is 01 April. Not every day is April Fools' Day! Let us be serious! What do the rules of coverage say? The rules of coverage say that we have to be very careful with regard to the way the camera is going to take the take of the Member - it shall not show the whole close up. It shall not show someone who is yawning. It shall not show someone who is provoking. It shall not show someone who sleeps. It shall not show someone who is startled when he wakes up. It shall not show all of that. But then again, in this august Assembly, we have members of the Press. I would like to place on record that the members of the Press have been doing *un travail formidable* for many years without TV being here. At least, they have been the vehicle to communicate to the people outside what exactly are we doing in this august Assembly. They have been helping us. They are the ones who can see exactly who provokes. They are the ones who see who are the ones who believe in April Fools' Day. They are the ones…

(Interruptions)

They are the ones who see and listen to who is the one who insults. They are the ones who know exactly what was said.

A lot of things may be said from sitting positions that are not noted in Hansard, but the archives of a newspaper have exactly what is said from sitting positions and by whom. They very often would go to their columns, their papers, black on white, they would write what is going on in the august Assembly. Now, if they, Madam Speaker, can tell the public out there who has been nasty, who has been unparliamentary, who has used insulting words, why is it, therefore, if there is no filtration process, there is a live and direct communication from them to see what is going on, do we have to be so restrictive as far as the rules of coverage go when it comes to *l'audiovisuel*? Why?

They can see and they can communicate what they have seen, but we should, therefore, be shy when it comes to people seeing what we do and what we don't do and what we overdo! Why? Why are we so afraid to let the people of this country see exactly what happens? Why are we so afraid or shy to be more diplomatic, to let the people of the country know those are the provocative words that are spoken here, those are the Members of Parliament who do not put questions but give information? Why do we not let them know exactly what is happening?

(Interruptions)

I do not understand the shyness! Maybe later on you would say, well, in other democracies, in England, France, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and India, this is what is going on. But, allow me - I have read a report, Madam Speaker…

(Interruptions)

No, actually!

(Interruptions)

No! Those are words of people who don't understand what exactly I am referring to. But here, I am referring to a document that has been published by the IPU. Every Member who has been in committees and going to the IPU in Geneva, *à la Maison des Parlements* would understand the importance of *les ouvrages* of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In that report, it talks about precisely a conference that took place in 2006 on the need to broadcast and how to help the European Broadcasting Commission, how parliaments in Europe could

help parliaments in Africa. I have come across a very important chapter in that report that talks about control or no control and the role of the camera.

> "This is a major issue. Westminster operates under very tight rules of control over what the cameras show and the core feed provided to all broadcasters. The camera may only film the person speaking or cut away to the reaction of somebody named by that speaker; wide shots are allowed for editing purposes. We recently tried - he says - a much looser arrangement in the House of Lords, allowing the director to use a normal range of shots. We tried to get away from what I thought of as being a photo booth style of coverage, where you see a face in a box. There were no problems, and the same, more relaxed rules have now been tried out in the House of Commons. This raises some very interesting issues about protests and bad behaviour. My view on this is quite conservative. The new rules of coverage do not allow the cameras to show protests in the public galleries, in the belief that were they allowed to do this, there would be no end of protests."

So, in other words, it shows that even in the United Kingdom, the House of Commons, the House of Lords, things are evolving by the British Broadcasting Corporation. The way that they are showing the coverage, the camera shots, the takes, they are changing. And we are doing it in 2015. I do not believe that we should be shy. Yes, if we say that we are going to bring members of the public into this House for the simple reason - and there is consensus on that - that they should know what is going on here, what exactly is our job, how many laws are voted. What exactly is the importance of laws? What do those laws mean? How does it interact with their daily life? How could they write to the Members of Parliament of their constituency and tell them to intervene on such issues of importance to their lives? This would create a symbiosis between members of the public, the electorate and us, Members of Parliament. But if we are shy in our approach, we will not succeed! If we are shy in our approach, *on va museler la démocratie*. If we are shy in our approach, then we will be really changing the rules of the game because already members of the Press can hear and can report, and not only can hear, they see what we do, as I have explained.

Now, it takes me to one issue also which was not covered by the Select Committee report. In France, for instance, we have programmes - not only live coverage, because here we are limiting ourselves to that aspect - on parliamentary channel, where we have people who are called as experts to listen to excerpts of what is pronounced, what is said, what is explained in debates, and we have people who come and analyse and comment as political

gurus. We have Members of Parliament who are interviewed – because this is what we have to end up with; we must have a channel that belongs to Parliament, to this National Assembly - they go down to the street, meet the people, the inhabitants of villages and towns and ask them exactly what they believe is going on, what they suggest should go on, what are the issues which should be asked, what are the questions that have never been answered, what are the questions that they have failed to understand, and what are the questions that should be put. So, those are issues that we should really move towards. And, yes, as we say, when we are not sure exactly and when we are shy, we always say, 'well, let us start somewhere.' How about I propose something else? Let us start where we can legitimately say we have the ability to start.

In my humble view, we are a democracy that is aged and mature enough for us to start further ahead. We are together: Opposition and Government. We form part of this mature democracy that entitles us to believe, and believe we must, that we can start further ahead because we have got that maturity. So, I hope that we can start the coverage and broadcast very soon. I hope that the cameras will not be shy and will not be limited by rules of coverage. I hope that the rules of coverage will not be *une atteinte à la démocratie* for the people out there to see what is going on because if we are going to limit the rules of coverage, we will be doing a great harm to our democracy.

I would like, *en passant,* to thank Members of this august Assembly, not during our session, but from the times of the 70s to the times when even the hon. Prime Minister, himself, was in the Opposition, to the 80s when he was Prime Minister, to the times of hon. Bhagwan, to the times of the Members of the MMM and the Labour Party, the MSM and the PMSD, who, each and every time, have always asked that we should have public coverage, public access to the works of this Parliament.

Now, we have all read from the same page; we are all on the same page. For once, it is quite a pleasurable moment that we do not have to fight one another on this particular issue and that we can look forward. Maybe, we can also proceed by avoiding making certain comments in order to score political points. I can only but say that, well, we are all politicians, forgive us, Madam Speaker, if we are going astray and if we, for once, take advantage of the doors that are opened by others, let us say that today was better than 01 April Fool's day.

Thank you very much.

(5.58 p.m.)

Mr S. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Madam Speaker, Mauritius by virtue of section 1 of the Constitution, is a Sovereign Democratic State, and I heard very intently what hon. S. Mohamed said all about democracy.

Today, we, this Government, this Prime Minister, *sous* his leadership - and I am proud to say this because he is my *colistier* - we are reinforcing all the principles of democracy, just like when he was Prime Minister earlier, in the year 2004, when he introduced live radio coverage and gave way for private radios to be set up in Mauritius. This is democracy. This is freedom of exPression in action and democracy in action.

My hon. friend Mohamed is right to say what he said earlier on, that intention should be transcribed into action. But, at the same time, it came from his own mouth that, in 2009, the former Prime Minister was the one who for the first time introduced to this House a Select Committee on Live Broadcasting. But then, what happened to that Select Committee? Even after what was done, how much hard work hon. Bodha made to that Select Committee, that intention was never transcribed into reality! Who transcribes it into reality today in Mauritius? This Prime Minister and this Government! We are the achievers; we are not only the dreamers. We are a Government of the people, for the people, by the people, and this is the Select Committee report that is going to bring democracy live in action in every household of this country.

Madam Speaker, there have been successive governments in this country that have used the MBC. I agree with my hon. friend Mohamed that successive governments have failed in their duty to bring back the olden glories of what the MBC was at the time when it was set up. But we should also go back to history - very recent history. What was going on in our country whenever the Opposition was trying to do something, whether in Parliament or outside Parliament? How coverage was being broadcasted on the national TV? There were and there have always been manipulation by the MBC. But what did we hear? This, I know, is not the forum to talk about MBC, but given the fact that my hon. friend Mohamed was given the latitude of talking about MBC, let me say this: that no one has seriously, other than what hon. Bhadain, who said the other day in this House that he is going to bring back into MBC some kind of reform that is going to reflect reality of what happens in day-to-day broadcasting business.

Madam Speaker, it is important to note today that this Government set up this milestone piece of Select Committee to bring, as I said earlier on, the Parliament to the people Mauritius on their screen. And what are they going to see? What are the people going to watch? Are they going to watch partisan politics or are they going to watch coverage which is going to be impartial? Here, I commend what is being said in the recommendation at page 13 of 36 of the report on Select Committee, it says –

> "Since your Committee is recommending the setting up of an in-house production unit (...)"

Not MBC Production Unit!

> "(...) Your Committee is further recommending that a director/manager of broadcast be recruited together with such member of operators and other staff as may be required for the effective and efficient ..."

The operative words are-

> "(....) the effective and efficient operation and management of the production unit".

Now, it is very important because this is something that is going to revamp and reinforce democracy in our country. It is my suggestion that whenever the Director, as set up here, would execute his duty, he should seek, in collaboration with the supervisor of the broadcasting unit, to give a balanced, fair and accurate account of proceeding with the aim of informing viewers about the work of the House. In carrying out this task, the Director should have regard to the dignity of the House and to its function as a working body rather than a place of entertainment.

Now I come to the comments made by hon. Mohamed about hon. Gayan earlier on. I am not going to do politics about it, but he was given the latitude of making remarks. Now, April Fools' Day has nothing to do with debates in this Assembly. Here, we debate very serious issues that concern the people of Mauritius, our nation, our people who live in towns, in villages, those who are poor, rich, poor and destitute, rich and very rich. That is the business that we do; very, very important decision-making process of the country and its future is carried out here. So, it would be wrong to say and to make remarks that are going to affect the very dignity and sanctity of this House, and doing so the sanctity and dignity of democracy will be put at stake. This should never be allowed again once live broadcasting will come into action as from early next year or mid-year, I anticipate. This entertainment business, this provocation business that goes on into the House should stop once for all. We

all hon. Members who sit in the House and we should act honourably so that the people of our country will see what we do in the House.

Madam Speaker, I also will speak a little bit on the privilege and the right of reply. This is again milestone and very important, vital aspect of strengthening democracy. We, sometimes, as Members of Parliament, under the cloak of privilege, we tend to say lots of things, make allegations, but the man who is outside of this Parliament roaming around the streets of Port Louis or Rivière du Rempart, where I come from, cannot say anything. He would even perhaps be victimised by the Press, a lot of things would be said about him, but he would have no right to reply; no one will hear him, but at least, now, when we will have live broadcasting, the man outside whose integrity has been attacked would have a right to reply, and this is again democracy in action. The right to reply, and Madam Speaker, you will be entrusted with the duty of ruling upon whether the reply of that man from outside carries any weight, so that that reply would find its place in Hansard and to put things right in perspective. However, Parliament, since its inception, has always been a place where freedom of expression is absolute and whatever reply would be given to the House by someone outside, I suggest that the Committee should consider very carefully that, that right, that privilege under which we work in Parliament, will not be infringed. That we should be given the latitude, we should be given the opportunity to come and express ourselves fearlessly and robustly here, like my friend hon. Bhagwan said earlier on, when there were comments made that *‘ mo pas pu vine faire gounga ici’*, and he is right.

Whenever we have a matter of public interest, whenever we have a matter of national interest, whenever we have a matter of interest of our people, we should be given the right without any condition to come and express ourselves here, debate the issues that need to be debated without any fear and prejudice and without any fear of any prosecution.

Madam Speaker, now I will move to what kind of coverage do we want. Do we really want the people outside to have a perception that we are going to control what is going to be broadcasted? Are we going to be called control freaks? We don’t want that. What we have to do is to look from outside our jurisdiction how the business of broadcasting is carried out.

For example, we are all used to the political democracy that exists in the United Kingdom, France, Australia and Canada. There are certain matters to preserve the dignity of the House that should never be broadcasted in public interest. For example, in England, in the House of Commons, David Blunkett who was the Home Secretary was being guided, because

of his blindness, with a dog all the time in the Assembly and it was the norm that his dog should never be filmed and broadcasted, and that with a sign of respect. In 1987, one Labour Member of Parliament in the House of Commons hurled papers at a Minister and then he held the Mace trying to throw it on the floor of the House of Commons. That kind of action and the kind of action that we see sometimes should not be broadcasted, simply because we have to set the example of respect in the House.

Madam Speaker, I am not going to be long - I have been told not to be long. Before I end, I wish to congratulate hon. Bodha and his entire team who have worked hard in order to produce this report today, over which we are debating, and I also congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for the initiatives that he took today to rewrite history not only insofar as democracy is concerned, but to set example in Africa.

On this note, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Sewocksingh!

(6.13 p.m.)

Mrs M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Madam Speaker, I feel privileged to address this august Assembly on a motion that has an objective. Indeed, we are living in a new era, the era of technology and communication and within a click you can reach the world nowadays.

Today, we are not only discussing about live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House, but we are talking about transparency, good governance, enhancement and consolidation of democracy, the very principles that this Government adheres to and for which the people of Mauritius, in their wisdom, voted for us. That's why we are here, Madam Speaker.

It is but legitimate, Madam Speaker, that the very same people who have put us here have the opportunity to see how we are faring in this august Assembly. They will have the possibility to assess by themselves the performance of the Members of the National Assembly of both sides of the House.

The people will witness live how matters are conducted here. We, parliamentarians, we are here to work for the welfare of the nation; we are here for important matters of the country and, as hon. Rutnah just said, we are not here for entertainment. People expect a lot from us. But, Madam Speaker, it is sad to note that some Members of Parliament resort to

languages and sometimes even actions that are offensive, abusive and disrespectful. I strongly hope that with this motion we shall no longer assist such things.

This is also a unique opportunity for our constituents and the public at large to see and know how their problems are being addressed in Parliament. As a result, the public will be more interested with parliamentary proceedings and will be more interested into politics.

Madam Speaker, many masks with fall, many myths will be debunked. In the past, many people boasted themselves as democrats, but no one dared to bring such a motion.

The motion we are debating today shows our commitment to the freedom of information. This very Government, under the able leadership of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, along with the Deputy Prime Minister, Xavier-Luc Duval, the Vice-Prime Minister, Ivan Collendavelloo, have proven once more their commitment towards the people of Mauritius.

A live broadcast, Madam Speaker, is a step towards what this Government intends to make of the *paysage audiovisuel de Maurice. Nous voulons et nous avons la volonté de faire de ce paysage un modèle pour la région. Ce gouvernement, Madame la présidente, a fait un pas qu'aucun autre n'a fait depuis l'existence même de la station de la télévision nationale.*

We do not just claim to be transparent, but our actions speak for themselves. We want the whole population to see, without hindrance, that we are working for them and for their benefit. Live broadcasting of the sittings will increase the accountability we have towards those who sent us here.

Whatever has happened has happened in the past, Madam Speaker, but as hon. Mohamed just mentioned, this report went on fast and it went on very fast and better. I also heard the hon. Member of Parliament, hon. Mohamed, complaining against the MBC. I hope that he still remembers that there were many complaints against the MBC when the Labour Party was governing the country. And this reminds me, Madam Speaker, how could the previous Government allow live broadcasts of the National Assembly when sittings were suspended for *'coze cozé'*. We cannot forget these moments; the *'coze cozé'* moments.

(Interruptions)

No, thank you. I don't want it.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Please!

Mrs Sewocksingh: I wish to take this opportunity, Madam Speaker, to congratulate all Members of this polished Select Committee under the chairmanship of the charismatic Minister, hon. Bodha, who has done an outstanding work. And on this note, Madam Speaker, I wish to make an appeal that our mother tongue, Creole, which is our pride, be widely spoken here, as our nation is very much keen to introduce this in this National Assembly.

Madam Speaker, as other democratic countries, let's make history too. It is time to move ahead and let's go live.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

(6.20 p.m.)

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to address this House on this important motion by the hon. Prime Minister on live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House. Allow me also to congratulate hon. Bodha and all the hon. Members of the Select Committee along with the Office of the Clerk and all her staff for the time and effort spared in ensuring that the report is before this House in the earliest possible delay.

Madam Speaker, today is indeed a historic moment for our country, certainly because of the decision of this Government to bring the proceedings of this House to the people, but also because of the unanimity on an issue that hon. Members on both sides of the House agree should be above party politics. This is an opportunity that I will not miss, Madam Speaker, to send a strong signal to every Member of this august Assembly that on matters of public interest and the interest of our nation, we are capable of relying on maturity instead of majority to move forward together.

Madam Speaker, before dwelling further on the contents of the motion in front of this House, allow me to say a few words on this yet another laudable initiative of our Rt. hon. Prime Minister. I have the strong belief, Madam Speaker, that men of vision have at least three things in common -

1. they will go the extra mile in order not to fail on commitments;
2. optimising on existing resources is for them a never-ending process, and
3. these men and their government will always look in the same direction as the nation at large.

Madam Speaker, our Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, is a man of vision, a man whose achievements will go down in the history of our country as a reference to one and all on outstanding leadership.

Madam Speaker, coming back to the motion in front of this House, there are at least three issues that we will need to address after going through the report -

1. the objectives that have been defined and whether the report fulfils them accordingly;
2. the implementation phase speaks about technicalities of application, resources, rules, etc., and
3. the methods of evaluation to ensure that gradually changes are brought in order to improve on effectiveness of live broadcasting of the proceedings of our Parliament.

Coming to objectives, Madam Speaker, I have not seen much on the objectives of the decision to go for live broadcasting in the report but anybody can guess that the following forms the very basis of what this Government is aiming at through this report.

Madam Speaker, I have identified three major objectives -

First, consolidate democracy through better accountability. The live broadcasting of the proceedings will allow the population to have better access to the proceedings of this House. Let the population at large be reassured that this Government means business and that we will leave no stone unturned in our endeavour to make our Mauritius a country with a system of Government by the people, for the people.

Second objective, Madam Speaker, plurality, transparency and fairness in the reporting of the proceedings of this House. The intention on both side of the House, I am sure, is to ensure that we put in place a system of reporting that protects the rights and privileges of each and every Member individually, but also as a member of a party or to a specific group. The report has gone far in addressing this specific issue, but, as in other Parliaments around the world, we will have to go through a test phase and improve on the model gradually.

Third objective, I believe, Madam Speaker, is better responsibility. We have seen during the last few weeks that the conduct of a few hon. Members in this House, have been far from meeting the standard expected from a hon. Member. However, my appeal to one and all in this House on this historic day is a wake-up call for better

responsibility and respect towards our National Assembly, which is an institution where many, among the existing hon. Members, have spent almost a lifetime fighting for the interests of the citizens of this country.

Coming to implementation, Madam Speaker, I am not going to dwell on the technicalities of the implementation process, as this should be left to the professionals to ensure that the proceedings of this House reach the maximum amount of our citizens much in line with the objectives I have elaborated earlier. However, I am sure that we can rely on the collaboration and assistance of friendly countries like India, UK and many other examples listed in the report, in view of gradually improving on the quality of the live broadcast envisaged.

Madam Speaker, the implementation phase always consists of four major components that, if not well addressed, will not allow any project to meet the objectives defined. I, therefore, believe these four components will have to be addressed with the importance they deserve. The HR component first, and I request that every effort is spared to ensure that we have the best team in place. Second are the processes in any project that will require strict monitoring in order to protect the rights and interests of all stakeholders. We are speaking here, today, about us, parliamentarians, but we have also other stakeholders like journalists outside, the people outside. Third is to ensure that while implementation, the people outside are satisfied that they have access to information they consider fair and transparent, and finally, an appropriate budget to implement everything.

On evaluation and monitoring, Madam Speaker, the report addresses the issue of implementation extensively, but we also need to put in place a system of evaluation and monitoring post implementation. This will enable the broadcasting authority to uncover shortcomings that I believe can only be identified along the implementation process. We have been identifying shortcomings today. I have listened to a few hon. Members earlier who have been identifying some of the shortcomings in the report, but I believe, as it has been the case in other Parliaments, we will have to move on gradually and then work on the shortcomings and improve gradually. There have been welcoming critics from different quarters that the project has been drafted and will eventually be voted and implemented by only the elected hon. Members of the National Assembly and that professionals in the field of communication outside have not been given the chance to share their views.

Madam Speaker, it is my firm belief that, as far as the project meets the three objectives mentioned earlier, that is, accountability, transparency and responsibility, there is no reason

for anybody to have reservations on the intention of this Government to meet the aspiration of one and all on an effective live broadcasting of the proceedings of our Parliament.

Madam Speaker, let the unanimity in this House for the live broadcast of the proceedings of our Parliament be a wake-up call to the youth of our country. I want them to be better involved in the political, social and economic affairs of our country.

There are, Madam Speaker, very few options that we are left with to convince our youth today to believe in their potential, and the country needs them.

Let this historic initiative today be among those few important options we are left with to inspire and reinstate the confidence they desperately require today in we, politicians, after the "classy type" model they have been exposed to during the recent years.

It is my humble view that the quality of debates in this House on numerous issues of importance will inspire an increasing number of our youth to participate and get involved directly or indirectly in the proper management of the affairs of our country. Madam Speaker, I have in mind where we, people on this side of the House, found ourselves 12 months earlier.

To conclude, therefore, I find no better words than those of Dale Carnegie to summarise what we are about to accomplish within a year, and I quote -

> "Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all."

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

(6.29 p.m.)

Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Madam Speaker. From the outset, I would like to thank the Chairperson and Members and previous Members of the Select Committee on Live Broadcasting and to bring the report with the hard work of hon. Bodha as Chairperson and with all Members that were present in the Select Committee.

It took only about 11 meetings and, on the day we elected hon. Nando Bodha as Chairperson, we set a timeframe. Probably, it is not in the record, but we did talk and we said: "five or six months". We succeeded in doing it in five months. And let it be, why not implement the live broadcasting in a timeframe very soon - I said it on the radio: "six

months" - but let it be within one year or probably earlier and that would be a great step forward. We mean business. I am sure we will succeed because we have *la volonté de le faire.*

Madam Speaker, I would like also to thank the Clerk and her staff and all those who took part, namely the members of the MBC, the three private radios, SLO, and there were other people who came to give us a helping hand where we did understand certain issues that were made clear to us. Here, Madam Speaker, in the Select Committee, the experience that I got was that all Members, we were like a family. There was no Opposition side, no Government side. We were all friends at that time when we were discussing.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bodha made sure, as Chairperson, that we were doing the business as friends.

(Interruptions)

Well, we know what kind of business we are talking here!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I will not dwell in the content and recommendations of the report. We have all, I hope, read it. So, Madam Speaker, I will just make a few general comments to show the objective behind live broadcasting. Madam Speaker, live broadcasting or parliamentary proceedings can bring about mixed reactions, and I hope it will tame some of the bellicose hon. Members into behaving themselves.

I hope also that it won't motivate Members to go on the rampage with added vigour. We do have some Members, and I hope they wont't take advantage because the camera will be on them and members of the public will see what is going on.

Madam Speaker, live parliamentary proceedings will also show off the true interest of MPs towards their constituents who send them to Parliament. No MP, now, will play truant and ruin his/her re-election prospect. If they do so, truancy or bellicose.

Madam Speaker, Government Ministers too will not have the luxury of evading giving answers to questions raised by Opposition MPs having to do with people's welfare.

Madam Speaker, with live broadcasting, MPs will not be in the land of noddy. Those who doze off will have to be very careful.

Madam Speaker, unparliamentary language will be an impossibility. In the same breath, when MPs will behave themselves in this House - with due respect, Madam Speaker - the role of the Speaker may become monotonous, and I hope, the Speaker - with due respect again, Madam Speaker - won't nod or doze off in long debates.

Madam Speaker, implementation of this report will definitely make this Parliament, within these walls, a wider Parliament. With wider audience, these walls around us will become virtual. People at home will become the public gallery. The gallery that we see today, the people around Mauritius will become the gallery of this Parliament. Parliamentary proceedings, like I said, will be in the majority of homes and will, via internet, be international.

Madam Speaker, after giving some general objectives, many Members have talked on the good part of this report. There are just a few criticisms that have been brought, probably, by misundertanding of the report. I'll leave it to the Chairperson of the Select Committee. I am sure he will dwell in replying to those who have not understood, especially, on the MBC part.

Well, like I said, we have put a time frame for the implementation of the report and I am sure we are going to succeed. What next? There will be minor amendments coming with experience. Nothing is perfect! In 10 years, it won't be perfect. In UK, it is not perfect. We have criticisms. In Mauritius, we are born with live broadcasting. So, what next?

Madam Speaker, after having implemented live broadcasting of the proceedings of this House, we will have to consider live broadcasting of Committees, namely Select Committees, Public Accounts Committee and others.

I will elaborate a bit on the Public Accounts Committee because we heard a lot of criticisms. I will refer the Public Accounts Committee as PAC. PAC conducts hearings *in camera*. This is a tradtiion that started before Independence. It applies to all Select Committes of the National Assembly. This is a great surprise from an accountability perpective. It is true that certain accounts of Government might need examining *in camera*. It is also true that PAC, eventually, makes its report public and that the Chairperson of PAC is a Member of the Opposition. However, one would expect, in a democracy, that closed meetings would be rare and concern only certain forms of expenditure, especially those on national defence.

Examining all accounts behind closed doors will not promote good governance. Doing so will reduce public nature of this account and will not promote transparency.

However, the criticisms by the Director of Audit are more worrying. They suggest that PAC is not assertive and effective as it should be.

Open committees will provide Members with a lot of opportunities. Increased transparency can help to build trust in Government. Presently, worldwide, only 50% have live public broadcasting. Probably, Mauritius, today, has shifted the 50% that was not live and was making the 50% that was live above 50%. So, probably, history will talk that Mauritius shifts the balance towards live broadcasting.

Madam Speaker, the process of moving from a closed Parliament to one that is opened to the media and the public will involve a learning experience for all participants. So, will it be for all Members of this Parliament!

To sum up, Madam Speaker, live broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings allows citizens to witness what is being enacted in their names. It provides an opportunity for the constituents to appraise the conduct of their elected representatives and receive diversity of viewpoints on State issues that affect their daily life. Open broadcasting also sustains citizenship and civil society is one of the core objectives of public service broadcasting.

Madam Speaker, today, I am proud to form part and vote for this Motion to promote further our democracy through live broadcasting of the parliamentary proceedings. Long live Mauritius and democracy through live broadcasting!

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Monty!

(6.42 p.m.)

Mrs M. C. Monty (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Madam Speaker, please allow me, first of all, to congratulate the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for such a motion and also the President and Members of the Select Committee on live broadcdasting for the research work conducted, for the considerable work done and for all the recommendations towards this great step we are about to take in the history of our democracy.

Madam Speaker, it cannot be denied that live broadcasting is a most laudable initiative to allow our private works done for the public to be viewed to the extent of being assessed and commented. We should not forget that we are public figures, and as such, we must be prepared to be also the talk of the public and of the country. But, Madam Speaker,

we are all courageous and dedicated representatives of the people imbued with realism, we do not operate in secret, and we are capable of bearing all the costs that this new step to be broadcasted live will incur.

Cependant, Madame la présidente, l'extension de notre espace démocratique et le grand pas que nous sommes appelés à faire marquera un tournant important de notre histoire. Même s'il est vrai, Madame la présidente, que nous sommes les grands bénéficiaires des avancées technologiques et que l'information quelle que soit sa source est transmise à une vitesse vertigineuse à un public de plus en plus avide de connaissances, de nouvelles et de progrès, la question demeure : dans quelle mesure servirons-nous mieux la population en lui offrant *in toto* ce qui se discute, se vit à l'intérieur de l'hémicycle, appelé Chambre ? Je me réfère au paragraphe 6.11.6 du rapport disant le besoin de reconnecter avec le public. Mais, Madame la présidente, la question est : étions-nous déconnectés pour avoir à nous reconnecter ?

Madam Speaker, we have always been connected with the public. We only need to be more connected with the public at large in the sense that we have to bridge the gap that may exist between our people and the procedures involved in the work being done by us, representatives in Parliament. But then, another question remains: shall we not be too invasive? Besides, listening to parliamentarians may be very boring if you are not an actor in the scene. A passive listener may easily get bored.

Madame la présidente, même si ce projet répond aux besoins du moment, aux tendances modernes à vouloir rejoindre le peuple là où il est, et à lui apporter l'information qu'il est en droit de recevoir, il est aussi important, en regardant ce qui se passe autour de nous, de nous poser certaines questions. Notre public est-il assez mûr pour recevoir comme il se doit les affaires d'État ? Est-il en mesure d'écouter pour s'informer sans déformer?

Madam Speaker, many questions come to my mind. Has broadcasting improved the quality of work of legislators worldwide? How far will broadcasting render our culture more democratic? Will parliamentarians use this as a platform to pave their way and launch their future electoral campaigns? Shall we be tempted to show off so as to become stars of the TV? How often will our elderly and housewives understand the language of Shakespeare unless Creole is introduced or translation envisaged? Besides, Madam Speaker, have we thought of how to fill the gap during parliamentary recess? Our people will be used in the long run to

follow parliamentary works, and this gap could perhaps be filled by interviews, talk shows and follow-ups or field work and more.

The impact, Madam Speaker, can be positive or negative. It might change the way we behave in a good or bad way. *Sera-t-on porté par le besoin de paraître ? Ce changement poussera-t-il certains à cultiver l'art du paraître?* Will the fact that they are being watched make parliamentarians more concerned about what they are saying? *Une chose est sûre, Madame la présidente, la caméra pousserait nos parlementaires à mieux se contenir dans des moments de dépassement et à ne pas s'invectiver mutuellement, et aussi ne pas aller jusqu'à choisir les plus belles fleurs, voire même les fleurs les plus colorées de notre jardin linguistique et culturel pour les lancer à qui ne veut pas l'entendre.*

Madam Speaker, I refer to paragraph 6.1.11 of the report. The Committee rightly evoked the discomfort that may be caused by too much lighting and the intrusion of cameras during the whole sitting. Indeed, Madam Speaker, in a certain way, parliamentarians should not feel invaded by cameras to the point of being disturbed. Parliamentarians are not actors in the true sense of the word, though we may try to become future ones.

(Interruptions)

They are here to work and work for the advancement of the country and, by extension, for the people.

Is the constant presence of cameras a proof to the people that we are working more seriously as representatives of the people? In a way, the camera does not allow us to yawn freely, though we are not here for that, to doze off sometimes, as it may happen. *Car pour être parlementaire, Madame, nous n'en sommes pas moins humains. Des commentaires comme: 'ti avoye li dans parlement pour alle dormi vont fuser de tous côtés!' Nos compatriotes ne peuvent se plaindre cependant, Madame la présidente, d'avoir été privés d'info ou d'information du Parlement. Autrement, nul ne peut nier que le public mauricien est spécialement porté pour la chose politique, et désormais il sera bien servi, gavé d'informations jusqu'à en être repu, si on peut s'exprimer ainsi.*

Going live, Madam Speaker, will be providing a free ticket to the viewer to go to places in which debates take place and which were hitherto closed to him, allowing him thereby to be a passive participant in parliamentary debates, to do his own debates outside. Madam Speaker, there will be our names and our discussions *à l'autel des jugements, des commentaires et des sanctions gratuites*. We should bear in mind that people with

intelligence will speak ideas, people with average mind will speak events, but people with short mind will talk about gossips. Madam Speaker, if we think of three Ps as Politics, Parliament and Public affairs, this can also easily turn into *Parlement, Potins, Palabres*. Madam Speaker, there are two sides to every coin and, as responsible people, we should analyse them while wishing it does not turn out to be too negative.

Ceci étant dit, Madame la présidente, nous ne pouvons, en tant que gouvernement responsable, visionnaire, ayant le souci de la transparence, choisir de marcher à reculons et refuser d'emboîter le pas au progrès, mais, au contraire, rejoindre les plus grandes démocraties du monde dans leur démarche d'utiliser les moyens de transmission pour rendre au public les travaux de la Chambre, quels qu'en soient les désavantages. Enfin, tout députés que nous sommes, souhaitons que nous ne soyons pas dépités par cet engagement de ce jour.

And, to conclude, Madam Speaker, I wish to quote Confucius who said: "when it appears your goals are unreachable, don't adjust your goals, but the action steps." So, we are, Madam Speaker. And, on these words, I will wish to leave the floor and thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

(6.52 p.m.)

Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Madam Speaker for giving me the chance to participate in this debate of such a historical moment. At the very outset, I would like, on behalf of my constituency which we represent, both hon. Francois and I, in this House, say that we fully support this motion, and we thank the hon. Prime Minister for bringing this motion into this House. We also thank, on behalf of the people of Rodrigues, the Select Committee which has done a fantastic work.

Madam Speaker, this is a very nice reform. With the evolution of modern society, Mauritius needs to keep pace with evolution and that is why this reform on live broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings is important.

With technology, as you might know, Madam Speaker, the way in which we interact is changing. Ten to 15 years ago, when we were referring to Blackberry, we were thinking of just a fruit, but nowadays, when we are talking about Blackberry, it is a smart phone where we can interact, watch TV and where politicians can interact with the people they represent here. That's why this reform is such an important one.

Madam Speaker, this reform is vital to tackling the public perception that politics has become a value free competition for office. I have always believed that politics is worthwhile. This is not nowadays a popular view. Important issues are, we are told, above politics by implication and expectation of the province of the low road. No more damaging charge can be made than to say someone is playing politics with an issue. Because of the implication and expectation, politics is a game played for personal gain and entertainment. That's what many people think. But politics is one of the ways any democracy works out solution to its problem. Politics is a way to manage substantial disagreements within a society or a community and to bring about real change for the better. We all do politics here to express our shared values, our beliefs and our policy priorities. Politics is about public goods, not private interests. We see that among the public, there is that deficit of trust in regard to politics. Despite this fact, our democracy depends on that trust.

In Mauritius, Madam Speaker, we are lucky that the election is conducted fairly, and that produces legitimate governments. There is no problem with that. Therefore, the issue of trust rests on the operation of the government, that is, the ability to pass laws even where there is constraint or disadvantage of some members of the community.

Parliament, Madam Speaker, is one of the components of our democratic institution, but that is being undermined by how it is portrayed and perceived. Therefore, Madam Speaker, with the event of live broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings, electors and the public will see all the processes of Government and see that decisions are being made on their merits. Electors and the public as a whole will be able to see the principles of integrity, transparency and accountability, and those principles are equally important to the historic values of the people whom I represent here and my party, to which I belong - the OPR party. Those values are fairness and equality because they safeguard our movements against vested interest, self-interest and unfair advantage.

Madam Speaker, as a newly elected Member, new to this august House, I have observed that parliamentary behaviour is fuelling wider cynicism about politics. Parliament is becoming too confrontational thereby it should be a forum of genuine debate. I hope that live broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings will commit all Members in this House in having the duty to restore community confidence in our national Parliament.

Madam Speaker, because this is a historical moment, I do not want to go long. To conclude, as I wanted to participate in such moments, I strongly believe, Madam Speaker,

that such procedural step of making parliamentary proceedings go live, is in line with the concept of a modern Parliament in a modern Republic. This will show more people the contribution of Parliament to democracy –

- by being more inclusive in the composition and manner of working, especially in relation to women, to minority and to marginal communities;
- by being more effective public communicators;
- by opening more of our work to the media;
- to experiment new ways of engaging with the public, including civil society, enabling them to contribute to the legislative process, and
- to recover public confidence in the integrity of Parliament through unforeseeable codes of conduct.

Those examples, Madam Speaker, will show that in Parliament we are working hard.

To end up, Madam Speaker, I hope that provision is made so that Rodriguan audience also enjoy the luxury of live broadcast in Parliament. As you know, Madam Speaker, we have only four channels on TV in Rodrigues, and I am sure that provision is made for an extra channel to allow all people living in Rodrigues to follow live broadcast of parliamentary proceedings.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I thank you for your attention.

(7.00 p.m.)

Mr T. Benydin (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Madam Speaker, permit me, in the first instance, to congratulate the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, to come with this motion and to show also my appreciation to hon. Bodha, the Chairperson, and all the Members of the Committee, including the Secretariat of the National Assembly, who served on this Committee and came forward with a series of valuable recommendations.

Madam Speaker, this motion comes at a time when citizens, particularly the young people, are surfing daily on the Internet and other communication systems so that they be able to search updated and relevant information and data that will help them to enrich their knowledge, empower them to better understand current issues and challenges lying ahead in this digital world.

Live broadcasting would also be beneficial to all components of the civil society, including NGOs and trade unions. This will help these organisations to take stands and positions on issues of national interest.

Madam Speaker, this report, which contains a number of important recommendations, constitutes in itself a major breakthrough in modern communication and information technology and will definitely reinforce Parliament-citizens relationship so long awaited.

Madam Speaker, the broad consensus reached at the level of the Select Committee is most welcome and should be acclaimed as a step forward in political pluralism, which has proved that it can reconcile conflicting interests and expectations through democratic means, social dialogue and compromise.

Madam Speaker, it is a fact and an indisputable one that in our modern society, Parliaments in many countries are undergoing consequential changes to adapt to the changes of our new society. As such, live broadcasting will help MPs to engage more effectively with the public. It will also provide us with opportunities to be more visible and transparent in our deliberations, particularly with regard to a number of issues related to legislation, debates and resolutions geared at improving citizens' well-being.

Madam Speaker, recognising that democracy is a universal value and its essential ingredients should be shared with the citizens, it is very much encouraging to note that the new communication system of live broadcasting will further reinforce and consolidate democratic practices; unleash innovative measures to promote good governance, bring Parliament closer to the people and to respond to Government's noble endeavour to bring meaningful change.

Madam Speaker, live broadcasting will bring into the homes of thousands of citizens instant, fresh and updated information on parliamentary proceedings. Members of Parliament will have better opportunities to promote themselves to the nation and to allow citizens, at the same time, to better understand the responsibilities of Members of Parliament, particularly with regard to grievances and representations made.

Madam Speaker, while recognising the proactive role of the Press and its invaluable role to the public, so far we have had to rely entirely on Press reports and opinions exPressed by the media, be it written or oral. Live broadcasting, therefore, will indeed revolutionise the communication system in that it will enable more people to watch and listen, allowing them

to assess and form their own opinions without outside interference or bias concepts on interventions and subjects raised by their representatives at the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker, it is hoped that live broadcasting will spearhead a new culture of respect and behaviour among Members of Parliament from all political parties. Live broadcast will boost quality, usher courtesy in the components of speeches, statements and will, therefore, add decorum to the House. While we will have to groom our attire, body language, etc., due care has to be taken while addressing the Assembly. As MPs, we will have to bear in mind the adage, I quote –

"Be sure brain is in gear before engaging mouth".

Madam Speaker, the right to information and proper communication is considered today by most citizens as being a social and fundamental human right in order to enable citizens to exercise significance influence on their elected representatives. That is why they will appreciate and feel satisfied when they are first, fully informed about what their MPs are doing and proposing, particularly with regard to commitments and promises made, how to improve quality of life and make people happier. In some countries, namely the Hungary National Assembly where communication arrangements have been reviewed, the tendency has been to adopt a comprehensive information and education strategy under a single communication unit or department. This strategy includes various kinds of medium broadcasting, namely the internet publications, information centres and educational initiatives. A multiple and coordinated means of dissemination is helpful in that the public can assess information of their own choice or availability.

Live broadcasting is definitely an advantage for Mauritian citizens. If today, in many Parliaments, countries can broadcast or webcast plenary sessions to the public, we consider that Mauritius can also follow this trend and make full use of the new ICT techniques and methodology to make a holistic contribution to parliamentary proceedings. Madam Speaker, I welcome the recommendation made by the Select Committee that a dedicated channel be provided by the MBC to the Mauritius National Assembly on the days Parliament sits as well as the recommendation made to the effect that webcasting should become a core part of an integrated, interactive Parliament information system. I know that when you are outside time belongs to you, when you are inside you belong to time.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Benydin, address the Chair please!

Mr Benydin: Yes Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

I am still inside, thank you. This new medium of communication will also arouse the interest of the young people in representative politics. Live broadcasting, therefore, will respond to the demand for better and enhance public services offered with quality, efficiency and accountability, thus giving the public free and full access to debates and other deliberations of the National Assembly.

To end, Madam Speaker, the motion of the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, we are confident, will pave the way to make Mauritius an intelligent and smart country.

I thank you.

(7.10 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms and Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr S. Bhadain): Madam Speaker, this is indeed a great day for Mauritius. I am sure that the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the House is certainly going to consolidate democracy in our country. I would like to first and foremost congratulate the Members of the Committee for the hard work that has been put in it and also the Chairperson, hon. Bodha, who has dedicated himself to make this a reality but, more importantly, I would like to congratulate the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for bringing this motion to this House and making the live broadcasting of proceedings of the House a reality.

Madam Speaker, freedom of information and transparency are inseparable components of a vibrant democracy and contribute towards consolidating public confidence in our parliamentary system. In our manifesto, we pledged for enhanced transparency and accountability in all spheres of public life and to promote a society where integrity is at the forefront. Since the start of our mandate, we have not left any stone unturned to translate this vision into a more just and equitable society, into concrete action. The actions which have been taken so far, speaks volumes. In the sphere of good governance, we have already set the tone and the actions that will follow will demonstrate the extent of our commitment to maintain the required level of governance in our country, be it in the public or private sector. We are walking the walk, Madam Speaker.

In an increasingly wired world, the importance of transparency in public proceedings is crucial. The relevance and importance of transparency in parliamentary proceedings is more than ever a *sine qua non* condition towards building confidence in our institutions.

Talking about institutions, Madam Speaker, I would like to first and foremost agree with the hon. Member Mohamed who has been explaining to the House his thoughts about how the MBC operated in the past and is still operating. I do agree with him that it is in the DNA of people who are working at the MBC to be subservient to the government of the day. I do agree with him that MBC needs to change, and this is what we have embarked ourselves upon to achieve. For the very first time, we have advertised for positions of Director General and other positions at the MBC, be it Deputy Director General, Director of News, Sales and Advertising, Human Resources and even a Head of Oriental Section.

Now, we want to get a new management team in place, which is going to fulfil our vision of taking the MBC into a different sphere, a different dimension, a different level of operation, which is going to be more professional, which is going to be impartial and which is also going to make our country proud of having such a broadcasting corporation. This is what this Government is endeavouring to do. Now, as Minister for ICT and having the responsibility of the MBC in my portfolio, I can assure the House that everything will be done so that the live broadcasting of proceedings of this House becomes a success through the MBC, with the new management team which is going to be in place.

I also certainly agree with hon. Mohamed when he says that a culture has developed over a period of time, through successive governments, where people who are working at the MBC believe that they have to have some kind of proximity with the Minister, they need to have some kind of proximity with people who are in power. Why? Because that would probably give them a better chance of being promoted, getting increments and so on and so forth. It is a culture which has developed over time, and this is the culture that we want to change. This is the culture that we believe now must go away and be replaced by this new sense of professionalism that we are bringing into all institutions, and when it comes to the live broadcasting of proceedings of this House, this is a fantastic opportunity for the MBC *pour redorer leur blason*, as we say.

The problem, Madam Speaker, it is not good only to say that people who are working at the MBC are not doing their jobs properly and are being subservient. The problem is also in the law, because when you look at the MBC Act, you will see that the Minister appoints people who are sitting on the Board, and if you read the law, then, basically, the Minister can give directives to the Board, and the Board shall comply with those directives. That's why this whole debate about the word *'manipuler'*, which has been used before. In fact, it is in the law; the Minister can give directives to the Board, and they shall comply.

So, coming back to the Select Committee Report and the restrictions which have been described - I am not going to go through each and every one of them in detail, and I won't be too long, Madam Speaker - I agree again with hon. Mohamed that there is no need for these restrictions, because at the end of the day - he described it as why do we have to be shy - I am saying we should have full transparency. Let everything be broadcasted, let everything be shown as it is, so that the people can judge for themselves as to what is good, what is bad, what is right, what is wrong and also for people to be able to see that their elected ones are behaving in a particular manner and then, they can make an informed decision as to whether they want to vote for that person again or not. This is democracy! This is how it should operate.

The other issue, which I have heard hon. Members mention, is whether the debates should or should not be in Creole. I would basically say this, Madam Speaker: I very much believe that the standard of English in Mauritius is going down and I believe that in our institutions, especially when we talk about Parliament and our Court system, we should maintain the standards, and certainly, I do not believe that proceedings should be conducted in Creole.

Now, Madam Speaker, I am not going to be very long, but I would just want to finish by saying this: I would like to pay deep tribute to the visionary leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, a man of word, of righteousness, a shrewd decision-maker with a strong sense of purpose, conviction and sincerity and who will always be remembered for having created a greater edifice of our democracy for the betterment of our nation. Madam Speaker, many people ask me where do I derive the level of energy that I show every day when I go to work. I will tell this House today that every single morning when I look at myself in the mirror and I am putting on my tie, the very thought of being a Minister in the Government of Sir Anerood Jugnauth gives me tremendous energy to do everything that I do.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

(7.18 p.m.)

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I intended to be long …

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Ganoo: … but I have been apprised of certain circumstances, Madam Speaker, and I will shorten my speech in order to allow the other orators after me to contribute to this debate today. I understand that Government wishes to end the debates tonight and the issue be not postponed for the next sitting. So, I will be very brief and come to the point.

Madam Speaker, what we are talking today is about, in fact, enhancing democracy, consolidating parliamentary democracy and, of course, there are ancillary issues to that main theme. That is, the dignity of the House, the decorum of the House, giving better access to the population with regard to what happens in this House, the question of conduct of hon. Members, the issue of reprimanding hon. Members for their bad conduct, for their misbehaviour in this House. All these are issues linked to the debates today. I, myself, as you know, Madam Speaker, have been here since 1982 when the hon. Prime Minister was elected Prime Minister for the first time. I see a few of these old faces like hon. Koonjoo and hon. Gayan who have been with me since 1982 in this very House.

I have been Speaker of the House. Just like you, I did suspend the sitting because there was so much disorder in the House. I have also been a backbencher, a Minister, and I have been one day kicked in this very House when I wanted to intervene and pacify the two sides of the House who were fighting with each other. That was in 1993 when Sir Anerood Jugnauth was Prime Minister. The Speaker had to suspend the sitting of the House, and there was so much disorder in the House that he had to go by the other door instead of this door. Hon. Members who were there at this time would remember there was so much pandemonium in this House on that night.

Madam Speaker, what we are doing today is, in fact, a big leap forward. In our history of parliamentary democracy, I think we must celebrate this day today, and it is a good thing also there is unanimity in this House. It is a measure which is long overdue, as somebody has said before me. Other African States have long before us introduced live television broadcasting. True it is that there was a first Select Committee, which was set up in 2009, which addressed the issue. Unfortunately, we know the reasons why this Committee did not function. At one time, it came to a standstill after the political landscape had changed with the split of the Labour and MSM Government, and the second Committee was set up by the hon. Prime Minister in April of this year, a few months ago. I am sure hon. Bodha had the

advantage of the input of the last works carried out by the last Committee, and within a relatively short span of time, the report was produced, has been tabled, and today, the hon. Prime Minister is coming with this motion.

We must, of course, as everybody has done before me, congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for the celerity with which he came with this motion, congratulate the hon. Members of the Select Committee and the Chairperson, hon. Bodha, for the excellent work done. I have no doubt - because I was a Member of the first Select Committee which was appointed by the then Labour Government, hon. Bodha was the Chairperson, as we just heard - that he deserves our unreserved congratulations because he has been the driving force and he is the one who has stewarded the works of the past and the second Select Committee. I think we all have to applaud him.

Madam Speaker, I will not go into all what has been said before me: the advantages of adopting live broadcasting. They are multiple, as they have been elaborated and spelt out in the report itself, but Madam Speaker, in a nutshell, parliamentary channels constitute an important ingredient in enhancing democracy and fulfilling the full exercise of the right of the citizens by providing a greater public awareness, a greater appreciation of the work of Parliament by involving the public in the parliamentary debates, hence making the politicians also more accountable, as has been said before me, thus developing a fresher, a new attitude and perception of the works of Parliament in the eyes of the people. But this process, as we know, Madam Speaker, started years and years ago. Somebody said it before me; in the UK, the debates about live television broadcast started in the 1920s, then Australia and New Zealand, I think, became the pioneers in broadcasting the proceedings of their House of Representatives in the 1940s. But, be that as it may, Madam Speaker, the advantages of adopting live broadcasting, as I said, are extraordinary.

But there are also reasons why, according to me - and I'll come to that - we are doing a good thing today, a historical decision which is being taken by this House today when we shall vote the motion. In fact, one of the major problems faced by many countries where parliamentary democracy is developing is a lack of public knowledge and awareness of the functions of Parliament and the mode of operation. And this is one way to remedy to this situation. This lack of awareness, Madam Speaker, is said to be accompanied by a general public opinion that Parliament is, in fact, an opaque institution, devoid of transparency, devoid of accountability and, with the live broadcasting, I am sure, this goes a long way

towards dissipating this confusion, this perception that Parliament is opaque and works in opacity and is devoid of transparency.

More importantly to me, Madam Speaker, live Parliament broadcasting is essential because it provides a channel between the public and the politicians, because very often our work here reaches the public after interpretation by journalists and Press people who are present in this House. What I mean to say, Madam Speaker, is that, in fact, online broadcasting will enable the people of our country to watch and listen to us and will allow the people to form their own opinions without media interference. Because what happens very often is that a journalist reacts subjectively to what happens to this House. *Le traitement de l'information est quelque chose de très subjectif* and each journalist decides which information to give priority to, which questions he thinks you should highlight and enhance whereas once live broadcasting takes place, Madam Speaker, it will be unadulterated…

(Interruptions)

… broadcasting of the proceedings. Unpolluted, if I may say so! So, this is according to me, why I agree, I fully endorse what is taking place today in the House. I fully support the motion.

Madam Speaker, I will come very quickly now to the point I wish to make about the production, the edition, the Rules of Coverage, which is an important part of the report, of course, from what I understand, and I am sure the hon. Minister Bodha, when he will intervene, will clarify the issue. So, what this report is proposing, Madam Speaker? Firstly, that there will be this production unit, which will be fully controlled and staffed by our legislature, and it is this production unit, and not the MBC, which will own the feeds and which will have full copyright on the proceedings of this House. This is one! And what I understand also from 6.2.6, and this is perhaps what hon. Mohamed confused me when I was listening to him. From what I can read …

(Interruptions)

…in paragraph 6.2.6 – "no editing should take place". I am quoting –

> "(…)since the broad principle to televise is to cover the business of the House and being given that the aim is to make parliamentary debate more accessible to the public and to improve public understanding of the democratic process, no editing should take place. However, the coverage should strictly adhere to the Rules of Coverage (…)"

Therefore, the MBC will come at a later stage, from what I understand, Madam Speaker. And this is why I think this issue should be clarified, that is, whether the debate has been going on in many countries when they adopted live broadcasting, whether there should be editing or not editing. From what I can see, there will be no editing, but there must be adherence to the Rules of Coverage.

Now, concerning this Broadcasting Committee, Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Everything will depend on the structure that we are setting up, the personnel, the human resources on the Committee when that will be set up, and I have no doubt that Government will agree that this Committee will be pluralistic, composing of all political components; all political parties represented in the House will form part in this Committee. The recruitment of this Production Director or Manager or Broadcast Manager also must be done in all transparency. He will be recruited, I don't know, by the Public Service Commission or by another Service Commission, but all this will be done in transparency to buttress the confidence of everybody in the whole process.

I will just remind the House, Madam Speaker, that in France, for example, in the Upper House where, of course, there is live broadcasting, there is a free and independent channel and, in fact, it is a duly accredited journalist who is at the head and who, because of his competence, his past experience, of the respect he commends, has been the guarantee of the channel's independence. So, this is why, according to me, it all depends on the people we choose on the independent nature of this Broadcast Committee which will be set up in order that all the process will be given the legitimacy it deserves.

Now, on the question of editing again, Madam Speaker, we are retransmitting the public deliberations, I understand, with no commentary. In other systems, the proceedings are provided with comments, with journalistic added value, in order to decode the proceedings and to explain the underlying political issues. And this, of course, is different from just broadcasting the streaming of the debates. Therefore, the question which I would like to ask the hon. Minister is whether, in fact, we should not have given thought to the possibility of retransmitting the public deliberations with some commentaries. Because that will help the listeners, the population to decode the proceedings, to understand fully the political issues and the procedure that is taking place in the deliberations in the House.

On the question of editing again, Madam Speaker, the basic rule is that the camera focuses on whoever is speaking. Therefore, the camera operator is not to focus on the events

that are not directly related to the proceedings, such as a demonstration or disturbance being caused by other Members, because all this will be taking place without the direction of the Speaker. So, that is why all this should be excluded and the camera should be focusing only on the Member who is taking the floor.

But it is also, as somebody said before me, Madam Speaker, very boring to watch somebody speaking for a long time. So, it is important to cut away, to show people who are around listening. I don't think we should be as restrictive as the rules are, Madam Speaker. This is one criticism that I have to make against the rules. I think they are a bit restrictive. I think - somebody said it before me; it was hon. Shakeel Mohamed - if we are interested in preserving the dignity of the House ourselves, we should act in a dignified manner. So, whoever does not act in a dignified manner will pay the political price that he has to pay and this, on the contrary, I think, live broadcasting without too much restriction, over restriction, too much conformism, will help MPs to act in a dignified manner.

Madam Speaker, I come to the question of the breach of the rules and the conditions. I would like to comment on this issue because, again, according to me, there might be some confusion on this issue. There is a suggestion I wish to make, Madam Speaker. This is what I can read from the report. That is, in case there is contempt, the Speaker can act under the Standing Orders or the law, National Assembly (Powers, Privileges and Immunities) Act in order to repair whatever wrong has been committed. I am referring to paragraph 6.6.3 –

> "Your Committee further noted that in most legislatures, breach of rules and conditions may be treated as contempt and that it has been dealt with through the exercise of the Speaker's power to withdraw the privilege of being able to broadcast. Your Committee is of the view that this may be included in the Standing Orders/National Assembly (Powers, Privileges and Immunities) Act as being a further example of contempt."

That is, in case there is a breach of rule, therefore, there is another new type of contempt that will be added to our law and, therefore, this is the solution which has been proposed by the Select Committee. But one thing I wish to say, Madam Speaker, is that when we look at the Act which has been mentioned, the National Assembly (Powers, Privileges and Immunities) Act, this is what I can read in section 7 –

"No prosecution for an offence under this Act shall be instituted except by the Director of Public Prosecutions and in accordance with the procedure laid down in that behalf in the Standing Orders of the Assembly."

Therefore, we have to comply with the procedures laid down in our Standing Orders in order to sanction whoever has been guilty or has committed any act of contempt. We know, in our Standing Orders, Madam Speaker, how tedious and cumbersome is the procedure when a matter of contempt is raised. There is a long procedure in section 74. If it is a Member who is complaining, the Member has to undergo a cumbersome and tedious procedure, raise the matter before Madam Speaker, who decides whether there is urgency, appoints another day for his/her decision, he considers whether there has been any contempt and then he refers the matter to the DPP for appropriate action and so on and so forth. We are talking of defamation, slander which has taken place when a Member has said whatever he has said, he has defamed and this has been broadcast immediately, Madam Speaker, and now "the victim" will have to come through somebody in this House because it is only a Member who can raise the issue before you, Madam Speaker and then he will engage in this long tedious repetition. I think this should be relooked and revisited, Madam Speaker, because I think the hon. Minister should consult the SLO and see whether we can think of other remedies in order to deal with situations of contempt because if we go by what has been proposed in the Select Committee's Report, that that will take a long time and justice will not be restored expeditiously, with celerity, as it should have been done in such a case.

So, this is why I will appeal to the hon. Minister to revisit that aspect, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Ganoo: There is a justification why when broadcasting live proceedings, Madam Speaker, the Committee decided not to focus on whatever is happening in terms of disorder, in terms of unruly behaviour inside the House.

In 2002, for example, in Ottawa, Madam Speaker - and I will end on this - there was a Member, he was very unhappy because he was piloting a Private Member's Bill and this Bill was not receiving the support that the Member expected his Bill to receive. Therefore, what did he do? He took the mace and he attempted to take the mace out of the House, Madam Speaker. Of course, the camera did not focus on this incident; the camera recognised the

Speaker and this episode was picked up on radios. The protesting Member of Parliament, of course, left the House, Madam Speaker. The reason for doing that is as follows - this is what a senior Member of Parliament said:

> "It was not because we were not allowed to show the incident. We can show any footage provided to us by House of Commons Broadcasting. House of Commons Broadcasting, however, does not show these kinds of incidents. Their instructions are to broadcast individual Members only when they have been recognized by the Speaker of the House or as a group when they are voting. At other times, the camera is aimed at the Speaker's chair (…) the shot is always on the Speaker even if he/she is not speaking or ruling from the chair."
>
> 'Cameras are told to ignore "deliberate misconduct designed to secure television coverage.'

To end, Madam Speaker,…

(Interruptions)

I will reiterate what my friend hon. Dr. Sorefan just said about the PAC. I have been a Chairman of the PAC for a few years. The proposal has been made to the Prime Minister. I will not go into all the reforms that the PAC should undergo, but I think that we must amend the Standing Orders of this House to allow the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to organise its sittings in public, as it is done in the UK. I think this will be a long way forward in terms of watchdog. The citizens of this country, the NGOs, the Press people can come and watch the PAC in its deliberations when they are querying.

Hon. Xavier-Luc Duval and hon. Cuttaree, at the time, were my predecessors. They all came up with this suggestion and there has been unanimity among all parties. I think we should do that in terms of transparency, in terms of good governance. Coupled with the motion of live broadcasting that we are voting today, Madam Speaker, the opening up of the PAC to the public would tantamount to again enhancing democracy. I am sure that what I am proposing, what our predecessors had proposed and what the Chairman of the PAC has proposed also will not fall on deaf ears now that we have Sir Anerood Jugnauth as Prime Minister, and Government, during its campaign, has hammered so much on good governance. The symbol of good governance would mean making the Public Accounts Committee hearings public so that everybody can come and watch what is going on inside the PAC.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. Minister again and I wish good luck to this project of live broadcasting in our country.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister Bodha!

(7. 47 p.m.)

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): I am not going to be long. Madam Speaker, I have sat in the reporters' gallery overlooking the proceedings of the House. I have also sat in front of the hon. Prime Minister briefing him as a Press attaché. I was also at the head of the MBC under the guidelines of the hon. Prime Minister, and I was a Minister in the first MSM/MMM Government where the private radios were given a licence. Today, I have been very honoured to have been given the trust to chair the Select Committee.

I would like to pay an extraordinary tribute to Sir Anerood Jugnauth…

(Interruptions)

All through those years, he has been a man who has been favourable for the dissemination of true information. There are two landmark decisions which have to be taken in his career; I believe we are going to do it during this mandate. They will be the Freedom of Information Act, which we have promised in our mandate, and the arrival of a private TV network by the end of the mandate. We know Sir Anerood Jugnauth is a man of his words. He has this vision, the clarity, and I am convinced that all of us will have another extraordinary debate on these two new chapters.

Madam Speaker, a day is long in politics, but every minute in Parliament is making history. I always say that anything can happen in Parliament. This is a place which is amazing. It can flare up any time. You can have a walkout. You can have extraordinary exchanges.

(Interruptions)

Yes! And this is a place where history is written and we make and unmake laws. This is what we call the sovereignty of Parliament. I am also happy about one thing that watching the debates at home, which will close this gap between the people and Parliament, will help the people of Mauritius to better understand what was the intention of the legislator when the law or the Bill was passed because often this is what we want to know. What was the intention of

the Government, of the Prime Minister, of the Leader of the House in bringing such and such legislation? We are going to bring some very important legislation in the weeks and the years to come.

Madam Speaker, let me, first of all, congratulate all the Members of the Select Committees of 2009 and 2015. They have done a remarkable job. We all worked as a team. We were really taken up by the challenge and we wanted to succeed. We wanted to come up with a report which would be comprehensive, which would reflect the consensus in the House and in the country, and a report which could be implemented. That was very important for us; it had to be implemented. Madam Speaker, Your Committee did 11 sittings of one hour. I think we did something remarkable, but let me put on record the extraordinary contribution of Mrs Lotun, the Clerk, and Mrs Ramsahye-Rakha who is the acting PICT Manager…

(Interruptions)

…because week after week they summed up the whole debates and we came with the right issues; that is how we could move faster.

Madam Speaker, I would like to clear a few issues which have been raised, first of all, about the role of each institution. The in-house production unit would be an independent in-house production unit, as proposed in the report, under your responsibility and under your authority. It will be totally independent and it provides the signal, that is, the end result which could be either a video signal or a sound signal. This video signal is sent to the MCML for diffusion and the MCML will send this signal to the MBC for broadcast. So, the MBC is only a broadcaster providing a channel, that is, it is a channel provider. That is very important to know, that is, the whole production unit and uninterrupted signal comes from Parliament. The sound signal will be sent to the private radios. They will have an interrupted flow. We have come to…

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Uninterrupted.

Mr Bodha: Uninterrupted flow. We have come to the agreement with the MBC that, because of what has been said…

(Interruptions)

we will have one channel which will be dedicated when Parliament sits.

We have come to an agreement with the radios – we had each of them – that the Private Notice Question between 11.30 a.m. and 12.00 and the Prime Minister's Question time between 12.00 to 12.30 will be broadcasted live. They have agreed to this. While the MBC, on the Parliamentary channel, will have a total continuous flow, we have the radios after the PNQ and the Prime Minister's Question time, that will have the flow of the PQS which end up at about ten past four. They will have an edited version of the PQs on radio. Then, the rules of use of signal apply, that is, the reporting should be true, effective and the reporting has to reflect what happened in the House. The MBC will give us this channel for the uninterrupted broadcast. Now, if the MBC wants to include in its news bulletin at 7.30 p.m. one or two majors elements of what has happened, it can have it in an edited form, but again it will have to respect the rules of the use of signal. So, I wanted this to be very clear.

As regards the recruitment of the in-house production unit, we will have to decide whether it is going to be done by the Public Service Commission. There was one issue which was raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition about this monitoring committee which will meet as regularly as possible to monitor and supervise the live broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings. He proposed that we have the five possibilities, that is, the PAC's model where it goes to somebody from the Opposition; the ICAC Parliamentary Committee where some Members are nominated by the Prime Minister and some by the Leader of the Opposition. He also proposed that it could be the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker, and he proposed the last one, that the Chairperson be nominated by the Prime Minister in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. Maybe that could be the right way forward. We will leave it to the wisdom of the Prime Minister.

Madam Speaker, a lot has been said about the rules of coverage, about the sanctity of the decorum of the House and whether we should be very restrictive, conservative or we should have a true reflection of what happens in Parliament. There has been a long debate about this. In most Parliaments, priority has been given to respect the authority of the House so that the cameras which are on at that point in time, - we will have five cameras - one of the cameras will always be on the Speaker sitting and that shot will be always there so that the General Manager can have recourse to that shot at any time. The four other cameras are automated. They are not manipulated by camera people, they are automated. So, in fact, it is the General Manager who will decide which shot to go on air. If we give him some latitude, it will be to his judgment.

Now, let's say we have disorder in the House. He will have four cameras showing disorder in the House and one camera showing the Speaker sitting in front of the House. So, he will decide. That's why we said that instead of letting him decide on which side of the House to show, which disorder to show, which MPs to show, we have gone by what is done elsewhere, that the camera should be on the Speaker when there is any disorder in the House. But the sound bites are always there. Everybody will listen to what is being said. Now, I think that this is the first stage. We can see with some experience that we can give him some latitude so that he gives us a proper rendering of the proceedings of the House.

The second issue I wanted to address was the uninterrupted flow of the live broadcasting. In Britain - hon. Ganoo mentioned this - and in France, we have a number of programmes linked with the debates after the debates to enlighten the nation at large. I was speaking to my colleague, hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun. Let us say after the Bill on the Nine-Year Schooling, which is a very important Bill – because in Parliament you cannot decide and say everything – she can come and have a dedicated programme on that channel. We have provided for this. We have also provided for a small studio and that could be a second stage where eventually we can have a number of programmes maybe on Select Committees, on a certain number of complex legislations that we are going to pass. I would like to say one word about what has been said by Jean-Pierre Elkabbach. I think hon. Ganoo mentioned this. He mentioned that one important thing is the independence of this production unit. He was one of the most brilliant journalists and he was the Chairperson of France 2 and France 3, a very famous broadcaster. He said that we have to secure the independence of this production unit. He also said something which I like. He said that we have to narrow the gap between the people and their institutions, and Parliament is one of the most important institutions in our democracy. He said that when we have edited versions, we have all the problems that we have been facing.

We are never happy with an edited version of parliamentary proceedings because Government wants to have its way and Opposition wants to have its say. So, to give the balance in an edited version is very difficult. But, I think, Madam Speaker, that we have set the stage for something remarkable. This is a great day in the life of our Parliament. We have come a long way and I am sure, I am very much convinced that the project will be implemented in about six to eight months. Of course, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister will show us the way.

I am convinced that we will be able very soon to have live broadcasting. I am convinced that *nous sommes une démocratie de proximité.* I will not be surprised if the day after Parliament you meet people in the streets and they relate to you from what they have heard you say, from what they have heard you do, and this will help us to come closer to our people. Because when it comes to democracy, be it in the Panchayat in India or in ancient Greece, people have always wanted to know what their elected Members and representatives are doing. In this sacred House of Parliament, it is very important for them to know that they have sent us here and we are doing what we should in the best interest of our country.

I would like to thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for bringing this motion and I would like to thank everybody, because at the end of the day in the House, there has always been a consensus, and I am convinced that in a few months we will all be very happy to see this happen.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(8.02 p.m.)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me, firstly - like everyone in this House - congratulate my friend, hon. Bodha, and his team Members on the Committee for a great piece of work and, of course, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for bringing this motion very quickly, within a matter of weeks to Parliament.

Needless to say, Madam Speaker, tthat I am fully in favour of televising of our proceedings in the House. We have unanimity - very rarely, but we have unanimity. I think nobody wants to take the risk of not being in favour of progress. So, let us all vote in favour, Madam Speaker, of this motion. Let's try however, to look forward: six months, eight months; we are now in April 2016, June 2016. Five cameras are looking at us, Madam Speaker. What will happen? What has happened? Because we are not reinventing the wheel here? Other people have travelled this path.

(Interruptions)

They have been able to weather this change in their proceedings. Some have been more successful than others, Madam Speaker. This is, maybe, what we should try to do. We should try to not only be modern like everybody else, but be successful in our modernity. Be able to be mature enough to espouse this new technology, and more technology is to come like Internet - I'll talk about it perhaps shortly later. So, espouse this new technology and be responsible and democratic enough to make it work and not take the path of maybe some

other Parliaments which have had - not unfortunate - less happy experiences with televising of debates, Madam Speaker.

So, I did some research: UK, Canada, India and Pakistan, for I had a little bit of time to look at that. And so, as I mentioned, Madam Speaker, what are the experiences? In UK and Canada, Madam Speaker, case studies show that successive Members of Parliament, successive Houses of Parliament there, Members have not tried to attract undue attention simply because the camera is looking at them. They have done their work, maybe the population also, not as politically active as others, but anyway cameras haven't had any undue effect on debates. There has been no deterioration of behaviour in Canada and UK and people have continued to act properly as they did before.

But, in fact, it seems that Members have tended to be more careful in their behaviour, trying to impress their electorate. I think also the response of the electorate will be important. If there are tantrums in the House - confrontation, someone said before. I think hon. Sorefan - if there are confrontation tantrums in the House and the population disapproves, then very quickly this will be stopped in Parliament. But if, on the other hand, Madam Speaker, tantrums in the House, theatricals in the House are applauded by the population, then the opposite will happen to our debates. In fact, as they say, a population gets the Government it deserves. In this case, the population will get the Parliament that it deserves, and that is my honest view of what will happen. I do also, therefore, hope and plead with the population that there are negative responses to tantrums, confrontations, violence or whatever else can happen in the House and that, in fact, televising the debates, because we have a mature population, will have a restraining effect on undue and negative behaviour in the House.

So, Madam Speaker, in UK and Canada, fewer MPs have been thrown out. We have for example last week I think, a week before. So, fewer MPs have been thrown out and speeches, as mentioned, have been up to the standards. Also, although, Madam Speaker, sound bites have become more important. This is also the issue. Sound bites may become the order of the day because then they are picked up in excerpts, etc, people may tend to be more appealing directly to the population. I hope that we don't become superficial in our speeches. Hon. Ganoo before me was very technical. How that will go down to the public, I don't know. I hope that we do still have technical speeches in the House because it is necessary to go down to the *virgule* and the full stops, etc, in a Bill. So, I hope, Madam Speaker, that we don't become superficial and some Members of the House continue to be very precise and analytical in the way that they deal with issues although I suspect that may not be very

popular in the public. I may not even be popular in this House as I could see the number of people who clap hands when the speech stops.

So, let's try, Madam Speaker, to maintain our standards. Now, in India and Pakistan, Madam Speaker, from the case study, in fact, there has been more disruptive behaviour. In some countries, even bad publicity is considered as being good publicity, and publicity is publicity. If that is the attitude that is taken here, then we have a problem. So, let's hope that bad publicity is not good publicity and no one will seek to get bad publicity just to catch the nation's attention. In fact, Madam Speaker, there has been more disruptive behaviour in some Parliaments, but also the positive effect, for instance, in Pakistan, is that it is tended to encourage participation by MPs. A lazy politician, Madam Speaker, not seen in Parliament is not good. So, you have to speak, you have to participate, and that has been positive. And also in Pakistan, according to the case study, this outshouting of politicians and other Members has not been appreciated by the population, and that also has been toned down.

Madam Speaker, one thing that I also need to talk about is the whole question of libel, defamation. As we know, what I say here in this House, I have immunity, every one of us has immunity according to the National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act, and that is how it should be. I say something, you will bring me back to order, I will apologise hopefully and we all apologise, and it is over. But when it is live, it is already gone out. What I have said here, a second later it is already in the population. Whatever libel I would have said, it is already too late. Later we will have a point of order and I will provide excuse or whatever it is or there will be a right of reply, but it would have been too late. So, I think Madam Speaker, with due respect, you will have to be more stringent. You are already, obviously...

(*Interruptions*)

I am not saying that you are not! But I am saying that discipline will have to be tightened, we will not try to allow people to be libelled and for defamation even though it might be corrected later. So, what are the tools that are going to be at your disposal, apart from throwing someone out for a day, that will prevent recurrent, such behaviour? I think it is going to be important to protect the decorum of the House and to protect the reputation of people that this does not happen and that there is discipline and this mindset that is prevalent, because we are going to be live and because whatever we have said will be too late and will not be able to be corrected in the minds of the people, especially if you are talking at peak

time or something like that. So, there will also be, Madam Speaker, maybe a change in behaviour all over even in terms of how discipline is applied. So, stricter compliance with Standing Orders, Madam Speaker, I think is going to be very important in this House.

Madam Speaker, let us also imagine tomorrow that we are in electoral year, the last Prime Minister closed down Parliament for the year because he didn't want to face Parliament in the electoral year, probably was the truth of the matter, even though there was no live broadcasting, that Parliament would be tumultuous and would be negative, maybe, for his campaign. In the end, it did not do him much good, but still that was the case. Imagine now that we have live Parliament and we are on the eve of an election. How will Members react and how we will need to adapt to this?

So, Madam Speaker, the whole point I am making is this can be a great step forward if we all play the game as we should, if we all act as patriots, if we all act with discipline as a mature democracy and as Members of Parliament who have respect for our population. If not, it can go the other way, and this is why, Madam Speaker, we are all voting in favour of this Bill, but at the same time there will need to be an appeal for greater respect of our Standing Orders and for each other's dignity.

I will end on that, Madam Speaker, just to say that on the whole debate of Creole - I know the Rt. hon. Prime Minister does not agree, but not today or not tomorrow - Creole is in the schools, Creole is an examinable subject, Creole is a subject that we all understand. It is a language that we all understand. It is much easier than the Oxford English that many of us try to use here, very few of us speak in French. So, Madam Speaker, one day, we might see that happening and we will see how that brings us even closer to the population, but it is a great day for our democracy. It is always nice, Madam Speaker, when the nation moves forward, takes steps that open new ways of doing things and makes us a more modern country. This is such a day, Madam Speaker, and again congratulations to all concerned and let's look forward to April 2016!

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(8.14 p.m.)

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Madam Speaker, I would also like to add, as stated by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, it is a great day today for our Parliament and, as a Member of the Select Committee, I would like to

congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for bringing a motion to this National Assembly within the least possible time after his arrival from mission, and we are today nearly concluding the debates on this very important motion, a historic motion, and in some months, I can say, the live broadcasting will become a reality. Allow me also, as a Member of the Select Committee, to congratulate my good friend, hon. Bodha, for the excellent chairmanship he has done. He was Chairperson of that previous Select Committee and he has been appointed unanimously as Chairperson, and today, we have a very good report, and I am sure the way forward has already been traced out.

Madam Speaker, what we are doing *est une grande avancée démocratique.* I am here since 32 years; this is my eighth mandate. One of the big moments of my parliamentarian life which will stay with me is this very day. For many, many years, I have been fighting as a backbencher in the Opposition with the Government of the day to come up with live broadcasting. Modern Mauritius could not stay behind. Our Parliament is moving, modern, we are now provided with iPads. Formerly, we were not provided with efficient and modern tools and today our reporters have modern equipment. So, we had to move with time, and also the reputation of our Parliament within other Parliaments of the world. We are Member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA); we are also in the IPU; we are in the SADC Parliamentary Forum and our Parliament could not have lagged behind. This is why today when we will be approving in a few moments the motion - from what I see there is unanimity - it would be a big step forward for not only the country, but for our Parliament.

Madam Speaker, in the Committee, we have addressed all the problems. We cannot forget to thank the Clerk, the staff, the technical staff, and I know that you have had the opportunity, yourself, to visit other Parliaments in India and UK, to see how things are working, and I am sure that will help you and your staff to put in application what we have to do.

Madam Speaker, there have been lots of comments on behaviours of Members of Parliament. It depends on the individuals. When you feel you have to say something, when you feel you have to withdraw also, it depends on the individual and we have nothing to learn from other persons, but it depends on us, one individual, and he/she will have to assume his/her responsibility for behaving in such a disorderly manner.

Madam Speaker, as stated, today is a great day and there have been some qualms in certain sections of the Press as to why we are putting some restrictions. I think we had to start somewhere. Had we started going into details, trying to find solutions to queries, trying to

find alternatives, we would have never started. I think it is a right step; we had to start somewhere, and I am sure that in the years to come, we will learn, we will progress and come up with new suggestions, take new suggestions on board and then modernise our system further. I will be very happy. Now that we have the Press, we have to thank them; every Tuesday they are here. With the coming of the radios, the reporters of the radios sit here, even for long night sessions, and we have to thank them for their commitment and what they have been doing over the years to bring to the population what we are doing here. Our Mauritian population, I will say, is very much interested in political issues. Mauritians are interested in what the MPs are doing. *Notre population est très exigeante auprès des élus*; I know it by experience and bad luck to those who stay silent in Parliament. I agree for those who start for the first year. I myself when I started in 1983 - we are among the seniors here - for the first two years I was, I would say, trying to see how things were going.

(Interruptions)

Il y avait des ténors, but as years went on, I started progressing. I will appeal to my good friends on the other side not to be shy. They have come here to ask questions; people in their constituency will know what they are doing. At Adjournment Time, they must not remain silent. People know there is an Adjournment Time; they must raise issues concerning their constituency. I see my good friend hon. Bhadain is not here.

(Interruptions)

No, but he is a good friend of mine. I know politics is politics, but I have lots of, I will say…

(Interruptions)

'Li ti raté vine dans MMM ça! Li ti raté vine dans MMM, laisse mo dire toi! To pa coné ça!'

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: But today, we will judge the MBC. I see my friend, the cameraman. Why have we been fighting for having live debates, Madam Speaker, over the years? Why? It is to modernise our Parliament, but the main reason is because of the behaviour over the years of the management of the MBC/TV. We have been witnessing over the years one Director General sitting here. I have been challenging him over the years, Madam Speaker. How can we accept that the Director General of the MBC/TV comes here every Tuesday with his scissors? It is the case today, and we will judge the MBC through the reporting of very

important debates. We have news now at 6.00 p.m., 7.00 p.m., 7.30 p.m. and even at 11.00 p.m. We will see tomorrow how the MBC will cover this very important debate and give coverage even to a backbencher. When a backbencher in one of the rural areas, Madam Speaker, a new one, even in urban area, his constituents, his people will hear his voice - many of them have had the opportunity of delivering their speech today - you know what this is for the MP, himself or herself, even in the constituency, but the MBC has not been acting in such a manner where democracy prevails.

So, I hope that today with the speech of the hon. Minister responsible for the MBC/TV - he is not responsible for the management, we agree, but for the personnel. So, I hope when tomorrow or even the day after we will see a reporting of the debate of what is happening today we will have, I would say, a transparent coverage; a coverage which is *clair et net*.

Today, Madam Speaker, is a very important day in the history of this Parliament. We have had big debates on Independence, on Republic, on radios coming, but this one is a very important motion of the Prime Minister which will bring Mauritius along with other countries, in Parliaments elsewhere, where we are now moving further with the live coverage of our deliberations.

This is what I had to say, Madam Speaker. Again, I thank the Rt. Prime Minister. I congratulate my good friend, hon. Bodha. We have had the opportunity of his experience as former Director General of the MBC TV, as past Chairperson of a Select Committee and I think that has helped a lot, and also all the civil servants, the radios and the personnel of the State Law Office.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The Rt. hon. Prime Minister!

(8.24 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition and all the hon. Members from both sides of the House who have contributed to the debate on this historic motion. I am glad to see the enthusiasm and the general consensus around this project. This day will be remembered for long, as it is a defining moment in the history of our Parliament.

Madam Speaker, parliamentary business is at the core of public service mission. It is important, therefore, that people know and understand the kind of work their MPs do in the Assembly, and for this we need to use every means available to open up Parliament to the people.

Madam Speaker, we have pledged to work resolutely towards entrenching democracy and promoting higher norms of governance in public affairs. Transparency and accountability are indeed the dominant characteristics of public institutions, and it is my firm belief that live telecast of the proceedings of the National Assembly will further reinforce these characteristics and create greater openness.

The Select Committee has proposed the ground rules and the framework for live telecast, so as to ensure a fair and balanced coverage and, above all, to preserve the dignity of the House as a working body. I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his suggestions regarding the chairpersonship of the Broadcasting Committee. I am sure later on we can agree on an appropriate formula. Insofar as Creole language is concerned, I am of opinion that it is not relevant to this debate.

I must say that I share the views exPressed earlier by a few hon. Members to the effect that, with the advent of cameras inside this Chamber, hon. Members will become more concerned and careful about what they say or do in the Assembly. Of course, we are going to have the rules, but I believe that if we are to preserve the dignity of the House, it falls on hon. Members to act in a dignified manner.

I also hope that we will not see an over emphasis on short period of drama, ignoring worthwhile but not particularly exciting debates.

Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech earlier, we are embarking on a new venture and certain new issues and concerns may crop up as we go along, but this should be no reason to delay this laudable initiative any longer.

The Select Committee has highlighted that the advantages of live broadcasting far outweigh its disadvantages. So, let us be bold in taking this historic step and move ahead to connect Parliament with the people.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 27 October 2015 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 8.30 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 27 October 2015 at 11.30 a.m.