



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION

TUESDAY 16 APRIL 2013

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTIONS (*Oral*)

MOTION

BILLS (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

QUESTIONS (*Written*)

Members

Members

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

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues
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Hon. Satyaprakash Ritoo	Minister of Youth and Sports
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Hon. Lormus Bundhoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Sayyad Abd-Al-Cader Sayed-Hossen	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Surendra Dayal	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Jangbahadoorsing Iswurdeo Mola	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Roopchand Seetaram	
Hon. Mrs Maria Francesca Mireille Martin	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sutyadeo Moutia	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms

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<i>Deputy Speaker</i>	Peetumber, Hon. Maneswar
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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 04 of 2013

Sitting of Tuesday 16 April 2013

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

At 11.30 a.m

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office –

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill (No. IV of 2013).

B. Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities –

The Central Water Authority (Production of Drinks) (Fees and Other Charges) (Revocation) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 74 of 2013).

C. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

(a) The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (Arab Republic of Egypt) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 72 of 2013).

(b) The Agreement on Exchange of Information on Tax Matters (States of Guernsey) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 73 of 2013).

(c) The Public Procurement (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No. 75 of 2013).

D. Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Consumer Protection –

(a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 9) Regulations 2013 (Government Notice No.76 of 2013).

(b) The Annual Report 2011 of the Mauritius Standards Bureau.

E. Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives –

The Annual Report 2011 of the Saint Antoine Planters Co-operative Trust.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

FOYER NAMASTÉ – RESIDENT – ALLEGED SEXUAL ABUSE

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr A. Ganoo) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the *Foyer Namasté*, she will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the former Assistant Director thereof has been arrested following an allegation of sexual abuse on a young male resident, indicating if she had received information from different quarters of him being abused prior thereto and, if so, indicate the reasons why measures had not been taken for the protection thereof and of the other residents, and
- (b) state –
 - (i) following the recommendations of the Ombudsperson for Children in her Annual Report 2011-2012 concerning lack of adequate amenities and hygienic conditions thereat, the actions taken, and
 - (ii) the other safe places where the residents thereof have been transferred, indicating the additional protective measures she proposes to take.

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs M. Martin): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that following an alleged case of sexual abuse, reported by minor L. J. A. B aged 14, now residing at CEDEM, Mr S. S, a former part-time educator at Foyer Namasté was arrested at Eau Coulée on 09 April 2013.

I am informed that on 05 June 2012, my Ministry received an anonymous letter with respect to an alleged case of sexual abuse on children of the Foyer Namasté.

In that letter, mention was made of a minor committed to the Foyer by my Ministry who could disclose and provide information on the case.

In spite of the letter being anonymous, my Ministry acted promptly and on 06 June 2012 itself, removed the said minor and placed him at the shelter of the Ministry i.e La Colombe, and provided appropriate therapy and support to enable the child to talk on any incident that may relate to the matter or on the case itself.

However, on 06 June 2012, the Psychologist attending the child reported that the minor, as per the sessions “did not reveal any form of abuse”.

In September 2012, the minor was sent to CEDEM to pursue the therapy and psychological sessions. Concurrently, a discreet enquiry was initiated by officers of my Ministry.

It is also to be noted that since June 2012, the Foyer has thereafter been under constant scrutiny and monitoring by the CDU, the Police and the *Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform that on 12 June 2012, I, along with my Permanent Secretary met a lady, who requested to remain anonymous. She, in fact, informed that she suspected that the Director of the Foyer Namasté was abusing children sexually.

I requested her to report the matter to the Police immediately to enable the CDU and my Ministry with concurrence of the Police to initiate an enquiry under the Child Protection Act.

She refused to give a statement to the Police.

The Ombudsperson was also apprised of the alleged case of sexual abuse on the minor and she in turn, requested the Police to make an enquiry as per section 7 (2) C of the Ombudsperson for Children Act 2003.

In September 2012, the Police informed the Ombudsperson for Children, with copy of the letter to my Ministry, that all minors, I quote, “are happy at the Centre and have never been victims of any forms of abuse and no suspected behaviours of Mr J.A.A and Mr S.S. were noticed. Nobody also came to report any case of sexual abuse by the Officer in Charge of Foyer Namasté”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, furthermore, following a press article on 16 March 2013, on an allegation of pedophilia in a shelter of the Plaines Wilhems, I informed that all the shelters in Plaines Wilhems including Foyer Namasté would be subject to an enquiry with a view to verifying the veracity of those allegations and requested my officers to make discreet inquiries on their activities and running of the designated places of safety.

Coming back to the measures taken to ensure protection of minors, it is to be noted that since June 2012, Foyer Namasté has been under constant scrutiny by the CDU and its stakeholders namely, the Ombudsperson’s Office and the Police.

On 18 June 2012, a meeting was held with the Director of Foyer Namasté to officially inform him about the allegation made against J.A.A and Mr S.S in an anonymous letter dated May 2012.

As per the explanations tendered by the Director, he was aware of the allegations made against his person and the Foyer. He denied the allegations made against him and explained that, according to him, this had been the result of him dismissing one of his volunteer carers, a certain Mrs N.G.

The Director informed that he usually brings children on educational tours and on special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas, to his home with a view to facilitating the rehabilitation process.

He was warned by Head of the CDU against such practice, in particular the upkeep of children under Court orders. The Director promised to comply with the warning.

Following allegations of such practices having been carried out in other shelters, my Ministry devised a list of 'Do's and Don'ts' which was disseminated among all shelters in November 2012.

While minor J.A.B was removed for therapeutic support as well as support in view of disclosure, arrangements were made for the protection of minors staying thereat, and they are as follows -

- (i) surprise visits at scattered hours to the *Foyer* on a regular basis by officers of the CDU;
- (ii) calling of the Director to the CDU for monitoring of his activities, and
- (iii) visits by *Brigade pour la protection des mineurs*, CDU psychologists at the *Foyer*.

Because psychological intervention has to be carried out in a neutral background and not in institutions where children are placed, officers often brought these children from this *Foyer* to their respective outstation for psychotherapy by the psychologists. This particular exercise posits for both supervision and therapeutic support to the children at *Foyer Namasté*. No disclosure was obtained.

Officers of the Ministry of Social Security with the mandate of Residential Care also visited the shelters of the Ministry, including the *Foyer Namasté*.

The Ombudsperson for Children's Office was also scrutinising the shelter. It is to be noted that, since June 2012, officers of my Ministry have refrained from sending more children to *Foyer Namasté* to allow proper monitoring.

On 24 March 2013, following recommendation of the inter-ministerial Committee, three inmates at the Brown Sequad Hospital were sent to the *Foyer Namasté* under interim committal order. The rationale of the Committee being that the children had to go back to their respective institutions, where they were originally committed. In the light that no formal accusation had been levelled on the *Foyer* and noticeable improvement done with respect to *la prise en charge* at *Foyer Namasté*, our Ministry did not raise any objection thereto.

As regards part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed that, as part of the routine monitoring of NGOs carried out by officers of the CDU, in 2012 a visit was carried out in January. The attention of Management was drawn on the need to bring certain improvements to the shelter and its immediate environment such as ventilation of rooms of older children, cutting of grass around the shelter, disposal of

broken furniture. Furthermore, it was observed that overall the children were getting adequate care and attention. They were properly nourished and special care was given to their specific health needs.

Following the Annual Report 2011-2012 of the Ombudsperson for Children, my Ministry was requested to look into various shortcomings such as lack of hygiene, no proper ventilation, inadequate storage facilities. Most of these shortcomings had already been pointed out to the Director of the *Foyer* in January 2012 with a request that immediate and proper remedial actions be initiated accordingly.

Concurrently, my Ministry was informed by the Ombudsperson for Children that, during a visit effected by her officers on 27 February 2012, it was observed that the Management of *Foyer Namasté* was making an effort towards improvements such as removal of old furniture, cleaning of the dormitories. They also intended to improve the kitchen and to send the cook for a medical check-up.

As regards part (b) (ii), following the suspension of the designation of “Place of Safety” of *Foyer Namasté* with effect from 11 April 2013, arrangements have been made as from 10 April 2013 to remove the 30 children from the *Foyer* to other places of safety in the interest of the children, and to prevent tampering with evidence in connection with the investigation of the alleged sexual abuse case.

Moreover, carers of the National Children’s Council were posted to the three units of the *Foyer* on 09 April 2013 with instructions to remain there until all children were removed. For the sake of confidentiality, I cannot reveal the names and locations of the places of safety where the children have been placed. But, I am willing to hand over the list if the hon. Member wishes to take cognizance thereof.

Out of the 30 children, 23 were placed under Court orders by my Ministry, while the other seven were placed by parents and relatives. According to information from *Foyer Namasté*, three parents have agreed to take back their children from the *Foyer*, while for the remaining, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions is taking measures for their placement in another institution.

The transfers of the children were made by the staff of the CDU with the assistance of the Police Department, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has made reference to an anonymous letter sent to her in June 2012, wherein allegations had been made. Does the hon. Minister agree that the name of the child who made the declaration to the Police last week is mentioned in that very letter which was sent to her on 05 June 2012?

Mrs Martin: Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, the name of the child was mentioned. That is why I also mentioned that, on 06 June 2012, I had the child removed from the said shelter in order to follow a therapy with a view of disclosure.

Mr Ganoo: This is not my question. The name of the child was mentioned in the anonymous letter one year ago, and this is the very child who last week gave a declaration to the Police that he had been sexually abused.

Mrs Martin: I have already answered yes, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Ganoo: Can we also know - because the hon. Minister has not told us that - on which date is the alleged offence to have been committed?

Mrs Martin: In the child's statement, there is no particular date that is stated because he cannot recall the exact date on which the act was supposed to have taken place.

Mr Ganoo: Is it to the knowledge of the Minister that this offence is allegedly to have taken place on 24 December 2010?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said, in the statement of the child there is no date precisely given.

Mr Ganoo: In fact, what is most material in this case is when did this alleged offence take place, and I am surprised that the Minister does not know of the date. I am putting it to her that, in fact, information received by her Ministry is that the alleged offence took place in December 2010, on Christmas Eve.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot rely on allegations, on anonymous letters.

(Interruptions)

Once we were made aware that this child was speaking and saying that she was victim of an alleged sexual abuse, we have immediately followed procedures and recorded the statement of the child at the Police. Based on that, the child did not say the exact date, and that is what I am basing myself on.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister has given a press interview on 31.03.2013, Mr Speaker, Sir, saying categorically on 31 March of this year, that is, a few days ago -

« ...aucun enfant de Namasté a été victime d'abus sexuel ».

She said it categorically whereas, in fact, now, according to this young resident, he has made an allegation that he has been sexually abused on a date which, granted, the Minister is not aware of. The Minister says

categorically that no child has been abused in this *Foyer* to the press, but if we go by what the child is saying, he had already been abused at the time the Minister was denying so publicly!

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I based myself on the outcome of three different reports which emanated from three different sources, whereby it was established that there had been no sexual abuse at *Foyer Namasté*. I based myself on the report of the psychologist, which said that the child did not disclose anything. I based myself on the Ombudsperson's enquiry carried out by the Police, which said that there was no sexual abuse there. I based myself on the therapy results given by CEDEM, which recommended that the child go back to the *Foyer Namasté* because he was happier there. I based myself also on the enquiry that one of the main sponsors of *Foyer Namasté*, a private company, made, whereby nothing was proven. It is on this basis that I said that there had been no sexual abuse at *Foyer Namasté*.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister is making reference to the three enquiries that took place. These enquiries took place after the hon. Minister had received the anonymous letter and after the child had been transferred to another shelter. Is she aware that the enquiries were conducted in the shelter of *Namasté* when the child was absent from the shelter as he was already transferred to another shelter? The Police said that they enquired at *Foyer Namasté*. So, the child was not there when the enquiry took place!

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition needs to understand. Once the child's name was cited in that letter - usually, Mr Speaker, Sir, anonymous letters are not that important, but ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, please!

Mrs Martin: Because of the important content of alleged abuse in the letter saying that there was sexual abuse, we took matters in hand immediately. We removed the child that was mentioned and started the therapy with the child, with a view to making the child speak. We cannot force the child to speak. As all the psychologists and the experts say, when the child is ready he is going to speak on his own, which actually happened nearly a year after. But, what I wanted to say was that we did not leave the other children unattended. The enquiries were carried out in the *Foyer Namasté* and in the different institutions of *Namasté*; the enquiries from the different sources revealed nothing.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister has quoted CEDEM. We all know that it is Mrs Rita Venkatasamy who is responsible for CEDEM. Is the hon. Minister aware that Mrs Rita Venkatasamy said the following, and I quote –

« *Finale­ment, ce n'est que la semaine dernière que l'enfant s'est confié à deux des ses amis du CEDEM, qui lui ont conseillé de parler à un adulte. Les détails que l'enfant a donnés sont choquants. Il ne peut pas avoir inventé tout cela.* »

Mrs Martin: Yes, this is precisely the reason why, when the child started speaking, we went to the Police; we had the statement recorded and, subsequently, the arrestation was done.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister also referred to the fact that she had an interview with a social worker, a lady she met. Does the hon. Minister agree that this lady – the social worker - met her one week after she had received the anonymous letter and if the hon. Minister is aware that this social worker confirmed all the allegations that were made in the letter, told her about suspicious occurrences that were taking place? The hon. Minister is laughing, Mr Speaker, Sir! Did not she confirm the suspicious occurrences, in particular, the fact that a *responsable* was taking young boys out of the shelter into a car on a Friday afternoon and she actually witnessed that, and she gave all that information to the hon. Minister? And I put it to the hon. Minister, instead of providing assistance to that lady social worker, she dismissed her casually and told her to go to the Police Station, and by doing so, she failed in her a statutory duty as a Minister to protect children at risk in a shelter!

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, let me reassure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I am not laughing. This is not a laughing matter.

(Interruptions)

No, I am not laughing on this matter, Mr Speaker, Sir. What I mean to say is, indeed, that what the hon. Leader of Opposition is saying is proving that we acted promptly. The lady requested a meeting from us, we received her, we spoke to her, and we even tried to convince her to give us grounds to be able to enquire further into the matter. In fact, as a Minister, and my Ministry cannot enquire on unsubstantiated allegations, Mr Speaker, Sir. Officially, *on n'est pas autorisé à agir de cette façon-là*. What we wanted from the person who came to see us, we wanted her to substantiate what she was saying, by going to the Police and making a formal statement, which would help the Ministry. In the meantime, we were also conducting unofficial enquiries on *Foyer Namasté* and this, the hon. Leader of the Opposition should not forget.

Mr Ganoo: Does the hon. Minister agree that even if somebody is taking children out of a shelter, in that case taking them home to spend the weekend, and the Minister wants us to believe that the reason was for educational purposes or whatever, but is the hon. Minister aware that the law says –

“Where a child is placed in a place of safety, any person who, knowingly and without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, takes or keeps the child away, commits an offence”?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, we were made aware of this situation. I must say that *Foyer Namasté* is not the only shelter where this type of practice has been done. But, the minute that we learnt and we were made aware, we asked the Director of *Foyer Namasté* why he had done that and he explained the reason why. We told him that he should not do it; he was given a warning for this and then as from there, he never did it again.

(Interruptions)

He said that he was not aware that he was not supposed to bring the children out of the shelter. But, at the same time, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we took cognizance that there were other shelters also doing this, we, at the Ministry what we did, was to issue a formal list of 'Do's and Don'ts' so that it would be distributed to all the existing shelters so that they would know exactly what they are supposed to do with children under Court orders and what they are not supposed to do, because there has been quite a lot of ignorance on this matter.

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Minister aware that this *Foyer* was never delivered a Residential Care Home Permit?

Mrs Martin: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: So, is the hon. Minister aware that up to its closure last week, when the Ministry took away the place of safety licence, up to the time of closure, this shelter had been operating for all this time without the Residential Care Home Permit?

Mrs Martin: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. I must inform the hon. Leader of the Opposition that, in fact, the appellation of 'Place of Safety' is given by the Minister responsible for Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare but, at the same time, there is no specificity, no clause in the law which says that the place, which is to be designated, has to have any sort of Residential Home Care Permit. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

Let me tell you, this practice ...

(Interruptions)

No, let me explain! Mr Speaker, Sir, this practice is on-going...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Martin: It has been done before. Actually, out of the 19 residential care institutions for children in operation since 1989, I must say, 12 are not registered under the Residential Care Home Act. This is to say that the designation place of safety is not exclusive to that.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jugnauth!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Minister aware that in this particular case, the Ministry refused this Residential Care Home Permit on the particular ground that, in that case, the residents were not categorised because all residents of different age groups, whether handicapped or not were living in the shelter, and this was not appropriate? I am quoting what the Ombudsperson said: "This made it inappropriate for the holistic development of the children"; and this is why, rightly so, this shelter was never granted this permit.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, like I said, there are other residential care institutions, which are not registered under the Residential Care Home Act. Let me give just one example. In 1989...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, please! Order!

Mrs Martin: In 1989, a renowned organisation such as *Terre de Paix* was granted the appellation 'Place of safety'. Up to now, it does not have the Residential Care Home Permit.

(Interruptions)

I am going to give other examples. These are renowned organisations which deal with children. In 1991, the shelter at Forest Side! The same has not been granted Residential Care Home Permit but, at the same time, it has been given the appellation 'Place of safety'. There is no obligation for this Ministry under the Child Protection Act to have the organisation or institution operating under the Residential Care Home Act to be able to designate it as 'Place of safety'.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House how come the place of safety licence was granted to this shelter when there was a cohabitation of adults, mostly handicapped, with children?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the place of safety is given when, in our Ministry, we decide that this place is appropriate for children to be taken care of. In view of the record of *Foyer Namasté*, there

was no indication that *Foyer Namasté's* Directors and *Foyer Namasté's* carers were unfit to be able to take care of those children.

Mrs Ribot: M. le président, j'aimerais savoir de l'honorable ministre si elle est au courant des conditions inhumaines dans lesquelles ces enfants ont été transférés à onze heures du soir du *Foyer Namasté* à d'autres *shelters*; des conditions, M. le président, où un enfant alité, de six ans, a été pris par les officiers de la CDU, je pense - puisqu'elle a dit que c'était des officiers de la CDU qui ont transféré les enfants - avec son *pouch*, à onze heures du soir, et d'autres qui pouvaient marcher recevaient des instructions de ceux qui faisaient le transfert : *marsé, marsé, dégazé rentre dans van!*

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, these are all hearsays, but I want ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mrs Martin: I don't know if the hon. Member was there at 11.00 in the evening. Let me inform the hon. Member, like I said, in my answer, the transfers of the children were made by staff of the CDU indeed, with the assistance of the Police Department, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions. Therefore, the child

(Interruptions)

Let me explain to the hon. Member. Given that an allegation had been made and an arrestation had been subsequently done, it was in the interest of those children to be removed within the least possible time and for doing this our Ministry ensured that the best conditions possible had been applied in order to make the transfer of those children. The reason why the child who was *alité*, as the hon. Member has mentioned had been transferred later on, was that when SAMU came and saw that it could not transport the children, it had to have another van come to be able to transfer that child.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Speaker, Sir, from the answer given by the hon. Minister, we have been made to understand that she has been relying on reports and reports except the very allegations of sexual abuse made in the anonymous letter. Does she not think that upon receipt of the letter, immediate action should have been taken either to close down the shelter or remove the children therefrom, or set up a new management thereof forthwith?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, *les allégations anonymes n'étaient pas* substantiated. This is what the hon. Member should understand by alleged victims or otherwise, but the minute it was substantiated,

Mr Speaker, Sir, I took prompt action. On 09 April it was suspended; the appellation of place of safety of *Foyer Namasté* was suspended. Within 48 hours, the children were removed under Court Order and placed in other shelters. Mr Speaker, Sir, we acted promptly.

(Interruptions)

But I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we took action the minute that the allegations had been substantiated and a statement was done. *On ne peut pas* rely *sur* allegations like that and we just close every shelter.

(Interruptions)

If we had to do this with the number of anonymous letters we receive on every shelter, every shelter in Mauritius will be closed, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

And then, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the part of the question...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence please!

Mrs Martin: ...where she said that whether we, at the Ministry, could not take actions to be able to change the management of the shelter, I must inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, *Foyer Namasté* is a private institution; it is ruled by a private Board with their own rules and regulations. They have their own Board ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Martin: ... and they are allowed to recruit and deal with the day to day running of the institution in the way they see fit. But the Ministry with the granting of appellation of place of safety has the right to advise them and monitor their actions. We do not have the right to change the whole Board.

Mr Jugnauth: The hon. Minister has agreed that it is illegal to take children to the Director's home, and she has even given a warning. How can the hon. Minister explain that when she was asked a question in 'l'Express Dimanche' of 31 March 2013 –

« *Pourquoi le Directeur de Namasté emmenait régulièrement les enfants chez lui le week-end ?* »

The Minister replied –

« *Pour qu'ils connaissent autre chose que les quatre murs de leur foyer.* »

How can she justify that?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! I say order! Silence!

(Interruptions)

Let the Minister answer, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Ms Deerpalsing!

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned in my answer that the Director indeed admitted that he brought children there, but he said that he brought them on educational tours and special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas with a view to facilitating the rehabilitation process.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what I said in my answer.

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

Mr Ganoo: Does the hon. Minister agree also that after the visit of the Ombudsperson and the enquiring team, this Ministry was enjoined, in fact, to bring about the remedial measures and this is what one of the Ombudsperson's team, an enquiring officer, Mr Ismaël Bahemia, after underlying the fact that the Ministry of Health had booked the *Foyer* for seven contraventions, said to this Ministry under the control of the hon. Minister: «*Nous avons demandé au ministère de la protection de l'enfant (...)* »

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the Leader of the Opposition. He has to put a question. If he is going to read lengthily ...

Mr Ganoo: Does she confirm that?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, please, listen to me!

(Interruptions)

Well, this is Question Time!

Mr Ganoo: This is preliminary. So, my question is: is the hon. Minister aware that the Ombudsperson asked her “*de placer tous les enfants dans un autre centre, mais rien n’a été fait*”, and this is what the Ombudsperson has said in a letter. Because of that, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ganoo: ... I think, in view of all the circumstances of this case, the hon. Minister should resign.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

I say order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister, answer your question!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Laisse mo causer!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence I say; I say order!

Mrs Martin: *Laisse mo causer ...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order!

Mrs Martin: *Laisse mo causer! Li pas laisse moi causer! Li pas korek!*

(Interruptions)

Laisse mo causer !

(Interruptions)

Laisse mo causer! Zot pas pé laisse moi causer !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, you answer the question. Time is over, okay; please! Answer the question!

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already told the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the Ombudsperson ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please!

Mrs Martin: ... did make remarks about the *Foyer Namasté* but, at the same time, I also informed the hon. Members that during a visit by her officers, the same Ombudsperson said on 27 February that it was observed that the management of the *Foyer* was making an effort towards improvement...

(Interruptions)

...and that they were willing to work towards improving the facilities and therefore in view of that...

(Interruptions)

...and in view also of the fact that he did not...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! I say order!

Mrs Martin: In view also of the fact that we did not have at the material time when these allegations were made, any substantiated allegations...

(Interruptions)

...we could not take any action with regard to the children.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Martin: But I must also say, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order, please!

Mrs Martin: ... that *Foyer Namasté* does not only receive children from my Ministry, but they also receive children from parents and relatives.

(Interruptions)

If we had removed only our children, Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order. Time is over! Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order! Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

Some order, please!

(Interruptions)

I am speaking! Now, questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister! The Table has been advised...

(Interruptions)

Silence, please! The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question No. B/116 has been withdrawn. Parliamentary Question Nos. B/113 and B/117 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister will now be replied by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development. Parliamentary Question No. B/123 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister will now be replied by the hon. Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms. In keeping with practice, these questions will be replied at the end of Question Time, of course, time permitting.

BELLE ROSE - MR S. D. - DEATH

(No. B/107) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to one Mr S. D., who died on 15 July 2012, at Belle Rose, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto, indicating the number of persons arrested in connection therewith and the charges lodged against them, in each case.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 15 July 2012...

(Interruptions)

I don't know what's the problem with the lady!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say silence! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Silence! Allow Dr. the hon. Prime Minister to answer the question! Silence!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

I say silence! I don't want to tolerate any interruption, now!

The Prime Minister: If they allow me. Otherwise, I won't. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 15 July 2012, at around 0400 hrs, two persons reported at Rose Hill Police Station the kidnapping of their friend, one Mr S.D, by unknown persons in a van at Belle Rose. On that same day, 10 minutes later, at around 0410 hrs, Police carried out a mobile patrol in the area and found the dead corpse of Mr S.D. lying along Ollier Avenue, Belle Rose. He had sustained injuries to his head.

On that same day, an autopsy was carried out by the Principal Police Medical Officer who certified the cause of death as a fracture of skull with intracranial haemorrhage.

On that very same day, the Police found the van which was abandoned in a waste land at Palma. Later on, the Police proceeded with the arrest of the four persons who were identified as occupants of the van.

In the course of its enquiry, the Police have recorded statements from seven other persons.

The following day, on 16 July 2012, the four suspects were brought before the Rose Hill District Court and were provisionally charged for murder. They were remanded to police cell up to 23 July 2012.

On that date, they were brought anew at Rose Hill District Court and were again remanded to police cell up to 30 July 2012.

On 24 July 2012, all the suspects were brought before the Bail and Remand Court for their bail motion. The Court granted bail. Two of them were bailed out after furnishing a surety of Rs25,000 and Rs15,000 respectively and a recognizance of Rs100,000 each.

The other two suspects were granted bail by the Court on 27 July 2012, after furnishing a surety of Rs100,000 each and a recognizance of Rs500,000 each.

The four suspects appeared before the District Court of Rose Hill on 18 October 2012 and their bail was extended up to 28 February 2013. On that date, their bail was further extended up to 20 June 2013.

On completion of the Police enquiry, the case file will be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he is aware that one of the accused, namely, Mr N. G., despite being on bail, was recently involved in a case of aggression and attempt to rape?

The Prime Minister: This is the subject matter of a different question. From what I see, yes; that is why I am answering the question.

POLICE OFFICERS - PROMOTION EXERCISE

(No. B/108) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Mauritius Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to -

- (a) if the promotion exercise for the Men Police Officers has been completed in respect of the grade of -
 - (i) Inspector of Police to that of Chief Inspector of Police, and
 - (ii) Chief Inspector of Police to that of Assistant Superintendent of Police, and
- (b) when was the promotion exercise for the Women Police Officers last carried out.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have in various replies to Parliamentary Questions stated that promotion in the Police Force falls under the purview of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission. Recommendations for the promotion for all ranks are made by the Commissioner of Police to the DFSC and the final decision rests with the DFSC.

In regard to part (a) of the question, the procedures for promotion in these grades are presently under process and on completion thereof, the recommendations of the Commissioner of Police will be submitted to the DFSC.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, there is no separate exercise for the promotion of Women Police Officers. Promotion exercises in the Police Force are common to both male and female Police Officers in the respective grades.

Mr Nagalingum: Will the hon. Prime Minister be of a view that financial compensation should be paid to all officers who retired while waiting for a promotion which never came?

The Prime Minister: This is not the case. That is how the procedures are, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. S. Boolell: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that there is a lack of officers in the Police Force at gazetted officer level, which accounts for the lack of decision process, especially in times of major emergencies or any regional emergency? I am thinking of the promotion to Assistant Superintendent of Police grade.

The Prime Minister: I just explained that this exercising process, I believe, is nearly ending. But there is also now - I should perhaps draw the hon. Member's attention - an additional requirement of performance management. That is why it takes longer.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister that since a similar question was put to him some time back, about nine months ago, and he said that he has been informed - after having said that it's the responsibility of the Disciplined Forces Service Commission to address the issue of promotion - that the exercise has already been completed, from the grade of Chief Inspector of Police to the grade of ASP? The hon. Prime Minister confirmed to the House that this exercise has already been completed. May I also ask him that in view of the fact that the last promotion exercise from the post of CI to ASP and ASP to SP dates about two years ago? I am sure that we all want to have a Police Force which is very efficient. Promotion is one of the ways to motivate Police Officers. Can the hon. Prime Minister, therefore, see to it that this exercise which he says has already been completed be implemented?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I cannot interfere in that. But some of the promotions have already been done. I noted he did not mention this, but the process is ongoing, and this is being done.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) (ii) of the question which has just been referred by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that is, promotion from Chief Inspector of Police to that of Assistant Superintendent of Police, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister - because it is taking a long time - whether the reason for this delay is due to the fact that it concerns one Chief Inspector by the name of Mr Hector Tuyau, who is proposing to go further if that promotion exercise is not finalised?

The Prime Minister: If somebody thinks that is the way forward, let him try.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he could have a list of the number of Women Police Officers per grade tabled?

The Prime Minister: All the grades? Well, you have Women Police Corporal, Women Police Sergeant. It goes on the same grades, Sub-Inspector, Cadet Inspector, Inspector, Chief Inspector, Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent and then it goes on to Assistant Commissioner of Police.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister what is currently the number of vacancies in the position of Chief Inspector and Assistant Superintendent of Police?

The Prime Minister: In each case, Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe it is two.

Mr Bhagwan: One cause of frustration within the Police Force is automatic promotion at different levels. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether this issue of automatic promotion still exists or whether there has been a review? Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister the exact position with regard to this automatic promotion?

The Prime Minister: This is precisely why there has been a review, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think, from the question, the hon. Member also doesn't think it is right to have automatic promotion. That is also the feeling. That is why we brought in Performance Management, and that is why it takes a bit longer because we have to look at the performance.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, in view of the fact that what he said in his last question...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ganoo: ... I want to underline that, Mr Speaker, Sir. Does the hon. Prime Minister remember what he said in a supplementary to a similar question of December last year? He said -

“But my understanding is that the exercise is already there. I understand that given there were elections, they preferred not to do any promotion at that time”

Now that Municipal elections are over, I think the exercise should be completed unless the hon. Prime Minister is thinking that General Elections will be held soon!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I remember saying that precisely because if at the time when you have elections you start promotion exercise, it will always be that case; Mauritius being Mauritius. That is why it was suspended at that time.

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister give the breakdown of promoted officers constituency-wise?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: We do not do that, Mr Speaker, Sir. Already Mauritius is a small island. You realise what will happen if we do it by constituency...

(Interruptions)

A Police Force is a disciplined force. That is why this is not possible.

Mr Speaker: One last question to hon. Navarre-Marie.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Will the hon. Prime Minister say whether there has been a change in policy whereby a woman Police Officer is present in each and every Police Station? Because on 30 March, this year, a case of assault was reported at the Police Station of Rose Hill whereby no woman Police Officer was present to assist the lady.

The Prime Minister: This is the general policy, but if the hon. Member comes with a substantive question, I will answer that particular question. It is better to keep the general policy; we try to do that.

MBC – PRIME MINISTER - ADDRESS

(No. B/109) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the recording of his address to the nation on 12 March 2013, which was broadcast by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to or state, if the services of Euro Media was hired therefor and, if so, was it done by the Corporation or by his Office, indicating the –

- (a) cost thereof;
- (b) names of the foreign nationals involved;
- (c) procedure followed for the award of the contract;
- (d) names of the Mauritian cameramen involved, and
- (e) number of times the services of Euro Media or of any other foreign provider of such services have been retained, since 2005 to date.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the recording of my address to the nation on 12 March 2013 was done solely by a team of technicians from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, as has always been the practice for many years.

The other parts of the question, therefore, do not arise.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether, during that period, French technicians came and assisted the technicians of the MBC for that purpose?

The Prime Minister: I just said that it was done by the MBC, but I must add that the hon. Member himself complains about the MBC so often...

(Interruptions)

So, we want to improve ...

(Interruptions)

Because he is abroad, that's why. But we try to improve, make them more professional. What they need, Mr Speaker, Sir, is training, and that is what we propose to do.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether, for his 2012 speech, one company, MRoad Creations, was involved, in which one of the cameramen of the MBC is very closely associated? Can the hon. Prime Minister enquire and say if that company was involved for this 2012 speech, and even outside he asked assistance from that company through the MBC?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Prime Minister enquire? I think it would be in his interest and that of the public. I know what I am saying; it is in his interest. One cameraman has a direct link in that company, MRoad Creations. The hon. Prime Minister can check.

(Interruptions)

Ki movais gout, ki to coner ta! Prochaine coup to pas pou gagne ticket même, ferme la bouche!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Bhagwan: *Ferme to la bouche, pas coze are twa mwa!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, proceed with your question!

Mr Bhagwan: *Li pas pou gagne ticket sa. Trois quart to pou met dehors ladans!*

(Interruptions)

Banla pé passé même dibeurre!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: *Sik Yuen ticket pas pou gagner!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I repeat, address the Chair!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I repeat my question, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Mr Speaker: Yes.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the hon. Prime Minister check whether one cameraman of the MBC, Mr R. B. - not Bhagwan - has direct link with that MRoad Creations, and is also doing private works for Mr A. G. who is an adviser of the hon. Prime Minister? Alain Gordon Gentil!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: As far as I know, I can't see any R. B. as cameraman. I don't know what the hon. Member is referring to. There is no R. B. here. There is another question, I believe, later on, about what we do at *Culture et Avenir*. Again, we want to professionalise everything.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to ask the Director of Audit to conduct an enquiry on the outsourcing by the MBC to that company, where senior officials of the MBC have direct link to make money out of our Rs100?

The Prime Minister: The Rs100, in fact, should have been increased.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/113 has been withdrawn.

Hon. Jhugroo!

JEWELLERY – LARCENY

(No. B/110) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to larceny of jewellery, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, over the past two years, indicating the –

- (a) total value thereof, and
- (b) measures taken to prevent the recurrence of cases thereof.

The Prime Minister: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that for the cases of theft of jewellery, which have been reported to the Police since 2011 is as follows –

2011

- 942;

2012 - 833, and
 Up to 11 April 2013 - 254

In regard to part (a) of the question, the Police do not keep records relating to the value of the jewellery reported stolen or lost.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Police carry out regular checks at jewellers' shops with a view to ascertaining whether they are in possession of stolen jewels and also whether they are complying with the provisions of the relevant legislation. The Police also gather intelligence on any suspected activity relating to the theft of jewels and their disposal.

Through community policing, the Police aim at reinforcing the fight against crime by sensitising the public on the need to take precautionary measures with a view to eliminating opportunities for theft. One such measure is the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

At the Police Divisional level, community policing forums are conducted with stakeholders in the business sector, including jewellers operating in the relevant Divisions. The latter are sensitised on crime prevention strategies and initiatives to be adopted in order to secure their shops against theft. With a view to discouraging them from indulging in illegal activities, the jewellers are made aware of the penalties applicable in case they are found in possession of stolen jewels.

The Jewellery (Dealer's Registration and Transactions) Regulations 2012 which was promulgated on 02 February 2012, better regulates the sale of second hand jewellery on the local market with a view to ensuring that jewellers are accepting rightfully-owned jewellery, enabling customers to make informed decisions and safeguarding the interest of customers. Consequently, a person must fill in a Declaration of Ownership Form, produce proof of identity and address, and produce a receipt in respect of the jewellery being offered for sale.

The Police, the Assay Office and the Mauritius Revenue Authority are working in close collaboration during joint operations, inspections and investigations.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Prime Minister confirm to the House whether there was a group of foreigners who were involved *dans le vol des bijoux à Grand Bassin* during the last Maha Shivratri festival, and if so, can we know how many persons have been arrested?

The Prime Minister: This is subject to a different Parliamentary Question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, next question!

PAEDOPHILIA – PENALTIES

(No. B/111) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to paedophilia, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, since 2011 to date, indicating if consideration will be given for amendments to be brought to the relevant laws to provide for tougher penalties therefor.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is referring to the term paedophilia and I assume that he is using the term advisedly. May I refer the hon. Member to the definition of a paedophile in the Oxford English Dictionary which reads as follows -

“a person who is sexually attracted to children”.

There is no offence of paedophilia as such under our current legislation.

However, the offence of sexual abuse on children is dealt with under the Child Protection Act and the Criminal Code. The penalty for any offence under the Child Protection Act provides for fines ranging from Rs25,000 to Rs100,000; and imprisonment for terms ranging from 05 to 30 years.

Furthermore, such category of offenders under the Criminal Code are already liable to penal servitude for terms extending from 10 to 20 years, depending on the circumstances in which the offences were committed.

The statistics regarding sexual offences against children are being disaggregated, so as to obtain the number of cases of sexual abuse committed on children by suspected paedophiles. The information will be tabled as soon as it is available.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue of child protection is a matter of concern for parents, for society, as well as the authorities. Minors may be abused not only by strangers, but very often it is by known persons who may turn out to be very close relatives. It is also a fact that such offenders, especially when they operate within a family context, often get away because they are not denounced by family members or neighbours. The major difficulty in policing such cases of abuse is some sort of what we call a ‘law of silence’, so to speak, which makes Police intervention difficult. We have seen how recently several cases have come to light, years after the offences were committed when the victims decided to come forward and report on how they were abused by close relatives. This is a situation which happens in other countries as well, similarly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will agree that just increasing the penalty by itself will not put an end to such offences. It is important to lay emphasis on better sensitisation and education of the public, and of children in particular.

As a matter of fact, the Police Force, through its specialised units, that is, the Police Family Protection Unit, *Brigade pour la protection des mineurs*, and Crime Prevention Unit, is carrying out intensive awareness campaigns on child abuse in primary, secondary schools, and also in Women Centres, Youth Clubs and other socio-cultural organisations. From 01 January 2011 to 10 April 2013, 32,750 persons have thus been sensitised. Through the Police Public Partnership Policing Scheme, the Police are also working with the community members in order to develop a network to gather information about cases of child abuse, and to involve them in the protection of the minors in the community.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has set up a Child Victim and Witness Protection Unit to improve Court practice in child abuse and neglect cases. The Director of Public Prosecutions has recently launched a booklet, which explains the different stages of assistance given by the Police and the Court to minors who are victims of sexual assault.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare is also currently working on a comprehensive Children's Bill to make better provision for the prevention of offences committed on children, as well as more effective protection for the victims of such crimes.

Mr Baloomoody: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will intervene with the Chief Justice, so that, as from now on, children who are victims of offences don't have to face their aggressor and can depone *in camera*? Because this is one of the main problems we have in Court today. Children do not want to come forward when they see their aggressor sitting in the dock vis-à-vis them.

The Prime Minister: From what I understand, the hon. Chief Justice is well aware of this, and he is trying to do his best.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, considering that justice delayed is justice denied, could the hon. Prime Minister intervene with the Chief Justice so that there is a fast track in our courts of justice for victims of child exploitation or child abuse? Otherwise, it takes too long.

The Prime Minister: I will pass it on to the Registrar, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I can do no more.

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

Mr Ganoo: To pursue on what hon. Baloomoody said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must inform the hon. Prime Minister that, in fact, a few years ago, our law was amended to enable child victims to depone on live camera in the absence of an accused party. About ten years ago, the law was changed in this very

House, but I have never come across a case in which this new arrangement has been implemented. The hon. Prime Minister mentioned the DPP. May I ask him to see to it that, in fact, this law should be put into practice and implemented, and the Judiciary must be given the necessary resources to implement this change? The amendment has already been brought about ten years ago, but never implemented.

The Prime Minister: In fact, as far as I remember, I think we brought the law. But the hon. Chief Justice is well aware of this situation. I know he is trying, but I will pass this on to him.

CHILDREN - CRIMINAL OFFENCES AGAINST

(No. B/112) **Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to criminal offences committed against children, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, over the past five years, indicating the -

- (a) number of persons who have been prosecuted therefor, indicating the number thereof who have been convicted and the number thereof who have previous conviction/s for a similar offence/s;
- (b) nature of the offence, and
- (c) age of the child and of the offender/s, respectively, in each case.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, criminal offences committed against children includes a wide range of offences under the Criminal Code Act 1838, the Child Protection Act 1994, and the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations 2008. Therefore, they include a whole list of offences. Perhaps it will be too long for me to go through one by one.

But I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the number of reported cases of criminal offences committed against children over the past five years is as follows -

- 601 for period 01 April to 31 December 2008;
- 601 in 2009;
- 653 in 2010;
- 685 in 2011;
- 676 in 2012, and
- 237 as at 10 April 2013

But let me say again, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the list also includes -

- infanticide and murder of a newly-born child;
- abortion;
- rape, attempt upon chastity, illegal sexual intercourse;
- child trafficking;
- abandoning child, and
- abducting minor.

There is a whole list. I don't want you to get the impression that this just concerns one thing. It concerns a whole list, including as I said, selling liquor to a child or selling tobacco products and all this. That is why the list is like this.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that, out of these reported cases -

- (i) 581 persons have been prosecuted;
- (ii) 409 persons have been convicted, and
- (iii) 16 persons have been previously convicted for a similar offence.

In regard to parts (b) and (c) of the question, the information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, est-ce que je pourrais savoir du Premier ministre si, parmi les agresseurs, il existe des étrangers, et de préciser si cela relève d'agressions sexuelles ?

The Prime Minister: As I said, it is a detailed list. The Police are working on it, and I will lay it on the Table of the Assembly.

WHITE DOT INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING LTD - FUNDS – ALLEGED EMBEZZLEMENT

(No. B/113) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the alleged case of embezzlement of funds by White Dot International Consulting Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto, indicating the measures taken, if any, to recover the alleged embezzelled funds.

(Withdrawn)

MRS V. D. & MS T. D. – ALLEGED PHYSICAL ASSAULT

(No. B/114) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the alleged case of physical assault on one Mrs V. D. and on her daughter, Ms T. D., on or about 3.30 p.m. on 20 February 2013, at Avenue Seeneevassen, in Palma, Quatre Bornes, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry has been carried thereinto and, if so, the outcome thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on 20 February 2013, at about 1613 hrs, the Police of Quatre Bornes Station received a request for assistance. The personnel of Quatre Bornes Police Station and the Emergency Response Service proceeded to Avenue Seeneevassen, in Palma, Quatre Bornes, where the incident had occurred. They reached there at around 1630 hrs.

Mrs V. D. complained to the Police to the effect that her neighbours, Mr B.G, Mr N.K.G and Mrs M.G., had damaged her private car.

Both Mrs V.D. and her daughter Ms T.D. made allegations that they had been physically assaulted. They asked to be medically examined as they were suffering from pain. They were issued with the proper form, that is, PF58.

On the same day, from 1825 hrs to 1950 hrs, Mrs V.D. gave a written statement to the Police in the presence of her Counsel. She accused Mr N.K.G., Mr B.G. and Mrs M.G. of damaging her car, and during the incident Mr B.G. also assaulted her. A case of “Damaging Motor Vehicle” was reported against Mr B.G.

On the same day, Ms T.D. reported a case of “Attempt upon Chastity” against Mr B.G. She complained that Mr B.G. had attempted to assault her sexually. As she was not feeling well, she opted to give her written statement on 21 February 2013 in the presence of her Counsel.

On 20 February 2013, the Quatre Bornes Police looked for the three accused, but did not find them. The Police also arranged for the damaged car to be examined by a Forensic Science Officer.

On 25 February 2013, Ms T.D. was examined by the Police Medical Officer. On the same day, she accompanied the Police to the site of the incident for further enquiry.

On Friday 01 March 2013, one of the accused, Mr B.G., was arrested in Port Louis, and handed over to the Quatre Bornes Police. In his statement, in defence in the case, Mr B.G. denied the accusation levelled against him by Mrs V.D. and Ms T.D. After enquiry, he was released on parole by order of the

Assistant Superintendent of Police, and was warned to call back to the Police Station on Monday 04 March 2013 for Court procedures.

On 01 March 2013, another accused, Mr N.K.G., presented himself before the Quatre Bornes Police Station, and denied the accusations levelled against him. He stated that he was not present at the scene of the incident on 20 February 2013.

On Monday 04 March 2013, a provisional charge of “Attempt upon Chastity” was lodged against Mr B. G. before the Rose Hill District Court. He was bailed out after furnishing a surety of Rs5,000 and entering into recognizance for the sum of Rs20,000. His next Court appearance is scheduled for 06 June 2013.

In the case of “Damaging Motor Vehicle”, Mr Speaker, Sir, the accused parties have given their defence statements on 01 March 2013. The third suspect, Mrs M. G. gave her written statement on 22 March 2013. The Police also recorded statements from five witnesses.

Upon completion of enquiry, the case file will be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr Speaker: Last question to hon. Navarre-Marie!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Last question? First question!

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Will the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether one of the aggressors was on bail for a previous case of murder?

The Prime Minister: Yes, that is the case. I answered that. The hon. Member is referring to the previous question. I answered that question. In fact, the answer is yes.

Mr Ganoo: Can we then ask the hon. Prime Minister how come that somebody who had been charged with murder was granted bail, and was released on bail anew?

The Prime Minister: That does not depend either on me or on the Police. The Police did object to bail, I should have pointed out.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to the other case of murder. The hon. Member is asking the question in place of the Leader of the Opposition. He asked about the murder case. I am replying to the murder case! I cannot reply to two questions!

(Interruptions)

No, he is asking about the murder case. The Police did object to bail, but the Court decided to give him bail.

Mr Ganoo: I am asking that, since he was released on bail, as you are rightly saying for murder, how come that, in the second case in which he was involved, he was released on bail anew? This is my question!

The Prime Minister: That was not the question originally. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the murder case, but this is something that depends on the administration, Mr Speaker, Sir. I can't answer for this, as if I am the one who did it. I didn't do it, but, as I said, the Police did object to bail.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers. The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions B/128 and B/129 have been withdrawn and also Parliamentary Questions B/113 and B/115 have been withdrawn.

CITÉ MALHERBES, CUREPIPE – MMM/MSM CANDIDATE – ALLEGED ASSAULT

(No. B/115) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the incident that took place on the eve of the municipal elections in 2012, at Cité Malherbes, in Curepipe, whereby a candidate of the MMM/MSM alliance was allegedly physically assaulted, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto.

(Withdrawn)

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS – SECULAR – POLITICAL CONSENSUS

(No. B/116) **Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether he will state if he will consider the proposition for the setting up of a Sessional Select Committee, having as terms of reference, the forging of the required political consensus and the formulation of specific recommendations to shore up the secular foundations of the Republic of Mauritius and to keep politics and religion separate.

(Withdrawn)

RIVIERE NOIRE – LAGOONS - PORE-HAND BUOYS & STARBOARD-HAND BUOYS

(No. B/126) **Mrs Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the lagoons of Rivière Noire, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tourism Authority, information as to if it has been informed that the pore-hand buoys in green with flashing lights and the starboard-hand buoys in red with flashing lights thereat are broken and are not visible to the boaters entering the open sea or heading upstream and, if so, indicate if remedial measures have or will be taken in relation thereto.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the National Coast Guard has notified my Ministry that two marker buoys of red and green colour at Black River are missing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last week in reply to P.Q. B/67, I indicated to the House that my Ministry has, on 26 March 2013, floated tender for maintenance and repairs of existing marker buoys at various locations, including Rivière Noire.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the deadline for submission of bids is 30 of April 2013. During that exercise, all missing and broken buoys will be replaced.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell us whether restricted or public tender was launched? Because I have not seen any public tender till now. If there is a restricted tender, can he please provide the names of the pre-qualified contractors?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that it is a restricted bidding. I don't have any problem; I will table the list of potential suppliers.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Minister understand the needs for fishermen or any other boaters to return to their respective port safely, and will he give a date when works are expected to start and completed to ensure navigational safety?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to follow procedures, and in the public sector we absolutely must follow all these procedures. In three months' time maximum, we will have all the buoys repaired around the island.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell us if maintenance will be included this time in the contract?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

SAVANNE & BLACK RIVER – SCHOOL MATERIALS - DISTRIBUTION

(No. B/127) **Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River)** ask the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to school materials, he will state the dates and places the distribution exercise thereof was carried out for Constituency No. 14, in Savanne and Black River, indicating the number of needy children thereof that have been provided therewith, on each date and at the respective place of distribution.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the distribution of school materials to children of families earning a total monthly household income not exceeding Rs6,200 is not carried out on a constituency basis but rather on a districtwise basis.

I am informed by the National Empowerment Foundation that, as of date, 2236 needy children from families with a household income of up to Rs6,200 in the districts of Savanne & Black River have benefitted from such assistance.

A breakdown including dates and distribution centres is as follows –

Distribution of School Materials in the Districts of Black River and Savanne					
District	Place of distribution	Regions Covered	Date of distribution	Total No. of beneficiaries	Remarks
BLACK RIVER	Swami Sivananda SSS	Camp La Pailles (Cite la Ferme), Folles herbes,	7 January 2013	535	

		Vaudagne, Cascavelle, Impasse Simonet, Beau Songes			
	La Gaulette SSS	Cite Padco, Carre d'As, Camp La Colle, Camp Robinet, Petite Riviere, Carreau Calyptus (Case Noyale), Cite Case Noyale, Camp Madras, Remy Ollier, Coteau Raffin, Dilo Pouri	9 January 2013	439	
	Case Noyale Community Centre	Cite Padco, Carre d'As, Camp La Colle, Camp Robinet, Petite Riviere, Carreau Calyptus (Case Noyale), Cite Case Noyale, Camp Madras, Remy Ollier, Coteau Raffin, Dilo Pouri	18 February 2013	99	2 ND distribution 18 February 2013*
	Gros Cailloux Community Centre	Camp La Pailles (Cite la Ferme), Folles Herbes, Vaudagne, Cascavelle, Impasse Simonet,	19 February 2013	121	2 ND distribution*

		Beau Songes			
	La Valette	La Valette	11 January 2013 & 18 February 2013	290 (189 on 11 January 2013 and 101 on 18 February 2013)	2 ND distribution on 18 February 2013*
SAVANNE	M. Sangeelee SSS	African town, Bel Ombre, Riambel, Camp Charlot, Camp Fanny, Cimetiere Trois Bras, Riviere des Galets, St Martin, Contour Prune	30 December 2012	642	
	Riviere des Anguilles Community Centre	African town, Bel Ombre, Riambel, Camp Charlot, Camp Fanny, Cimetiere Trois Bras, Riviere des Galets, St Martin	25 January 2013	110	2 nd distribution*
TOTAL				2236	

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to table this information where there are several regions for the benefit of the House.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have heard the hon. Minister mentioning the dates which vary from December to February. So, some children are getting materials in December and others in February. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will take some measures to ensure that no children get materials in February while others get it as far back as December?

Mr Dayal: I do agree with the hon. Member, but all this depends on the registration. You will see in several cases that a second distribution is effected in February, but it is our decision that they get the school materials before they go to school in January. This is a good question.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he can certify that all needy children have been provided with school materials by now.

Mr Dayal: I can say to the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, depending on those families who are registered and are qualified, they do obtain school materials.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would kindly ask the hon. Minister to look into the matter because according to information from my own school, there are needy children in my school who have not yet received any school material.

Mr Dayal: When such information comes to my attention, Mr Speaker, Sir, I really do the needful. Usually, whenever my attention is drawn, even in the month of March itself we effect distribution as some people do not turn up the day the distribution is done. They come later, but I will always consider any case whenever my attention is drawn.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, last question!

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister how is the purchase done? Is it by tender exercise in each constituency?

Mr Dayal: Yes. It is through tender exercises nationwide.

RADIATION THERAPY & CHEMOTHERAPY - PATIENTS

(No. B/128) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to Radiation Therapy and chemotherapy, he will state the number of patients who have been undergoing sessions therefor respectively, since August 2011 to date.

(Withdrawn)

BEACHES – DECKCHAIRS – ALLOCATION OF PERMITS

(No. B/129) Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the allocation of permits to operate deckchairs on the beaches, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Beach Authority, information as to if a Committee has been set up to review the criteria therefor and, if so, indicate the –

- (a) composition thereof, and
- (b) new criteria laid down, indicating when same will take effect

(Withdrawn)

Mr Speaker: This is a proper time to break. I'll suspend for one and a half hours.

At 1.00 p.m the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.36 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

STREET CHILDREN – SAFIRE REPORT – RECOMMENDATIONS

(No. B/130) Ms L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare whether, in regard to the street children, she will state the measures taken by her Ministry in relation thereto, indicating if –

- (a) a new survey thereof has been carried out, and
- (b) the recommendations contained in the SAFIRE Report have been implemented, and if so, give details thereof.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to PQ B/27 where I had already indicated to the House that, based on Amnesty International's definition, in Mauritius, there are children on the street, that is, children who spend most of their time on the street and go back to their families at the end of the day.

It is the policy of my Ministry to intervene whenever cases of vulnerable children are reported. Support services are provided to these children who are followed by the Child Development Unit at the level of their families. In cases where a child is deemed to be in immediate danger and is exposed to harm, arrangements are made through the issue of an Emergency Protection Order to have the child accommodated in a "place of safety".

My Ministry works in collaboration with all stakeholders, including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) where children are involved. The NGO, SAFIRE has carried out a study on street children which was made public in February 2012. Since most of the recommendations of the report are quite recent, my Ministry has not undertaken a second study regarding this issue.

As regards part (b) of the question, it is to be noted that the recommendations made in the study are multisectoral and involve the participation of different Ministries/Stakeholders. I wish to inform the House that the recommendations which concern my Ministry are being taken on board. Following the publication of the report, a meeting was held at my Ministry on 28 February 2012 with SAFIRE and the representative of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions. SAFIRE was invited to drive the multisectoral committee. Following the setting-up of the said committee, my Ministry would accordingly provide appropriate support in order to better respond to the needs of children in street situations. Another meeting was held on 17 May 2012 wherein SAFIRE was apprised of the role of the CDU and the projects that are being implemented under its aegis. The representative of SAFIRE was also briefed on other services and projects related to children, for example, the existence of the *Brigade pour la protection des mineurs* and School Child Protection Clubs. It is to be noted that SAFIRE has not proposed any plan of action as at date.

As regards the recommendations which are of direct relevance to my Ministry, the following measures have been implemented –

- (i) policy makers are being sensitised on the situation of vulnerable children in general. The Working Together Committee has been set up to enlist the collaboration of all relevant Ministries on the issue of children at risk inclusive of children in street situations;
- (ii) the capacity building on issues related to HIV/AIDS, early pregnancies, abortion, substance abuse, school dropout, child abuse and related rights, etc., are being regularly conducted for personnel of NGOs working with children;
- (iii) the National Children's Council undertakes intensive capacity building programmes for children through talks, seminars and sensitisation campaigns in schools. The Community Childwatch Committee and the District Child Protection Committees are also roped in the IEC programmes mainly on issues related to Rights of the Child. SAFIRE is represented in different instances of the Ministry;
- (iv) under the Special Collaborative Programme for Support to Women and Children in Distress, SAFIRE has been provided with funds to the tune of Rs920,000 to support children in developing agricultural techniques;
- (v) the Ministry is also focusing on a project related to strengthening family values and the *Ecole des Parents* as a matter of priority. These projects are designed to empower parents with the capacity to manage and develop coping mechanisms in regard to their family problems and upbringing of their children;

- (vi) the Children's Bill is under preparation with a view to harmonising and consolidating legislations to protect children from exploitation and violence, and
- (vii) the National Child Protection Strategy, which aims at consolidating the ongoing efforts and measures to respond to child protection issues, will address the issue of further studies to identify and evaluate the institutional capacity of local bodies, public and private that can help out with the reintegration of these children into the society.

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Minister to PQ B/27 on 08 May 2012, where it was clearly said that SAFIRE had expressed the wish to have the help of the Ministry in elaborating a concerted plan with clear objectives for improving the well-being of these children, to which the Ministry was agreeable. I would like to have some details from the hon. Minister regarding that concerted plan.

Mrs Martin: As indicated in my answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, following publication of the report on 20 February 2012, SAFIRE and the representatives of my Ministry and the representatives of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions met and, therefore, SAFIRE was invited to drive the multisectoral committee. Up to now, SAFIRE has not proposed any plan of action, and my Ministry also informed SAFIRE at the time that we would be willing to give appropriate support to SAFIRE in case it does so.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned the Working Together Committee as she did in her reply last year. May I know from the hon. Minister when this Committee sat for the last time and who chaired this meeting, and whether the protocols which were to be established by this Committee as per her response to a previous PQ, have been established?

Mrs Martin: Actually, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are 12 stakeholders who sit on this Committee, and on 25 October 2012 the following six stakeholders had signed the respective MoUs, that is, the Prime Minister's Office, Civil Status Office, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Attorney General's Office, and the National Children's Council. Two stakeholders have agreed to sign their respective MoU on 19 April 2013, that is, the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands and the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment. The discussion with the other stakeholders is ongoing for signature of their respective MoUs.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I have asked the hon. Minister whether she has the date of the last sitting of this Working Together Committee and whether the protocols which were to be established, as per her reply to a PQ at the beginning of last year, have been established.

Mrs Martin: Like I have indicated, Mr Speaker, Sir, the protocols with the different partners are being established. We are doing it, and we have already signed six of them and two also are in the process of being signed. Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member must understand that there are negotiations that go on with the different Ministries...

(Interruptions)

...in order to be...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Silence!

Mrs Martin: There are negotiations which are ongoing with the different stakeholders in order for them to be able to sign the different memorandums.

Mr Obeegadoo: I have two questions, Sir. I have listened carefully to the Minister. I heard her say that her Ministry had invited SAFIRE to lead the multisectoral committee, and that SAFIRE has not come up with a national plan of action. So, I would like to ask the Minister whether she is aware that we have a Ministry headed by a Minister, funded by public monies to do precisely that, and I would like to ask the Minister to tell us whether she has a plan of action for street children ready, and if not, why not; whether as prescribed by UNICEF, she has a child protection policy which is clearly spelt out, and if not, why not.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, like I have indicated in my answer, this is a multisectoral problem and, therefore, it requires a multipronged approach. Therefore, that is the reason why we have asked SAFIRE, which deals specifically with street children, to lead the process so that we will be able to participate...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Martin: ... in the process as well. I must say...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister is answering, listen to her answer!

Mrs Martin: I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that SAFIRE and my Ministry are collaborating and working on different issues, and SAFIRE is represented in several instances of my Ministry. Whenever a case by SAFIRE is reported to my Ministry, we also take into account that case and follow up. I must say that, since 2006, SAFIRE has referred 12 cases to my Ministry. Although the figures which they claim,

according to their study, is about 6,000 children, they have only referred 12 of those 6,000 children to us. At the same time, there is a problem with the methodology of SAFIRE because they work in anonymity, for example, with the children; therefore, we do not have access to the files of the children. Even though we ask for the children's names, we do not get those names as well to be able to work with the children, as I said.

Mr Obegadoo: Given that Government is multisectoral and that the SAFIRE Report recommended that urgent action be taken concerning school drop outs, because street children are school drop outs, may I know from the Minister whether she has drawn the attention of Government – I am not asking for Cabinet secrets – to the issue of school drop outs and whether she has taken the initiative of liaising with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and other concerned Ministries to set up a monitoring initiative concerning school drop outs?

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, we regularly have meetings with the different stakeholders concerning different problems with regard to children. *Le ministre de l'Education en fait a été mis au courant de ces problèmes et il est en train de tackle them at his own level.*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: A last question to hon. Mrs Ribot!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Ribot: Last question on the same issue!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the issues raised by the SAFIRE Report was the issue of child labour. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether this issue has been addressed by her Ministry.

Mrs Martin: Like I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, we consult various stakeholders, the Ministry of Labour is also one of them.

HEALTH SECTOR - CAESARIAN SECTION – STUDY

(No. B/131) Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to caesarian section, he will state if a study has been carried out to determine the reasons for an increase in the rate thereof and, if so, indicate the findings thereof and, if not, why not.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a study on the factors associated with an increase in the rate of caesarian section in Mauritius has been carried out by the Mauritius Institute of Health in collaboration with our Private Health Institutions in March/April 2011.

The study has revealed that the main causes of an increase in the caesarian rate are as follows –

- women who have delivered previously by caesarian section are likely to undergo another caesarian section;
- foetal distress;
- failure of labour to progress;
- hypertension in pregnancy;
- malpresentation;
- haemorrhage, and
- on request.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of the recommendations of the report, my Ministry has taken the following measures –

- counselling of women on appropriate prenatal care;
- reinforcing the Safe Motherhood Initiative;
- sensitising gynaecologists and obstetricians on the high rate of caesarian sections;
- putting in place a monitoring system of deliveries headed by Consultants Gynaecologists and Obstetricians at the level of each regional hospital, and
- establishing a better records system of case recording for pregnant women undergoing caesarian sections.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that for the period 2009 to 2012, the rate of caesarian section was stabilised at around 43.9% in 2012 as compared to 44.4% in 2009 in both public and private health institutions.

Dr. S. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there is not a financial dimension to caesarian sections as it is evidently more lucrative in the private sector to have a caesarian and it gives good overtime pay in the public sector?

Mr Bundhoo: May I assure the hon. Member that part of his observation is quite correct because many of the caesarians are being done by private doctors in private clinics. But I can assure the hon. Member, I did ask myself the question and that is why I am in a position to tell him that, most of the caesarians, conducted in our public hospitals, were done between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Therefore, it does not involve overtime paid to doctors. I have checked that.

Mrs Ribot: M. le président, j'aimerais demander à l'honorable ministre si l'étude qui a été menée a pris en considération le nombre de césariennes en moyenne pratiquées par différents gynécologues dans les hôpitaux publics et privés.

Mr Bundhoo: I have gone through the report. Yes, there is some kind of classification within the report; where it has been done, how it has been done, whether in private hospitals or public hospitals.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned that the rate of caesarian is now at 43.9%. Is he aware that according to the World Health Organisation the standard should be 15%, which means that we are well above the accepted level of caesarian? In view of this situation, what precise measures will be taken? May I also ask the hon. Minister whether it is not a fact that it is 40% in Government hospitals ...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Labelle, one question at a time.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have checked the information. The hon. Member is right. The recommended percentage is 15% by the World Health Organisation. But since she has mentioned that, may I take the opportunity to inform her that in BRIC countries, for example, in Brazil, which is also a member of WHO, it is 45.9%.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Bundhoo: Let me finish! I am giving the hon. Member the good and bad figures also. In Russia, it is 18%, which is just above the 15% level; in India it is 30%; in China it is 63%, and in South Africa it is 20.6%. I have taken the pain to request officers of my Ministry to find out what is the trend. I must say that even the World Health Organisation has drawn the attention of European countries that, over the last six, seven and eight years, in UK, France and Spain, the percentage of caesarians have doubled in most European countries. But, this is not the reason for us in Mauritius to sit in our armchair. Still, we agree with the World Health Organisation that 15% is the required level; in fact, it should be limited as much as possible. But my Ministry is doing everything possible to reduce the number of caesarians. I must say one thing again. I have this information and not being a doctor, I have been informed that, in order to reverse the percentage of caesarians done at the moment, it will take some time. At least, we have reduced it by nearly 1%. It may look meagre, but it is positive and we are moving in the right direction. If we continue with our efforts, I am sure if all of us put our heads together, we would be able to achieve a reasonable target.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House what is the percentage in the private sector and in the public sector?

Mr Bundhoo: I have the figure with me. I will circulate it in a minute.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will raise a point that I have already raised once. Caesarians are obviously linked to premature birth and low weight at birth, which are major issues in Mauritius. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether our regional hospitals, in that light, are now equipped with fully functional new neonatal care units, and if not, why not.

Mr Bundhoo: I thank the hon. Member for this question. Here, I have to thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Bachoo, who has pressed upon and has completed and opened the new neonatal clinic at the Flacq Hospital. We opened a new one at Victoria Hospital and Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital also has one. We are reviewing the system, and we shall continue to review and to provide the best possible services for neonatal and postnatal cares in all our hospitals.

Mrs Radegonde-Haines: Mr Speaker, Sir, in relation to the 15% rate of caesarians, we have heard a pompous rhetoric from the hon. Minister. I would like to know what system his Ministry has put in place to address this issue.

Mr Bundhoo: I will repeat that for the hon. Member. In light with the recommendations of the report, my Ministry has taken the following measures -

- putting in place a monitoring system of deliveries headed by consultant gynaecologists and obstetricians, and
- establishing a better record system of case recording for pregnant women.

Mr Speaker: Last question hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a perception that, in the private sector, gynaecologists tend to abuse of caesarians. I would like to ask the hon. Minister what measures, with regard specifically to private clinics, is his Ministry taking to ensure that people are not abused.

Mr Bundhoo: In fact, we are using the same principle in the private and the public sector. We all have a principle that is being followed, and a protocol that is being followed by both public and private doctors. There is some kind of protocol. All this emanates from that study.

Mr Speaker: Last question hon. Mrs Ribot!

Mrs Ribot: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister - to follow on what my colleague has just said - whether there has been a study on the date, time and price of caesarians in the private sector.

Mr Bundhoo: I am not so sure about the price, but I have just replied that most of the caesarians carried in the public sector are between 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. I answered that earlier.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister table a copy of the protocol just mentioned by him?

Mr Bundhoo: I have just said that there is no protocol. There is a principle.

(Interruptions)

I said earlier there is some form of principle. In fact, hon. Obeegadoo asked me that question and I said that these are the recommendations, and the measures are -

- (i) counselling of women on appropriate prenatal care;
- (ii) reinforcing the safe motherhood initiative;
- (iii) sensitising and all these things.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Let us move to the next question. Hon. Ms Anquetil!

CSR - ADVISORY TECHNICAL SUB-COMMITTEE - SET UP

(No. B/132) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state if an Advisory Technical Corporate Social Responsibility sub-committee has been set up and, if so, give details thereof and, if not, if consideration will be given therefor.

The Minister of Education and Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, as announced in the Budget Speech 2013, an Advisory Technical CSR Committee has been set up to ensure that the operations of CSR have maximum impact in combating poverty and improving well-being. The Committee is chaired by the officer-in-charge of the CSR Unit. It comprises seven other members, representing private sector organisations, CSR foundations and civil society organisations.

The Committee has been specifically mandated to -

- (i) clarify the interpretation of CSR guidelines;
- (ii) propose operational guidelines in relation to targeted areas;
- (iii) propose technical/operational amendments in the context of the budget exercise on specific areas, and
- (iv) disseminate policy decisions on CSR.

Ms Anquetil: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state how many times the Advisory Technical CSR Committee met?

Dr. Bunwaree: The CSR Committee has just been set up. In fact, it took some time to finalise the Board members. My colleague, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and I also, in his absence, are pressing on that Committee to meet very soon.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister tell us whether there is no conflict of interest in the procedures of the Advisory Committee due to the fact that this Committee is chaired - as the hon. Minister has just mentioned - by the officer-in-charge, who is the very same person who does not recommend approval of some projects and when the Committee has to review the project, he is the one who chairs this Committee?

Dr. Bunwaree: I personally do not believe that there is any conflict of interest when we see the mandate of that Committee. But I will transmit this *point de vue* to my colleague, and he will look into the matter.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the Advisory Committee had been consulted for the distribution of financial grants to flood victims recently?

Dr. Bunwaree: As I have said, the Committee is going to meet very soon. It has just been set up. I do not think that this has been done so far.

CAMP MAPOU – BUS LAY-BY

(No. B/133) Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the proposed acquisition of land for the provision of a bus lay-by at Camp Mapou, he will state where matters stand.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, in June 2011, the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix requested my Ministry to acquire two plots of land of an extent of 80m² each along Caldwell Road, Camp Mapou, Henrietta from “Anthurium and Orchids Ltd” and “Medine Ltd” respectively for the construction of two bus lay by and shelters.

We have recently been informed that additional land would be required for the construction of the footpaths for the two bus lay by. The Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix has been requested on 09 April 2013 to confirm the exact extent required to enable my Ministry to proceed with the acquisition of the land.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish also to inform the House that in December 2010, at the request of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, two portions of land were compulsorily acquired for the construction of another bus lay by and pavement at Caldwell Road, Camp Mapou, Henrietta.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, before putting my question, I would like to tender my apologies for words I used to the address of the hon. Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure before withdrawing my PQ No. B/77 at the sitting of last Tuesday. Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg leave to withdraw the word. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: The Chair appreciates your noble gesture. Thank you, hon. Member.

RDA - ENVIRONMENTAL SCOPING STUDY

(No. B/134) Dr R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Environmental Scoping Study, prepared by the CCA Environmental (Pty) Ltd. on behalf of SPP Project Solutions for the Road Development Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority -

- (a) information as to -
 - (i) the cost incurred thereof;
 - (ii) who financed same and;
 - (iii) the statutory provision under which same has been undertaken, and
- (b) and table copy of the report thereof.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Member for the decision taken. Mr Speaker Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that -

- (i) the cost incurred was USD 94,930.
- (ii) the study was financed by Government from the RDP Fund.
- (iii) appropriate information has been compiled in line with Section 15 subsection (3) of the Environment Protection Act, whereby a proponent is expected at least three months before submitting his application for an EIA Licence under section 18 of the Act, to provide the Director of Environment with an outline of his proposed undertaking, including its location, nature and scope.

Furthermore, the procurement process requires that sufficient information has to be given to the bidders to enable them to understand and mitigate the environmental risks and constraints to be taken into account in the design, construction and operations phases of the PPP project. This would enable them to develop a suitable Environmental Management Plan for submission with their RFP Bids.

(b) A copy of the report thereof is being tabled.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, as per the consultants, they themselves said that there is no statutory provision in Mauritius in the EPA Act for certain study. May I know from the hon. Minister whether such a scoping study was necessary to be done by the RDA?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the study was extremely important because being given that the area is so complicated and this is the first time that we are undertaking a project of such a magnitude, that is the reason one of the requirements before the EIA was the scoping study and we had no alternative but to undertake the study. First of all, we try to invite applications from bidders and, in fact, when applications were invited, out from seven specialist firms only three of them responded. Unfortunately, once evaluation was conducted, none of them was found fit to be able to do the job, and that is the reason why we had no other alternative than to request the SPP themselves to look into the possibility of undertaking the study. Had it not been important, we would not have gone into that.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell us when was the report tabled and whether the report made any recommendation on the adequacy of drains to evacuate water after flooding, and what action has been taken by his Ministry as a result of any such recommendation?

Mr Bachoo: I had already stated here in the House that this report concerns entirely the phase 2 of the Ring Road - that concerns the Ring Road, that is, the scoping report. It has nothing to do with the first part of the Ring Road and whatever recommendations there are will be included in the EIA report which is being prepared actually.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister in his reply stressed on the importance of such a project for our country and also on the amount of money involved in that project. May I ask the hon. Minister whether his engineers from the RDA did not find it fit when they were preparing the tender documents to include such a study, that is, an environmental scoping study in the tender documents, and had Government spent USD94,930 outside the contract amount?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned, this is to deal with the second phase of the Ring Road project being given the complexity of the project because a tunnel had to be constructed, and the study was extremely important. It had to be done and, in fact, I have got legal advice also that everything has been done in order. There were no means for us not to do this scoping because it is only once it is submitted that the EIA could have been worked out. This is the information I have been provided by the RDA.

Dr. Sorefan: May I know from the hon. Minister whether this scoping report was considered by the Ministerial Cabinet?

Mr Bachoo: Normally, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a PPP project. It has not been submitted to Cabinet because that is under PPP, and there is a Board at the RDA; RDA looks for that, the Board looks

after the petty issues that are concerned. I have already informed the House earlier that the matter will be brought before the PPO and then before Cabinet before the award will be made. So, the Cabinet will take cognizance of it only once all the formalities are completed.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister why such a study has not been done in the context of the first part of the ring road? The hon. Minister has insisted for a second time - I think in this House today - that this scoping study concerns, rightly so, the second part of the ring road. The question I am putting to him is: in view of the nature of the works regarding part one of the ring road and part two of ring road, although part two is more extensive, shouldn't we have also asked for a scoping study before the construction works with regard to the first component of the ring road?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is very simple because at three stages there have been three different consultants who have worked on that. About ten years ago, there was one group of consultant; the British worked on it. They have never made mention of the scope study; secondly, the CES, another international company, did the thorough study. There was no requirement, they never recommended for such a study. And the third was the Egyptians; they also never recommended because it all depends on the engineers or rather on those technicians working on the projects, that is, the international consultants. They did not make mention of it, but here, being given that we have to construct a tunnel, which is first of its kind in our country, and secondly, because of the nature, that this study was felt important. Had it been necessary, if they had proposed, then, definitely, we would have gone for that.

Mr Speaker: Last question to hon. Lesjongard.

Mr Lesjongard: Since SPP Project Solutions were the ones who carried the feasibility study for the decongestion programme and they were the ones who were appointed as transaction adviser, did they not see that they had to come forward with an environmental scoping study at the time they did the feasibility study? My question is: why did we have to pay extra money to them? Twice they worked on the same project; when they did the feasibility study, and then as transaction adviser.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, first, they had taken charge of the responsibility - the areas were so wide. Once they came forward with the proposition, the Board of RDA did not find any other alternative than to accept the request which was made because as they proceeded with the work, they came forward with many new ideas, suggestions and recommendations, which we were bound to accept. Had we not accepted that and had gone through the project, and tomorrow a problem would have occurred, then the entire responsibility would have been on the Government or on the RDA. They found the necessity of doing it, and had requested for it. We had to do it.

PPP TOLL ROADS PROJECT

(No. B/135) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the PPP Toll Roads Project, he will state the -

- (a) financial risk thereof, and
- (b) total value of Mauritian assets that will be transferred thereto.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, by choosing a PPP model of implementing this mega project, Government is transferring the following risks onto the private promoter. That is -

1. design and construction risks for Lot 2 of the Ring Road, the Harbour Bridge, the A1-M1 Connector, the Phoenix, Dowlut and Jumbo grade separated junctions, and the new grade separated junctions on M1 and M2;
2. variations and increases in project costs (both for the initial construction costs and maintenance and upgrading costs);
3. road life expectancy and maintenance;
4. environmental compliance, and
5. operation of the toll road and associated traffic revenue risks.

The private sector is financing the whole project. It is providing 20% of the investment requirement of the project through its own funding. The remaining 80% of the investment requirement will come from a loan to be contracted from the Government of Mauritius. Raising of funds by the promoter himself would have been more costly, thereby adversely impacting on the cost of operation of the toll system, whereas with the intervention of Government the onlending facility will significantly contain cost, thereby making the toll system more affordable. It must be emphasised that Government is only providing a loan facility to the promoter with the associated guarantee. There has been no question of Government making any grant to the private promoter. This is explicitly clear. All commercial risks will be borne by the promoter.

The special purpose vehicle which has been created by the Government is a State-owned company, which will interact directly with the private partner. Government will give the loan to the special purpose vehicle. It is expected that the private developer will also bear all commercial risks, including the traffic revenue risks, that is, any shortfall arising from road users not utilising the toll road network. This will motivate the private developer to ensure the attractive affordability of the toll rate.

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister why is it that the Government is going to provide a loan at sub market interest rate when the Government, itself, can invest 80% into that project?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a PPP project because the private partner will have to bring his own capital, his own funds, his own ideas into that. But, at the same time, Government wanted to come in, so that the consumers won't have to pay too much because if the private partner is going to...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish!

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Bachoo: If the private partner is going to take from the market, then the cost might be higher. So, the Government thought of coming forward and trying to help, so that the consumer at the end will not have to pay too much. That is it.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. May we know from the hon. Minister if in the contract there will be a clause where no cost overrun will be entertained by this Government; variation to above 20%? If this is so, the 20% the private sector is going to finance this PPP project will be zero.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that 20% of the funds is being provided by the private sector and 80% by the Government. That is not a grant. I have already mentioned that. That is only a loan which we are forwarding to the private sector, to the special purpose vehicle, and then the entire risk, the risk...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Bachoo: Let me finish! The risk is being transferred on the investors. We are transferring the risk on them. So, they have to take the risk. We are only giving them the loan and, at the same time, that loan is being guaranteed by those promoters who are in that project. They are going to guarantee the loan.

Mr Li Kwong Wing: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not heard the hon. Minister answering the question. What is the value of the total assets, land assets and road assets that are being transferred to that foreign investor? Secondly, where is the financial risk of the investor if Government is going to give a sovereign guarantee for the income to be received through the toll road?

Mr Bachoo: We are not transferring any asset to the promoters. There is no question of transferring assets. We are providing them a loan, and that loan will have to be guaranteed by those promoters. They have to guarantee the loan. This is not a grant. This is not money which we are giving to them. This is very, very clear.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Road Decongestion Programme, we are going to the tollable road. There is M1 and part of M2, Ring Road 1, Valentina to Terre Rouge. All these are assets of Mauritians, and these are going to be in the tollable road. May we know from the hon. Minister what is the value that is going to be given to them? It is as if I build the house, the private sector comes and takes the rent.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, that remains the property of the Government of Mauritius. They are given 33 years' time in order to recoup the investment that they have made on those roads. Anybody will not come in this country and just invest for the sake of Mauritius. Whatever investment they will make, they will have to recoup the money. They have to get the money back, but we are not engaging any part of this country to anybody, to any investor for that matter.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister what will be the interest rate for the loan that would be given to this promoter? Also, the hon. Minister stated that the company would give guarantee to Government. What types of guarantee the promoter will give in relation to this loan?

Mr Bachoo: We don't give guarantee; they have to give us guarantee. It has to be in terms of assets and, as far as the interest is concerned, I don't know exactly, but the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development will look into that. It must be around the market rate.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, to a question put to the hon. Minister on 08 June by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the issue was raised concerning the company which did the feasibility study, and the transaction advisor. Now we know that it is the same company. Can he confirm whether the company which has been shortlisted for the toll road project is from the same country as the one who did the feasibility study and the transaction advisor?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, to be very honest, we are not involved; my Ministry is not involved in this question of evaluation of tenders and all. We are not involved at any cost in that issue. That is the reason why - it is very premature - I am not in a position to say whether X, Y or Z who is getting the contract. The papers have been splashing out all types of news. We prefer to wait for the exercise to be conducted and the award to be made.

Mr Ganoo: *Le ministre peut-il nous éclairer sur un point, M. le président ?* Can the hon. Minister tell us whether the tollable roads, that is, the roads on which tolls will be collected, are also roads which have already been constructed?

Mr Bachoo: In fact, to be very honest, there are roads which have been constructed which will form part. But, normally, whenever we are going to include the tollable roads, there must be an alternative to provide those people who are not willing to use the toll roads. Second, I have already mentioned earlier in a Private Notice Question that public vehicles will not have to pay any toll on even the tollable roads.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Minister say whether Government is taking any commitment with regard to financial contribution? Should the operator not reach a target that has been set with regard to vehicles that are going to use those infrastructures?

Mr Bachoo: In fact, the hon. Member was Minister at that time when this matter was being discussed, and since, you must have been aware that all these risks are to be borne by the promoter. We have made it very, very clear, and, in fact, at the time of discussions between the Ministry of Finance and those SPPs, it was clearly spelt out at the very beginning that all the public vehicles won't have to pay a single cent. This has already been cleared earlier – I think you were deaf.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, after all the disturbing information we have received...

Mr Speaker: Just put your question!

(Interruptions)

Silence!

Mr Bhagwan: I am putting my question.

Mr Speaker: Yes, put your question!

Mr Bhagwan: After all the disturbing information we have received from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister...

Mr Speaker: Yes, put your question.

Mr Bhagwan: Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister agree that this project - from what we have heard from him - is a *mari* jackpot which he is giving to these promoters on the back the people?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the real jackpot that the hon. Member will get is the A1 and M1 roads which we are constructing to help the people of his constituency. To be very honest, there is

nothing as jackpot. These are all types of propaganda that have been conducted. The evaluation work has started and once these projects are completed, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are sure that each and every Mauritian will be proud to claim themselves to be Mauritians. It is a modern system. We are trying to modernise our road networks.

Mr Speaker: Last question, Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Speaker, Sir, may we know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether the tendering process was in foreign currency at fixed rate or adjustable rate on a daily basis?

Mr Bachoo: Well, I don't understand by tendering because, so far, as I am aware, the tenders are being evaluated as far as the nomination of the contractors, that is, the investors who are going to participate; and the second part of it, which currency, I am not in a position to tell the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

MAURITIUS WEIGHTLIFTING FEDERATION - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/136) Mr. F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the situation prevailing at the Mauritius Weightlifting Federation, he will state the remedial actions taken, if any, by his Ministry as at to date.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the hon. Member for coming up with this question which gives me the opportunity to enlighten the House on the chaotic situation prevailing at the Mauritius Weight Lifters and Power Lifters Association.

My Ministry has received several complaints from athletes against the Managing Committee of the Federation which was elected in July 2010. This state of affairs naturally led to the emergence of another group which took over the management of the Federation in July 2012. The legitimacy of the new Managing Committee became an issue and the Registrar of Associations confirmed that it was not in order. The Registrar of Associations further informed that the previous Management Committee was also not in order.

Consequently, I could not condone the existence of two illegitimate conflicting groups at the head of the Federation. I had, therefore, no alternative than to suspend the Certificate of Recognition of the Federation with immediate effect. The decision was communicated to the concerned parties on 21 February 2013.

My Ministry further proposed, in the first instance, to call both parties together with the Mauritius National Olympic Committee around a table to find an amicable solution to the situation. However, all

the efforts of my Ministry have gone in vain as none of the parties has shown an interest to sit around a mediation committee as at date.

I am informed that one of the parties has applied to the Supreme Court for leave to apply for a judicial review of my decision to suspend the Certificate of Recognition of the Federation. Pending the ruling of the Supreme Court, I cannot but continue to impress upon the Federation to elect a new legitimate Managing Committee the soonest possible.

I wish to assure the House that in spite of the conflicting situation at the Mauritius Weight Lifters and Power Lifters Association, at no point in time weight lifters have been penalised in any way. On the contrary, my Ministry has continued to provide training facilities by putting the training centre at their disposal, free transport and food supplements.

Furthermore, Ms Shaline Valaydon, a licensee of the Federation and promising weight Lifter was offered a sport scholarship by my Ministry for advanced training in France. This has enabled her to win the “*Championnats d’Ile de France chez les +75 Kgs*” and to be elected “*Meilleure haltérophile des Championnats d’Ile de France*”.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je vais rappeler à la Chambre ...

Mr Speaker: Supplementary question!

Mr Quirin: *Yes, it’s a question.* Je vais rappeler à la Chambre que cette fédération d’haltérophilie ne fonctionne pas depuis plus de 20 mois. L’honorable ministre, dans sa réponse, vient nous dire qu’il a, depuis le 21 février dernier, écrit au COM pour la tenue d’une réunion avec toutes les parties concernées. Puis-je demander à l’honorable ministre, M. le président, s’il peut nous dire qu’est-ce qui se passera si, d’ici six mois, il n’a toujours aucune réponse du Comité Olympique Mauricien ?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have requested the parties to come for a mediation committee and if there is no answer, I’ll have no other alternative than to go for a caretaker committee.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

Mr Quirin: J’ai d’autres questions supplémentaires, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: But don’t put hypothetical question.

Mr Quirin: I am sorry?

Mr Speaker: Don’t put hypothetical question! Put your question!

Mr Quirin: L’honorable ministre peut-il nous dire, M. le président, ...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, don’t make comments!

Mr Quirin: ...pourquoi dans le cas de la fédération d'haltérophilie, il n'a pas appliqué le même procédé utilisé pour régler le problème au niveau de la natation, et d'avoir attendu tout ce temps pour venir dire que bientôt il viendra avec un *caretaker committee*, comme il aurait du l'avoir fait depuis plus de 20 mois?

Mr Ritoo: *M. le président, il ne faut pas mélanger les serviettes et les torchons.*

(Interruptions)

Different scenarios require different actions. At the level of the swimming...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ritoo: The Swimming Federation had no legal Managing Committee following a mass resignation of executive members of the Committee.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Hon. Minister of Health!

Mr Ritoo: Whereas in the case of the Mauritius Weightlifters and Powerlifters Association, two groups are claiming legitimacy to govern. So, the situation is different.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, malgré ce que vient de dire l'honorable ministre des Sports, la section 8(6) (b) du *Sports Act* lui donne le pouvoir de mettre en place un *caretaker committee*. Pourquoi, dans ce cas, ne l'a-t-il pas fait ?

Mr Ritoo: That's why I stated in my answer, Mr Speaker, Sir that if an amicable situation is not reached, I will have no other alternative than to come up with a caretaker committee.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, par rapport au *Sports Act*, avant de suspendre la fédération d'haltérophilie, est-ce qu'il a consulté *the relevant International Federation*, comme indiqué dans la section 8(6) du même *Sports Act* ?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, once I consult the Mauritius National Olympic Committee, it is okay, I don't need to consult the International Federation, because Mauritius National Olympic Committee is supposed to take....

(Interruptions)

Mr Quirin: C'est à l'encontre du *Sports Act*. Je viens de citer la clause du *Sports Act* qui stipule, et, avec votre permission, je vais le lire rapidement, M. le président -

“Where the Minister is satisfied that a Sports Federation no longer satisfies the requirements of this Act, he may, after consultation with the relevant International Sports Federation ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Order! Allow the hon. Member to put his question. You have finished with the question?

Mr Quirin: Je n’ai pas terminé. Donc, je disais -

“...and the Olympic Committee, as the case may be -

(a) suspend the certificate of recognition of the Sports Federation, and

(b) set up a Caretaker Committee to run the affairs of the Sports Federation pending the election of a new Managing Committee.”

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was satisfied that I consulted the National Olympic Committee of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Quirin!

MINISTRY OF YOUTH & SPORTS - SPORTS MEDICAL UNIT – STAFF

(No. B/137) Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the Sports Medical Unit, located in Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Unit, a list of the-

(a) staff posted thereat, indicating their respective job description, and

(b) athletes treated thereat, per discipline, since January 2012 to date.

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are presently 13 staff attached to the Sports Medical Unit in Vacoas. We have a Senior Sports Officer who is acting as Officer-in-Charge. We have two Sports Nursing Officers, three Nursing Officers, one Senior Pharmacist, two Physiotherapists, and one Sports Therapist. In fact, I am circulating the list of staff posted at the Unit together with their respective job description.

As regards part (b) of the question, the Sports Medical Unit has attended to 1,166 requests for treatment by athletes since January 2012 to date.

I am also circulating a list showing the number of cases dealt with by the Sports Medical Unit sportswise as well as the number of medical coverage effected during that period.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, en réponse à une question parlementaire 1B/501 en date du 17 août 2010, l'honorable ministre des Sports avait indiqué que les centres médicaux sportifs étaient dotés d'équipements d'avant 2003 et qu'il n'y avait pas de nutritionniste, ni de diététicien, ni de psychologue. Le ministre, de ce fait, peut-il indiquer ce qui a changé positivement depuis ?

Mr Ritoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I should say that nutritionist is not employed at the level of the Ministry, but whenever we have major sporting events like the Indian Ocean Islands Games or the African Games, then we get the services of a nutritionist. Otherwise, we have 13 staffs already posted at the level of the Sports Medical Unit and, as at date, we have not received any complaint from any athlete regarding the services offered by the Medical Unit.

Mr Speaker: Okay, hon. Mrs Labelle!

Mr Quirin: *M. le président,...*

Mr Speaker: I feel that the hon. Member's question has been sufficiently aired. Next question hon. Mrs Labelle!

AGALEGA - MISS R. H. – MEDICAL TREATMENT

(No. B/138) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the young girl who was transferred to Mauritius from Agalega to undergo medical treatment, on or about 8 January 2013, he will state if she -

- (a) was accompanied by her father, and
- (b) has been discharged from the Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital where she was admitted on the same day, and, if so, indicate the reasons therefor.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that on 09 January, 2013, a young girl by the name of R. H. was referred from Agalega for medical treatment in Mauritius. The patient was accompanied by her father.

On the same day, the patient was seen by the Paediatric Medical and Health Officer at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital and was admitted in the Paediatric Ward for investigation and treatment. On 10 January 2013, the patient was examined by the Consultant in charge of the Paediatric Unit, who recommended that further tests be carried out. She was also referred to the Specialist of the Orthopaedic Unit for a knee problem.

On 11 and 12 January 2013, the patient was again seen by the Consultant in charge, Paediatric Unit. Furthermore, on 12 January 2013 itself, the Specialist of the Orthopaedic Unit saw the patient and informed her father that there was the need to carry out specialised investigations. Same were scheduled for Monday 14 January 2013. However, her father insisted on Discharge Against Medical Advice (DAMA) and on the same day, he signed the DAMA form and left the hospital with her daughter.

Nonetheless, the patient was given an appointment in one week but did not attend the hospital.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, taking into consideration the confidentiality of medical reports, may I ask the hon. Minister, whether, after all these different medical examinations, - from what I have gathered - there was nothing detected?

Mr Bundhoo: I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply that, on request of the Orthopaedic Unit specialist, there was to be carried out an investigation with regard to the knee problem on 14 January 2013. Unfortunately, the father of the child, R. H., decided for discharge against medical advice on the same day.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that it is not the first time that a patient is being sent to Mauritius, but not really with a medical problem? Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that *de mauvaises langues* are saying that there is a sort of win-win deal between people to be sent to Mauritius from Agalega and the doctor ?

Mr Bundhoo: I think what the hon. Member is saying is very serious, and I would very humbly request her if there is any such case - if I can use the word, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir - *connivence* between residents of Agalega and members of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life who are working there, a sort of *coup monté* in order to come to Mauritius, I would very much appreciate if the hon. Member could highlight these cases so as to enable us to take appropriate action.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is any resident doctor there and, if so, can we have the name of the doctor, and who took the decision to send the patient for treatment to Mauritius?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is normal practice that before the patient is sent to Mauritius, there is a doctor there who does inform Dr. Jeetoo hospital and sends all the facts. When the Dornier comes, then the patient travels on the Dornier to Mauritius. All the records are available at the point of embarkation at Agalega and the point of treatment in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister table a copy of all the...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Jhugroo: ... correspondences between outer islands, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and Agalega?

Mr Bundhoo: All the information sought are available, but if ...

(Interruptions)

I am not so sure whether I can do that because it involves a minor in this case, an 11-year old person. I am not so sure whether it is in his interest to do that, but if the father, who accompanied the child to Mauritius, makes a request, I am sure it would be considered.

Mr Speaker: Next question hon. Ramano!

MTPA - MAURITIUS SHOPPING FIESTA - LOTTERY

(No. B/139) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Tourism and Leisure whether, in regard to the lottery organised by the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority in the context of the Mauritius Shopping Fiesta, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to -

- (a) the outcome thereof, and
- (b) if the Authority proposes to organise another such event.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker Sir, I have been informed by the MTPA that, in the context of the MSF, a lottery draw has been organised to mark the event and also to attract the attention of the public and tourists to the availability of international brands in Mauritius. The lottery prizes include an Auto cycle Derbi Model Xtrem, two cars Nissan Micra, a Car Porsche Cayman and a car BMW 320i convertible.

(Interruptions)

A total amount of Rs13.9 m. has been earmarked with the organisation of the lottery. The raffle draw will be held at the Mauritius Turf Club on 31 May 2013. The total revenue generated from the lottery will be known after 31 May 2013.

Mr Speaker Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made to Parliamentary Question B/725 on 18 December 2012 where I indicated to the House that the event was covered by 86 foreign journalists from 14 countries, including the United Kingdom, France, India, Russia, China and amongst other countries which made Mauritius the headlights of various international press and media during the

holding of this event. The media fall out of this event in our tourists markets, as compiled by our PR representatives amounted to Rs389.5 m. which is equivalent to the total annual budget of the MTPA.

Mr Speaker Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the answer is no.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre la date qui était initialement prévue pour le tirage et la raison pour laquelle cela a été *postponed*, et s'il peut aussi nous donner le nombre de billets émis et le nombre de billets vendus ?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the draw was initially scheduled to take place on 21 December 2012. Thereafter, a request was made to postpone the draw to Thursday 28 February 2013. I am informed that the draw is now postponed for 31 May 2013, and Mr Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that 8500 tickets were issued and almost 2000 tickets were sold.

Mr Ramano: M. le président, donc, dans la liste des prix qui a été mentionnée par le ministre, il y a des prix faramineux, des BMW 3-série Cabriolet, Porsche Cayman, deux Nissan Micra, une moto Derbi Xtrem. Est-ce que je peux savoir du ministre le coût de tous ces prix et comment cela a été financé ?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have to look at the project as a whole. I have just mentioned that when we compare all the figures, we will see that around Rs389.5 m. – we have got it as visibility around the world and in many countries.

(Interruptions)

I have to say...

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I need some time to...

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, Minister!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have to say that appropriate actions have been taken so that we can sell a maximum of tickets, and I am sure that we will recover the maximum amount.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister has not stated what is the amount spent today by MTPA on the promotion of this lottery and where are these lotteries being sold.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered this question. In my reply, I have said it is Rs13.9 m.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: With regard to part (b) of the question, for us, it was not a shopping fiesta, it was a shopping fiasco. Can I ask the hon. Minister...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, you have a question to put? No comments...

Mr Bhagwan: I have a question on the shopping fiasco.

(Interruptions)

If I understood well the hon. Minister...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I am waiting for your question.

Mr Bhagwan: If I well understood, the Minister has stated that his Ministry or Government won't go into another Mauritius shopping fiasco or fiesta. Can the Minister inform the House that the decision of his Ministry, his decision not to go ahead with another Mauritius shopping fiesta is because the initiative to organise this was initiated by Mr Desveaux, the former Chairman of the MTPA?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, yes, it was a good project, in fact, but it takes time to organise such an event. As I have said, we have to look at the project as a whole and if we compare it with the previous project of my predecessor, 'Soul of the World', two years or three years ago, only 157 tickets were sold at Rs500, which amounted to Rs78,500 only, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, the figures given by the hon. Minister are really shocking; out of 8500, only 2000 have been sold, that is, an amount of Rs4 m. has been recouped up to now compared to Rs13.9 m. that have to be invested in terms of buying cars. Can I ask the hon. Minister what he will do for the Mauritius Tourism Authority to recover the whole amount and also whether people who have bought their tickets have come to the MTPA to return their tickets?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have just said. We have to evaluate the project as a whole. Secondly,...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Well...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, I want some silence. The Minister is answering. He must be given the chance to answer.

Hon. Minister, you answer the question and address the Chair.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have to compare it with 'Soul of the world'. Thirdly, I have said appropriate actions have been taken. I just said the maximum of tickets will be sold before 31 May.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of explanation!

Mr Speaker: Personal?

Mr Bodha: Yes. The Minister has mentioned every time...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Listen, there is a point of personal explanation.

Mr Bodha: ...that this project was a fiasco, but he always fails to mention that was a season of 40 representations which were scheduled and there was a sabotage of the project...

(Interruptions)

The project was sabotaged by him.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

I said silence. Well I have to point out that I have listened to your point carefully. I don't find any personal explanation. Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Soodhun! Order! Hon. Khamajeet, I said no interruption and no provocation in this House. Hon. Bodha, it is enough now. Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Since the hon. Minister is praising this project - he said that it is a very good project, he will come with the sale of the lotteries - can he inform the country, the House, the taxpayers, the nation, whether he is agreeable to recommend to the Prime Minister *la réintégration* of Mr Desveaux? *Étant donné qu'il est en train de dire que monsieur Desvaux a initié un très bon projet*, would he ask the Prime Minister to reinstate Mr Desvaux as Chairman of MTPA ?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: This question does not arise, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: The hon. Minister did not answer my question. How many people have come...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

Your question hon. Member!

Mr Ameer Meea: How many persons have come to the MTPA to return their tickets and to get a refund out of it?

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Speaker, Sir, the draw is scheduled for 31 May, and it will be done on 31 May because I have said appropriate actions have been taken to sell the maximum of tickets.

Mr Speaker: Next question, hon. Nagalingum!

FLOOD PRONE AREAS - MEASURES

(No. B/140) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, following the recent floods, he will state the number of flood prone areas identified island-wise, indicating the remedial actions initiated to prevent the recurrence thereof and the budget earmarked therefor, in each case.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to both questions B/140 and B/163 simultaneously as they deal with the same issue.

Following the recent flooding of 13 February 2013, forty five (45) flood prone areas were identified islandwide. Government's approval had been obtained to carry out urgent works in those areas under an Emergency Rehabilitation Programme according to the provisions of Section 21 of the Public Procurement Act in relation to 'Emergency Procurement'.

Although these works are being undertaken under the ambit of the Emergency Procurement Clause, the NDU and RDA resorted to zonal contractors who have been previously appointed on the strength of a full-fledged tender exercise conducted by the Central Procurement Board (CPB) with the exception of the dredging work which is of specialised nature. I am arranging to lay on the Table of the National Assembly a list of the works undertaken in areas affected by flooding.

Taking into account the complex nature of the problem in certain localities such as Place d'Armes and surrounding areas of Port Louis, Bois Rouge, Fond du Sac, Cottage, and Piton, it has been deemed necessary to conduct urgent studies by consultancy firms.

In view of the urgency of the work, the services of consultancy firms already providing professional and technical services to my Ministry were retained for the following solutions -

SN	Consultancy Firm	Nature of Study
(i)	Z & AP Antonaropoulos & Associates and Desai Associates	Study on problems at Place d'Armes and surrounding areas
(ii)	GIBB (Mtius) Ltd	Study on flooding problems at Elizabethville, Baie du Tombeau
(iii)	Servansingh Jadav & Partners Consultancy Engineers Ltd (SJPCE)	Study on proper drainage system at Bois Rouge
(iv)	Lux Consult (Mauritius)	Study on drain networks for Cottage, Piton and Fond du Sac

As soon as the reports of the consultancy firms will be finalised, works orders will be issued accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the unprecedented flooding of Saturday, 30 March 2013 which severely affected Port Louis and nearby regions, urgent clearing, dredging and rehabilitation works have been undertaken at Canal Dayot, River St. Louis, Pailles, the canal near Marie Reine de La Paix, the Pouce Stream, the canal along Poudrière Street and alleviation of flooding at Pointe aux Sables. I would like to inform the House that some 300 tonnes of debris have already been removed from drains which

had not been maintained by the Municipal Council. Works orders to the tune of Rs63 m. have already been issued for pressing rehabilitation of the affected areas in Port Louis. I would like to draw the attention of the House that on 24 January 2013, a Notice under the Environment Protection Act was issued to the Municipal Council of Port Louis for poor maintenance of drains. Though the Municipal Council of Port Louis had given the guarantee that the drains would be cleared by the end of January 2013, it is surprising to note that only Rs122,616.99 have been spent between 09 December 2012 and 10 April 2013.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence! Order!

Mr Bachoo: Added to that, the Mauritius Ports Authority, in a letter dated 01 March 2013, complained of the discharge of solid waste in the Port area through the drains. I am tabling both documents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since 13 February 2013 works orders amounting to about Rs750 m. have been issued for a range of emergency projects.

Additional services of consultancy firms have been resorted to for comprehensive studies of affected regions of Port Louis as follows -

SN	Consultancy Firm	Areas to be covered
(i)	Servansingh Jadav & Partners Consultancy Engineers Ltd (SJPCE)	Pointe aux Sables
(ii)	Mega Design Consultancy Engineers	Canal Dayot
(iii)	GIBB (Mtius) Ltd	Marie Rène de la Paix/Vallée Pitot and Place d'Armes, Monseigneur Leen, Belle Village
(iv)	Z & AP Antonaropoulos & Associates/Desai Associates	Port Louis Centre, Caudan and surrounding areas
(v)	Lux Consult (Mauritius)	Vallée des Prêtres and bridges in Vallee Pitot

The consultancy firm GIBB (Mauritius) has already produced a Preliminary Report. The reports of other consultancy firms are likewise being expected soon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it must be highlighted that besides the above priority projects, some 100 drain projects are being implemented throughout the island under the normal Land Drainage Programme.

Mr Nagalingum: Has the hon. Minister involved the local authorities in identifying district councils and municipalities...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No interruptions, please! I want to hear the hon. Member.

Mr Nagalingum: ... to the flood prone areas? Have they been consulted?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, wherever necessary, the local authorities have been definitely consulted. But I would hasten to add that we have got the NDU officers, the RDO, the SRDO and, at the same time, the PPS. We have taken note of all those letters which have been coming to my Ministry from different parts of the country, and that's why we have established a priority list. At the same time, whenever Members of Parliament are making requests to me of certain areas, in every nook and corner of the country, which need immediate attention, even that is being looked into.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, did the hon. Minister reply to PQ No. B/153 together?

Mr Bachoo: No. My answer pertains to PQ Nos. B/140 and B/163.

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président, est-ce que le vice-Premier ministre peut confirmer si les villages de Bambous Virieux, Quatre Soeurs et Deux Frères font partie des régions à risque, et si c'est le cas, quelles sont les actions prises pour remédier aux problèmes de glissements de terrain dans ces régions ?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are dealing with the areas which were affected by the floods in February and March. Priority is given to these areas. In fact, when the big flood occurred a few years back, we had spent about Rs63 m. in Ferney Bridge, which is already completed; Quatre Soeurs, Rs15 m., and there were other additional works which were conducted. At the same time, the hon. Member knows that in Constituency No. 11, most of the flood prone areas have already been taken care of. You know, it is a flash flood; you do not know where it can fall. So, there are certain places which are being looked into.

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président, le vice-Premier ministre doit savoir que, depuis 2010, concernant la région de Deux Frères et Quatre Sœurs, l'attention du ministre a été attirée du fait qu'il y a un gros problème de glissements de terrain et qu'il y a des maisons qui sont en train de s'écrouler. Il avait même

promis de faire venir des experts japonais pour faire une étude. Est-ce qu'on peut savoir aujourd'hui où on en est avec ce projet ?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in Quatre Soeurs, we have already spent Rs15 m. in the construction of one bridge. Secondly, as far as the landslide is concerned, on a few occasions, hon. Dr. A. Boolell, hon. Moutia, as well as I had conducted site visits.

(Interruptions)

Let me finish! I called those victims in my office, in the presence of experts of JICA, and the hon. Members were present in my office. We pleaded with them, we spoke to them, we offered them plots of land. At Camp Ithier, we have already offered plots of land, and Government is pledging a sum of money to give them; Rs1 m. per house.

(Interruptions)

We are offering them. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are one or two...

(Interruptions)

You have to listen first, and then you can ask me additional questions.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister should address the Chair.

Mr Bachoo: We have been pleading to those helpless and innocent people. We are requesting them to leave the area because it is a dangerous area. Unfortunately, there are one or two who are insisting, and they are even telling us that they do not believe in what we are telling them. They are telling us that whatever happens they are not going to leave that area. It is a dangerous area, but we are trying to convince them, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have to persuade them, we have to do our best to convince them, because Government is already making whatever is necessary and whatever is humanly possible to give those victims. It is the maximum that we are doing.

Mr Barbier: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not hear the hon. Minister mention the region of Anse Courtois, Pailles, which was badly affected by the flooding. May I know whether Anse Courtois forms part of the list and whether the hon. Minister is agreeable to give us the list? He mentioned the flood areas. Does he agree to lay on the Table of the National Assembly or even circulate to Members a list of the flood areas which have been identified?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the area which the hon. Member is mentioning, in fact, we are on the point of issuing works order. My only problem is that we just cannot issue works order haphazardly. We should know what we have to do, and in what way we can prevent the overflow of the water. Here, the technicians are working, and we have a number of consultants who are working on that. As I have just

mentioned, the preliminary report has been submitted - it is preliminary - it is not final. In a week's time, the final report will be available. I am going to lay a copy on the Table of the Assembly. You will see for yourself the astounding discovery in this report.

Mr Speaker: I'll allow two more questions. One from hon. Bhagwan and one from hon. Uteem.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether he is aware of the recommendations of the Japanese expert at Morcellement Hermitage, Coromandel, where the hon. Vice-Prime Minister himself, the Deputy Prime Minister and other Ministers have made site visits? The situation is very dangerous as far as *glissement de terrain* is concerned. An unscrupulous contractor, Mr Beerjeraz, has been cheating people and cheating Government, and the Municipality is bringing him to Court. The Municipality is doing its job. But can the Minister inform the House and the people of Morcellement Hermitage what action his Ministry is taking concerning the recommendations of the Japanese experts in their report, where the Minister sent these people, at least, to take urgent action *pour déclarer cette zone zone sinistrée*?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not five visits; I did conduct only two visits. I am aware of that, and my colleague hon. Aimée and myself have given the full green light to the authorities concerned to take all action they deem fit. I tell you honestly that does not form part of NDU or RDA. Had it been so, I would have stepped into it. But, we have given instructions to the local authorities to take all legal action that they deem fit. I mention again and, if I am not mistaken, once we had also answered questions on this; my colleague had answered. But, if that is not on, then definitely we have to step in.

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, the Municipality is taking legal action, but there are responsibilities as far as erosion is concerned regarding the Ministry of Housing and Lands and other Ministries - even the Ministry of Agriculture - *parce que* this unscrupulous Mr Berjeeraz is filling the river with soil. I have another question addressed to the Ministry of Agriculture. The Municipality is doing its best. It has sent these people to Court, but the Ministry of Public Infrastructure has to do its share of responsibility. Another question on that, Sir, the Minister...

Mr Speaker: No, there are too many questions! One question at a time!

Mr Bhagwan: No Sir...

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer! Answer hon. Minister.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that falls within the jurisdiction of the local authorities. I had been there twice, and together with me was hon. Mohamed.

(Interruptions)

I had been there twice; I do not want to exaggerate. It is not a cinema! I am talking sense to the House!

(Interruptions)

I had been there twice!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: I am not blaming...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say silence!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not blaming anybody...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: I am not blaming...

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say silence now!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: I am not blaming anybody. I have just mentioned that it does not fall within my jurisdiction, but at the same time I have mentioned....

(Interruptions)

..that we asked....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please! Yes Minister!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: We are going to take action. We had requested the authorities to do the needful. If they fail, the matter will be taken up at the level of the Government, and the needful will be done.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: I raised that previously at Adjournment Time...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Uteem: May I ask the hon...

(Interruptions)

May I ask the hon. Minister if urgent attention could be given...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, a question is being put. Let us listen to it!

Mr Uteem: May I ask the Minister to give urgent attention to the region of...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please, enough! Proceed hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: May I ask the hon. Minister to give urgent attention to people in the region of Nazareth, Tranquebar, Bangladesh who systematically get flooded from water coming from Le Pouce Mountain? I raised this before in Adjournment Time, but up to now nothing has been done.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that the region which the hon. Member is talking about is already included in the preliminary report. I have just mentioned that it is a shocking report. It is preliminary only. Once the final report is submitted, definitely I will lay a copy and, at the same time, we are going to take actions that are necessary.

Mr Speaker: The Deputy Speaker will take the Chair!

At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

FOREST LANE, FLOREAL - LADY M. C. S - COMPLAINTS

(No. B/141) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the site visit effected by two inspectors of his Ministry at Forest Lane, in Floréal, following complaints made by Lady M. C. S., he will state if the inspectors have submitted a report in relation thereto and if so, will he –

- (a) table copy thereof, and
- (b) state if an inquiry has been carried out thereafter and, if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 11 December 2012, my Ministry received a letter dated 01 December 2012 from Lady M.C.S. She complained against an industry manufacturing dental prosthesis in Forest Lane, Floreal. She mentioned that: (I quote) “a strong, unfamiliar smell of chemicals pervaded my home” (unquote) and that she had to be treated for acute toxicity. She further informed that her employees and she herself were suffering from various allergies and fits of dizziness. She suspected that these chemicals could possibly come from the Dental Mechanic next to her house.

A site visit was effected by a multidisciplinary team on 13 December 2012 on my request. The team comprised one Superintending Dental Surgeon, two officers of the Environmental Health Engineering Unit, one Environment Officer from the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, four officers from the Health Inspectorate Cadre, two officers from the Municipal Council of Curepipe and two officers from the Police de L’Environnement.

The main findings of the report of the team are as follows -

- At the time of visit, the operator was holder of a valid trade licence issued by the Municipal Council of Curepipe for the Dental Mechanic workshop at the ground level of the residential building.
- The operator does not hold a licence under the Private Health Institutions Act 1989 for the dental mechanic.
- No environmental nuisance was observed at time of visit.

The operator was verbally informed to submit his application for his licence under the Private Health Institutions Act. He was further informed that he would be contravened under the Act and has agreed to apply subsequently for a licence.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that several follow up site visits have been effected, namely, on 07 February 2013, 06 March 2013 and 19 March 2013. During the site visits neither odour nuisance nor noise disturbance was noted in the neighbourhood from the activities of the dental mechanic. It was noted that a Magma Catalyser had been installed to capture and treat emissions from the furnace.

Following a statement made in this very House by the Hon. Mrs Labelle herself at adjournment time on 26 March 2013, again on my request, an urgent meeting was held at my Ministry, under my chairmanship, on 27 March 2013, wherein I instructed to convene the representatives of the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Municipal Council of Curepipe.

The Committee took note that a notice had been served by the Municipal Council of Curepipe to remove a generator which had been installed without its prior approval and post monitoring would be effected.

The Committee agreed that -

- (i) a site visit would be effected the following day, that is, on 28 March 2013 by a team comprising the abovementioned stakeholders and officers from the relevant units of my Ministry, and
- (ii) the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development would carry an ambient air quality monitoring exercise.

At the time of the visit on 28 March 2013, neither odour nuisance nor noise disturbance was noted in the neighbourhood from the activities of the dental mechanic.

After the site visit, it was agreed, on site, that the following actions would be undertaken by relevant authorities -

- Action would be initiated by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development with the Central Electricity Board, Electrical Services Division and Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping for placing an ambient air monitoring caravan at the premises of Lady M.C.S. to assess the ambient air quality on her premises.

- The monitoring was due to start on 09 April 2013, but has been rescheduled for 18 April due to unfavourable weather conditions.
- Necessary action would be taken in light of the results of ambient air quality monitoring exercise.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that an intended prosecution by the Municipal Council of Curepipe was issued on 02 April 2013 against the developer for installation of a generator without Building and Land Use Permit.

I am further informed that the Municipal Council of Curepipe also issued a notice concerning unlawful development on 10 April 2013 regarding conversion of the first floor to Dental Mechanic Workshop, in view of the fact that it is an illegal extension.

I wish to inform the House that the application for the grant of a licence under the Private Health Institution Act for Dental Cabinet and Dental Mechanic has only been submitted on 24 February 2013, and these are in process.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for all the details. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has received a letter from the Dental Council relating to the unethical aspect of having a Dental Mechanic Workshop with a Dental Surgeon Cabinet together.

Mr Bundhoo: I am not aware if we have received a letter. But, I am sure that if we have received such a letter, it will be taken into consideration when the application for Dental Cabinets is being processed.

Dr. Sorefan: The hon. Minister is talking about majoring the ambient air. I may even tell him right now that it is a waste of time because the chemicals that we use...

(Interruptions)

... in the Dental Mechanic is just temporary. It just evaporates within seconds, and the ambient air that is going to be taken is useless time.

Mr Bundhoo: The observation made by the hon. Member will be taken into consideration. I will pass on the information to the team of the ambient air who conduct the measurements.

Mrs Labelle: Is the hon. Minister aware that there are, at least, two medical practitioners who were at the place when they had this feeling of intoxication? They are prepared to testify their experience. I don't know whether this has been taken into consideration because I think that it is something which lasts for very few minutes. But, we have doctors who were present and can certify because they have felt such intoxication.

Mr Bundhoo: I have received representations in writing from lady C.S. with regard to this. If need be, we are going to take into consideration the views of the doctors that have seen Miss C.S. and the other persons in the region.

NATIONAL ENERGY COMMISSION – TERMS OF REFERENCE

(No. B/142) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the National Energy Commission, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commission, information as to the –

- (a) names of the members thereof;
- (b) terms of reference thereof;
- (c) legislation governing same;
- (d) legal powers thereof, and
- (e) expected output thereof, indicating the time frame for the delivery thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Energy Commission is chaired by the Senior Adviser, Project Management and Delivery Unit of the Prime Minister's Office and comprises members from the public and private sectors, the academia and the civil society. With your permission, I am tabling a copy of the composition of the Commission.

As regards part (b), the terms of reference of the National Energy Commission are as follows -

- (i) review the national energy requirements;
- (ii) advise Government and other authorities concerned in the planning and execution of major projects in the Energy Sector to fully meet medium and long term needs, and
- (iii) oversee the operation of the *Maurice Ile Durable Fund*.

Concerning parts (c) and (d) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the National Energy Commission was set up on 31 January 2013, to advise Government as per the terms of reference mentioned in part (b) and, as such, the Commission has no legal powers and is purely advisory.

As regards part (e), the Commission is expected to submit a report to Government in line with its terms of reference. The Commission has started its deliberations on 15 February 2013, and has since then held ten meetings.

The Commission has also set up two sub-committees, the first one to deliberate on specific technical matters in the energy sector, and the second one to hear organisations and members of the public who have expressed their wish to be heard by the Commission. As at to date, more than 60 organisations/individuals have been registered, and will be heard by the second sub-committee.

The sub-committees are expected to submit their reports to the Commission by the end of May 2013.

It is only on completion of the sub-committees workings that the Commission will be in a position to finalise its final report, which would be submitted to Government.

Mr Lesjongard: Since the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has stated that the National Energy Commission has an advisory capacity, do we understand that his Ministry will no more advise Government with regard to the energy policy?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The NEC is advisory. This poses no problem. We can get as many advices as we can or from wherever we can, and this is one channel to get advice. So, I see no contradiction there.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I asked this question because one of the main objectives or activities of the Ministry of Public Utilities is to advise Government with regard to the energy sector. We understand now that we have a National Energy Commission chaired by a Senior Advisor from the Office of the Prime Minister. Then, what is the role of that Ministry?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I say it again. I see no contradiction whatsoever. We always receive advice anyway solicited or unsolicited. The CEB is open to advice, is open to representations. It has always been and will always be. The hon. Member knows it better than anyone.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we want to avoid wasting public funds. Being given the very wide terms of reference of the Commission that covers planning, policy formulation, policy advice, operation of MID and, on the other hand, being given the total silence of the Ministry when the critical debate on the future energy policy of this country has been going on, will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, therefore, agree that, given hardly any residual powers/role of his Ministry, he will recommend to the Minister the abolition of his Ministry?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think we already heard the answer. *Ha ha ha!*

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that same Ministry some time back had the responsibility of implementing the vision of the hon. Prime Minister, that is, *Maurice Ile Durable*. This was removed from that Ministry.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon, Lesjongard, please put your question!

Mr Lesjongard: Now, we are also removing the energy policy. That's why we are asking what is the purpose of that Ministry!

The Deputy Prime Minister: I repeat, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are not removing anything. We are adding.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question, please!

UTILITY REGULATORY AUTHORITY BOARD – SETTING UP

(No. B/143) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the Utility Regulatory Authority, he will state the reasons as to why the Board thereof has not yet been set up.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the proclamation of the URA Act, in 2008, action was initiated by my Ministry to recruit the Chairperson and the three Commissioners, as prescribed under section 10 of the Act.

Subsequently, a Singaporean team was appointed to advise Government on the strategic reform options for the water sector, including the legal and regulatory framework.

In view of the fundamental reform required in the water sector, my Ministry deemed it necessary to await the recommendations of the Singaporean team to complete the recruitment of the Chairperson and the Commissioners of the URA.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the URA cannot be set up on a piecemeal basis. A responsible and effective regulatory body must oversee the high level planning and development of infrastructure and utility services in a holistic manner. In fact, one of the objects of the URA is to, and I quote –

“To promote efficiency in both operations and capital investments in respect of utility services.”

As such, the water and electricity sectors have common needs such as way leaves, under grounding of cables and laying of pipes that require coordination for better optimisation of resources. Moreover, the expensive expertise of the Chairperson and Commissioners of such a regulator must be fully utilised when appointed for the three services, and in the best interest of consumers. Government has done the needful for the URA to be operational in the very near future.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Deputy Prime Minister stated that he is awaiting the recommendation of the Singaporeans to go ahead with the Utility Regulatory Authority, but then that amendment or that piece of legislation was proclaimed in 2008 and it was much later that the Singaporeans were appointed. May I know why it has taken so much time? Because it was stated in that legislation that that Authority will protect the interest of consumers with regard to the signature of power purchase agreement. May I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister why is it that we do not have such an Authority and, today, CEB, with regard to power purchase agreement, is acting *comme juge et partie*?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the reply is in the answer that I have given. The answer is there.

Mr Lesjongard: If the answer is there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Act has been enacted and, I said earlier, one of the main recommendations is to protect the interest of consumers with regard to power purchase agreement. Does not the Deputy Prime Minister think that all those power purchase agreements that are being discussed now with the enactment of this legislation since 2008 should be considered null and void?

The Deputy Prime Minister: They are being continuously considered at all times, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Next question please!

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS – FOUNDATION COURSES

(No. B/144) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology whether, in regard to the tertiary institutions, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as to the number thereof which are dispensing foundation courses, indicating if same have been accredited by the relevant institutions.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that currently two public tertiary education institutions and three private tertiary education institutions are offering Foundation Courses. Two (2) other public tertiary education institutions and one additional private institution intends to start Foundation courses this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to declare interest to the extent that the CEO of one of the institutions happens to be my brother. Therefore, I am declaring what may seem to be an interest.

I am also informed by Tertiary Education Commission that –

- (i) where the Foundation course is an integral part of an undergraduate programme, it is accredited by the Commission, and
- (ii) where the Foundation course is a non-award course and is offered as an alternative or a supplement to the entry requirement, it is approved by the Tertiary Education Commission or the degree awarding body of the institution.

As regards public tertiary education institutions, the programmes are approved by their Academic Committees or Boards and as such they do not require accreditation by the Tertiary Education Commission by virtue of their legislation.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether he could confirm to the House if the duration of the courses are the same in all the institutions that he has just mentioned?

Dr. Jeetah: I have the framework that I can circulate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Currently, we have four different institutions offering foundation courses. I can submit all the information to the hon. Member.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: My question is whether the duration is the same because the Minister has talked about accreditation by the Tertiary Education Commission and other bodies responsible for it. May I know whether this accreditation has been given across the board to all the institutions providing the course or there are slight differences in the terms of these foundation courses?

Dr. Jeetah: Let me take, for example, the minimum requirements for admission to foundation programme at tertiary level; it is a whole page, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The duration of the programme for this case is one year full-time with two semesters of 15 weeks each. I do not have the information for the public institutions because they are governed by their own academic regulations and standards.

For instance, Curtin has given accreditation through its own academic systems; but, I can definitely provide the hon. Member with all the information.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the foundation course is supposed to be the equivalent of the 2 A-levels that are required for access to higher education, will the Minister tell us whether his Ministry enquires as to the content of the different foundation courses, to standardise duration and the assessment at the end of the foundation course to guarantee our students have the required level?

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to begin with, if I could quickly go through the minimum requirements for admission to a foundation programme, one needs to have four credits at SC level and at least one A-level. There is an assessment procedure which includes written examinations, tests and continuous assessment in a number of subjects. Each student has to go through this assessment

procedure and accumulate a number of credits to be able to get admitted on the degree programme. I can circulate all this information to the hon. Member.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House that there is a TEC Board decision to the effect that the foundation courses should be dispensed on a pilot basis project initially?

Dr. Jeetah: I am not aware of this information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because I don't go through all their Board decisions. They have their Committees that go through the process. But, what I can say here is that there are four different cases. We have institutions which have to seek accreditation or approval for their programmes. These could either be public or private institutions. There is at least one private institution which was fully vetted by TEC, and there is another one which had to go through its own awarding body. For example, Curtin did not have to seek accreditation from TEC as they have their own mechanism for approval of courses.

Mr Uteem: In respect to foundation courses approved by TEC and conducted in Mauritius, may I know from the hon. Minister whether any of these foundation courses would be recognised outside Mauritius?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think since 1989 we have recognition of prior learning (RPL) for mature students foundation programmes in the UK. It is only recently that Mauritius has introduced foundation programmes to provide students access to tertiary education which was not the case previously. What matters here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that these students have to go through the same assessment procedure as the other students. They will have to take all the examinations – the first, second and final years exams – the dissertation, etc. So, once the students are awarded their degrees, if they are from a public university, their qualifications are recognized by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, and if they are from a private university they should satisfy TEC's requirements for them to be awarded the degree. So, yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they should have been through the process which leads to the award of their degree.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister, considering that some of the institutions are providing the foundation course free of charge, – *gratuitement* - isn't it a means to ensure an increase in their rate of intake for first year's students at degree level?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry does not have any control over fees charged by the different institutions. In fact, the hon. Member is right in saying that the fees charged for foundation programmes vary from institution to institution. There is one institution which charges Rs135,000 and another one which offers the programme for free. We also have the *Université des Mascareignes* which

charges Rs9,000 for its programme. What matters is the opportunity provided to these kids to enter the Tertiary Education System.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given that there is a huge variation between different foundation courses, some like EIILM lasts six or seven months, others last a year – huge variation. Being given on the other hand that in the case of EIILM, for instance, - you know what I am referring to, the so-called EIILM University Mauritius Branch Campus. In that case, there was a public communiqué of the Tertiary Education Commission to say that this foundation programme was not accredited by TEC. Does the hon. Minister not consider that, in the public interest, there is an urgent necessity to establish a proper regulatory framework?

Dr. Jeetah: The hon. Member is misguided. This particular university that you are referring to has been through the approval process of TEC and, in fact, it is the only institution that has had to go through its approval process. As I mentioned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is - in fact, they did get special treatment, they did have a panel that went to check, etc., because obviously, they know - Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are some institutions which did not even have to come to TEC. I refer you to Curtin again, because it is Curtin University's system that monitored the quality process.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the fact that we are making it easier for students to access to universities is a good thing. The hon. Minister mentioned also that this is normally done for mature students who have not had the chance previously to go for higher studies. But, may I ask the hon. Minister whether all this issue is not linked to two things? Firstly, an increase in intake of students in certain private institutes at degree level and, secondly, whether the hon. Minister would confirm to the House that this particular issue is not linked to the other issue of lowering the qualifications required for entry in public service?

Dr. Jeetah: No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I can assure the hon. Member that most of the students in Mauritius attend public institutions. Today, the University of Mauritius has more than 12,000 students. We have just created two new public universities. One is the Open University of Mauritius, which had only 700 students about a year ago, which now has about 1,300 students enrolled on its programmes. I would like to take this opportunity to invite the hon. Member for the opening ceremony of this new institution on Monday next. The *Université des Mascareignes* has recently appointed Professor Guillon, a well-respected Professor from France, as its first Director General. He is doing a wonderful job by providing our kids the opportunity to access tertiary education. The vision of this Government is to give a chance to those kids who would have never dreamt of attending university.

The Deputy Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/147 and B/150 have been withdrawn. Time is up!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

On motion made and seconded The Police and Criminal Evidence Bill (No. IV of 2013) was read a first time.

The Deputy Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour for tea.

At 4.34 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.13 p.m with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Second Reading

THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS REGULATORY OFFICE BILL

(No. I of 2013)

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office Bill (No. I of 2013) be read a second time.

The object of the Bill is to provide for the setting up of the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office within my Ministry which I will henceforth refer to as NAPRO. The Office shall take over the functions and powers of the Tea Board set up under the Tea Industry Control Act of 1975 and the Tobacco Board set up under the Tobacco Production and Marketing Ordinance of 1930 and the regulatory functions and certain powers of the Mauritius Meat Authority set up under the Meat Act of 1974.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up of NAPRO constitutes a major milestone in the context of the profound reform process that my Ministry has initiated. It goes in line with the firm commitment taken in the Government Programme 2012-2015 to undertake a major rationalisation of the Parastatal Bodies and State-Owned Enterprises to improve cost effectiveness, enhance quality of services and optimise the use of resources.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that for the preparation of this Bill, we have been greatly inspired by the successful experience of merging six Service Providing Institutions in the cane sector into one apex body, namely the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority (MCIA). The House will recall that the functions and activities of six Service Providing Institutions, namely the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute, the Cane Planters and Millers Arbitration and Control Board, the Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool Corporation, the Mauritius Sugar Terminal Corporation, the Mauritius Sugar Authority and the Farmers Service Corporation have been maintained and consolidated in a more efficient and cost-effective manner under a single Institution, the MCIA.

It is with this same underlying aim that the NAPRO is being set up to integrate the regulatory functions of three SPIs in the non-sugar sector, namely the Tobacco Board, the Tea Board and the Mauritius Meat Authority. Again, all the current functions and activities under the purview of these organisations will be maintained and carried out in a more efficient and cost-effective way.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the agricultural sector, at the international, regional and national levels, is undergoing unprecedented challenges and to remain competitive, viable and sustainable, we have no alternative than to adapt, modernise and professionalise the sectors. It is now recognised by all that the only thing that is constant is change. This Government, conscious of the compelling need to change and to adapt in view of the challenges on the international scene, is acting proactively.

This Government, under the able and strong leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, started the deep and profound reform process in the sugar sector which has already earned international recognition. Now we are reaping the fruits of these reforms and we are extending this successful experience to other agricultural sectors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before presenting the salient features of the Bill to the House, it is relevant to go down in history to understand the rationale behind this logical reform process. These three organisations were set up in certain context to give a boost to the respective sectors. Since then things have evolved drastically, so much so that their very existence is now questionable.

Let me first start with the tobacco sector, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Tobacco was introduced in Mauritius in 1639, that is, the same year as sugar cane by the Dutch Governor, Adrian Van Der Stel. However, the first successful attempt to create a tobacco industry was made in 1917 and by the end of 1925, some 250 acres were under cultivation.

In the year 1926, British American Tobacco opened a cigarette factory and conducted experiments on the production of flue-cured tobacco. The acreage under tobacco continued to increase significantly whereby production was greater than consumption.

To address this situation, in 1928, Government appointed a Tobacco Industry Committee and Mr Corbett, the Government Tobacco Officer, was sent to South Africa to study the working of the tobacco warehouses over there. On his return, he made recommendations which were endorsed by the Tobacco Industry Committee and subsequently Government gave effect to them by passing the Tobacco Production and Marketing Ordinance in 1930 which led to the creation of the Tobacco Board.

The Tobacco Board was first managed by Mr Corbett and a first “informal” meeting was held on 23 March 1931 under the chairmanship of Dr Harold Tempany, the then Ag. Director of Agriculture. In fact, the handwritten Minutes of Proceedings are still in the archives of the Tobacco Board.

The Tobacco Board started its operations on the 02 February 1932 in a building at the Line Barracks with 2 advances from Government as initial capital. In 1943, the Tobacco Board was reconstituted under the provisions of The Tobacco Production and Marketing Act No.13 of 1943.

After some 81 years of operation, the British American Tobacco, the sole buyer of domestic leaf, closed its local manufacturing unit in 2007. Consequently, the leaf tobacco is purchased by British American Tobacco (BAT) under a Memorandum of Understanding and is being exported to its processing unit in Kenya.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is noteworthy that the Tobacco Board is the first parastatal body ever set-up in Mauritius. It is vested with the power to control the production and sale of leaf tobacco and to license the importation of leaf tobacco and tobacco products into the country. The Board also fixes the grades of leaf tobacco and the purchase and sale prices of those grades. It keeps a register of producers and runs a warehouse where growers deliver leaf produced by them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Tobacco Board has stood the test of time and has over the years provided growers with a satisfactory price, stable market and the manufacturer with a steady supply of leaf.

It has almost always operated as a self financing organisation, for both capital and recurrent expenditures, deriving most of its income from the mark-up included in the sale of leaf tobacco.

The Tobacco Board started issuing licences for the importation of leaf tobacco and tobacco products cigarettes, cigars, smoking tobacco and other products in September 1998. Over the recent years, some 300 licences have been issued annually.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now deal with the tea sector. Since its introduction as a museum plant by Father Galloys in 1760, and its development on a commercial scale by Sir Robert Farquhar in 1817, the tea industry has passed through distinct phases. During period 1970 to 1992, the Tea Industry went through intensification as witnessed by -

- (i) the creation of the Tea Development Authority (TDA) in 1970 to establish tea plantation and lease them to the Tea Smallholders;
- (ii) the strengthening of the Tea Control Board into the Tea Board in 1975, and
- (iii) the dissociation of manufacturing and tea marketing activities from the TDA to the Mauritius Tea Factories Company Ltd (TEAFAC) in 1986.

It is noteworthy that before all these institutional set up were put in place, the tea sector was under the responsibility of the Tea Division of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Presently, the Tea Board provides regulatory and advisory services to some 1,330 tea planters cultivating some 670 hectares of land and to three manufacturers processing some 8,000 tonnes of green leaf supplied by these planters to manufacture some 1,500 tonnes of tea annually. It oversees tea production in the three factories processing leaf from tea planters. It also monitors the marketing of locally manufactured black tea and controls import of tea. The Board carries out arbitration as and when required.

Mr Speaker, Sir. I will now briefly speak on the third institution concerned with this reform, namely the Mauritius Meat Authority commonly known as the MMA.

The Mauritius Meat Authority was set up under the Meat Act of 1974, and the sale of fresh meat is authorised in meat shops and meat stalls licensed by it. Licences are issued in respect of meat shops approved by local authorities and Ministry of Health and Quality of Life in compliance with Meat Shops Regulations No.186 of 1980. With this Bill, the Mauritius Meat Authority will be operational as an abattoir and maintain its slaughtering activities while only its Regulatory functions will be transferred which was proposing to create that is the NAPRO. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have lengthily dwelled on the functions and activities of these three institutions. As I indicated they have served the purposes for which they were established and I take this opportunity to convey my appreciation to the staff and related stakeholders for their contribution to these sectors.

Unfortunately, the context is no longer the same and competition is fierce. The challenges are unprecedented: increased productivity and enhanced cost-effectiveness and efficiency are vital for sustainable development of these sectors. The *raison d'être* of the institutions supporting these sectors is now put to test and is questionable.

In 1932, when the Tobacco Board started to operate, some 200 tonnes of leaf tobacco were produced over an area of 321ha.

Production gradually increased and reached a peak of 1,259 tonnes for crop 1981/82 by 523 growers on an area of 742 ha. Production then started to decrease and for crop 2011/12, only 346 tonnes were produced on an area of 221ha by only 129 growers.

Compared to crop 1981/82, leaf production for crop 2011-12 decreased by about 73% (from 1,259 to 346 tonnes); area under cultivation decreased by 70% (from 742 to 221ha); number of flue-cured growers decreased by 47% (from 208 to 110) and the number of air-cured growers by 82% (from 325 to a mere 60).

On the other hand, as a result of increasing production costs, the price of domestic leaf increased significantly. On several occasions, the manufacturer has drawn attention of the Tobacco Board and the planters that the cost of leaf tobacco in Mauritius is two to three times higher than that in the neighbouring countries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in November 2006, the British American Tobacco Mauritius started shifting its manufacturing activities to Kenya. In June 2007, the BAT completely stopped all its manufacturing activities in Mauritius. BAT initially agreed to continue purchasing domestic leaf up to 2010. However, to enable planters to diversify away from tobacco, BAT agreed to extend its agreement to purchase local leaf for another five years. In December 2009, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Tobacco Board to that effect.

However, in December 2011, BAT made a new proposal and offered to compensate tobacco planters for not producing tobacco in 2013, that is, this year, the current year and 2014. The agreement for the earlier termination of the MoU was signed in December last year, 2012 and about Rs51 m. was paid by BAT to tobacco growers as compensation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the tea sector also has witnessed a similar evolution. Green leaf production and tea manufactured reached its peak in 1985 when 45,290 tonnes of green leaf were produced on an area of 3908 hectares by 4510 planters. The quantity of tea manufactured was 8114 tonnes, of which 7063 tonnes of tea were exported and the rest was consumed locally. As from 1986, the sector witnessed a steady

decline in terms of area planted, number of planters, green leaf produced, black tea manufactured and tea exported.

At present, tea is cultivated over an area of 670 hectares by some 1,330 tea planters. The annual green leaf production averages 8,000 tonnes. About 1,500 tonnes of black tea are manufactured and consumed locally. Tea exports stand at only 30 tonnes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is noteworthy that since 1985 when the peak production was recorded, the decrease in area under tea cultivation, number of planters, green leaf produced, black tea manufactured and tea exports has been phenomenal. In quantitative terms, there has been a decrease in area under tea cultivation by 83%, number of planters decreased by 70%, green leaf produced by 82%, black tea manufactured by 82% and tea exports by almost 100%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must here stress that the closure of the Tea Board does not mean the closure of the tea industry. The Tea Industry will continue as there is a demand for tea and tea products and the habit of drinking tea is well anchored in our Mauritian culture. From a competitive point of view at the international level, the local cost of tea production is high as compared to other tea producing countries, yet when considering the multifunctional role of the tea industry, Government will continue to support the sector. Hence, the existing policy to control import of tea in the island will continue through the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office, which is going to be set up, in order to ensure the survival of the industry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the setting up of NAPRO, the regulatory functions and certain powers of the Mauritius Meat Authority are being transferred with a view to rationalizing these functions under one umbrella.

Let me, at this stage, Mr Speaker, Sir, highlight and elaborate on some of the salient provisions of the present Bill.

Let me start with Clause 4. Clause 4 establishes the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office with the following objectives -:

- (a) to control and regulate the import, export, production and sale of regulated products, namely meat and meat products, tea and tea products, tobacco and tobacco products;
- (b) to control and regulate the preparation, processing, packing and manufacturing of regulated products;
- (c) to regulate the activities and premises in connection with the slaughtering of animals, and
- (d) to determine the prices at which green leaf and leaf tobacco may be sold by a cultivator to

a producer and in the case of a metayer to a cultivator.

Clause 7 gives Officers the powers of enforcement which is crucial for the legal provisions to be effective, that is, for enforcement as I said.

Clauses 8 to 12 provide for the issue of licences and registration of cultivators, producers, metayers, importers and exporters of regulated products.

Clauses 13 and 14 provide for Game Deer and Wild Pigs to be brought to the abattoir and for dealing in venison.

Clause 15 provides for cultivators who intend to supply green leaf or leaf tobacco to producers shall enter into contract to be prescribed by NAPRO. Similarly, metayers shall enter into contract with cultivators as may be prescribed.

Clause 18 provides for the issue of import and export permits for regulated products.

Clause 20 provides for the setting up of an Arbitration Committee to hear and determine disputes arising in relation to a contract. However, any person who is aggrieved by the decision may appeal to the Supreme Court.

Clause 21 provides for any person aggrieved by any decision of NAPRO or by a decision of an officer may appeal against that decision to the Minister.

Clause 22 of the Bill provides for a fine not exceeding twenty-five thousand rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years for offences under the present Bill.

Under Clause 24, the Minister may make such regulations as he thinks fit for the purpose of the Act. Any regulation may provide for -

- (a) the levying of fees;
- (b) the fixing of prices of regulated products, or
- (c) for the amendment of the schedule.

Under Clause 25, all legislations pertaining to Tea Board, Tobacco Board and the regulatory function of the Mauritius Meat Authority and subsequent regulations made thereunder are repealed namely -

- (a) the Tea Industry Control Act (1975);
- (b) the Tobacco Production and Marketing Act (1943);
- (c) the Tobacco Production and Marketing Regulations 1945;

- (d) the Tobacco Production and Marketing (Registers and Accounts) Regulations 1945;
- (e) the Meat (Shops) Regulations 1980;
- (f) the Tea Industry Control Regulations 1980, and lastly
- (g) the Tobacco Production and Marketing (Import Licence) Regulations of 1998.

This Bill through Clause 27: Savings and Transitional Provisions guarantees every employee on the permanent and pensionable establishment of the Tea Board and Tobacco Board may within 30 days of the commencement of the Act be offered the option to be redeployed to Government or a Statutory Corporation or to retire on grounds of abolition of office and on redeployment, the employees shall be entitled to be transferred on terms and conditions which shall not be less favourable than those of his previous employment and shall be considered to be an unbroken period of service. This is exactly what has been done for the six SPIs which were regrouped under one umbrella, that is, the MCIA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in light of the challenges ahead, we are merging the functions and activities of the Tobacco Board, Tea Board and the regulatory functions and certain powers of the Mauritius Meat Authority under a single office, i.e. NAPRO to be manned by Public Officers. This office will maintain the regulatory functions of the three above named organisations in a more efficient and cost effective manner.

Thus, with these reforms, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are going to reduce expenses related to eight (8) boards, namely the six SPIs in cane sector and the two SPIs in the non-cane sector, that is, the Tea Board and the Tobacco Board by 87.5%. Expenses in relation to the eight boards will be reduced by 87.5%. However, I wish to assure the House that services provided to the planters, breeders and other related stakeholders will be maintained.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders in particular, the small planters who have contributed to those sectors and the chairpersons and members of the different Boards who have serviced the Parastatal Bodies since their creation. I also wish to thank the staff of my Ministry and the State Law Office for the preparation of this present Bill.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall be moving for five minor amendments, which have been circulated, at Committee Stage.

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

Dr. A. Boolell rose and seconded.

(5.25 p.m.)

Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Mr Speaker, Sir, with the adoption of the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office Bill by this august Assembly, two parastatal bodies which have existed for several years will disappear. I am talking of two because the NAPRO will take over only the functions and powers of the Tea Board and the Tobacco Board, whereas for the Mauritius Meat Authority the NAPRO is taking over only the regulatory functions and powers. So, we will see the disappearance of the Tea Board which exists since 1975, and the Tobacco Board which exists since 1930; two parastatal bodies which I will say have stood the test of time and have known several upheavals. As we all know, agriculture was once the backbone of the economy, and as such the Ministry of Agriculture found itself in a situation where it had to decentralise, hence the creation of a number of parastatal bodies to take care and administer the sugar sector, the tea sector, the tobacco sector, and even the vegetables and fruits sector. The Ministry of Agriculture was known to have the highest number of parastatal bodies under its aegis. At one point in time, when agriculture was at its peak, there were about 20 parastatal bodies under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture.

As the Minister has just mentioned, recently this Assembly witnessed the disappearance of a number parastatal bodies, a number of institutions which were administering the sugar sector – the FSC, the SPMPC, the Mauritius Sugar Terminal Corporation, the Mauritius Sugar Authority amongst others. They have all been grouped under one umbrella, the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority, in view of the decreasing importance of the sugar industry, and with a view to reducing costs. Today also, with the presentation of this Bill, Government is showing that, in the agricultural sector, it is moving from decentralisation to centralisation and bringing the operations of the Tea Board and the Tobacco Board within the Ministry itself and also, as I mentioned earlier, parts of the functions of the Mauritius Meat Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have myself been associated with those sectors for quite some time, and I agree with the Minister when he says that it is more cost-effective in the actual circumstances for the Ministry to take over the functions of the Tea Board and the Tobacco Board. The tea sector, Mr Speaker Sir, was at its peak in the early 1980s, when about 700 ha of land were under tea plantation and producing about 5000 metric tons of tea. In these years, about 80% of the tea was being exported; about 4000 metric tons were being exported, but, as the years went by, it was found that Mauritius could not compete with big producers like China, India, Sri Lanka and Kenya both in terms of their very low cost of production and their high-quality. Export of tea decreased, and most of our tea is now marketed locally.

In 1995, there was the famous MAB report which coincided with the fact that we had to send about 25,000 additional tonnes of sugar to the European Union. That motivated the decision to remove part of tea plantations and replace it by sugar cane. In spite of this, about 4,000 families were still earning

a living out of the tea sector, which motivated us then – I am saying us because I was then the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture – to ask the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to include tea on the list of sensitive products, which ultimately meant that, even with trade liberalisation, the tea industry would still be protected. For how long, Mr Speaker, Sir? We do not know. But, definitely, I would say that we will not be able to compete if ever tea for local consumption is imported.

With regard to the Tobacco Board, the British American Tobacco was regularly purchasing leaf from the planters and, although it had ceased its operations in Mauritius, it still maintained its request for about 500 metric tonnes of tobacco leaves. I have been apprised - and the Minister, I think, just mentioned it - that only recently it had asked planters not to go for plantations, not to plant, and the latter had received compensation of about Rs51 m. from BAT. As I stated, Mr Speaker, Sir, with agriculture no longer being the main pillar of the economy, adjustments have to be made. However, I have traced out a number of things in the Bill for which I would request clarification from the Minister.

With the creation of NAPRO, all Boards will disappear. In his speech, the Minister just mentioned that there will no longer be any Chairman and members sitting on any Board to take decisions, either the tea sector or the tobacco sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it should be borne in mind that, on these Boards, there were the representatives of different Ministries and, most importantly, the representatives of planters and manufacturers. The voice of planters and manufacturers will no longer be heard; there will be a vacuum. The Tea Board had regularly eight planters and manufacturers sitting on the Board. What will happen now? Can the Minister give the guarantee that there will be regular meetings with planters and manufacturers? There will still be three factories producing tea, namely Corson, La Chartreuse and Bois Chéri, and a number of *métayers* will still exist. Can the Minister say what will happen, and how will there be coordination with these planters and manufacturers? The situation is somewhat different for tobacco, as there will no longer be tobacco planters. But still, the country will continue to import tobacco. Equally, there were eight members of the planting community on the Board, and the Import Licence Committee was chaired, in the old legislation, by a representative of the Mauritius Revenue Authority. Can the Minister tell us how will this Committee operate now?

This brings me, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the issue of licences. Clause 9 of the Bill talks on the issue of licences and stipulates that -

“(...) NAPRO shall issue a licence where it is satisfied that –

- (a) the applicant is a fit and proper person(...);
- (b) the applicant complies with such requirements(...), and

(c) 'where applicable, the premises(...)'.

It also says that any licence shall be issued on such terms and conditions as NAPRO may determine. So, can I ask the Minister whether it will be only one person who decides and, if so, who is that person who will decide on this issue of licences? Is it the officer-in-charge of the Ministry? Does he administratively need the approval of somebody else, or does he need the approval of the Minister? I think this issue needs to be clarified, as NAPRO will not be a body corporate; it will only be a division of the Ministry and, as such, will be an integral part of the Ministry. I wish to emphasise here, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the question of issue and revocation of licences should not rest in the hands of one person only.

Mr Speaker, Sir, clause 21 of the Bill in front of us talks of appeal. So, it states –

“(1) Any person who is aggrieved by –

(a) any decision of NAPRO may appeal against that decision to the Minister within 21 days of him being notified of the decision(...)”

Clause 21 (2) says –

“The Minister shall as soon as possible determine the appeal and forthwith inform the person accordingly.”

The power of appeal of aggrieved persons has, according to me, been completely removed. When I look at the Tobacco Production and Marketing Act of 1930, there is a section 49 on appeal. That section 49 of the Tobacco Production and Marketing Act says that -

“Subject to section 27 any person who is aggrieved by or dissatisfied with a decision of the Board may, after having been furnished by the Secretary of the Board, with a statement of the reasons for the decision of the Board, appeal to the Minister against the decision.”

C’était une autre instance because the Tobacco Board then did not form an integral part of the Ministry. The Board takes a decision and if that person is aggrieved by that decision, he then appeals to the Minister. But now that the Tobacco Board, the Tea Board will all form an integral part of the Ministry, how is it that it is with the Minister that the aggrieved person comes to appeal? The same thing is there in the Tea Industry Control Act, section 10, which has been blotted out.

It says –

“Any interested party who is aggrieved by a decision of the Board under section 9 may, within 21 days of his receipt of the decision, appeal against the decision to the Supreme Court in such manner as may be provided by rules made by the Supreme Court.”

And, if again I take the Meat Act 1974, it says the same thing, that –

“...any aggrieved person will appeal to the District Court.”

So, in the piece of legislation which is in front of us, NAPRO which is an integral part of the Ministry, only a branch or a Division of the Ministry under the general political responsibility of the Minister takes a decision, and it is finally the Minister himself who deals with the appeal. *Il n’y a pour moi absolument pas de séparation de pouvoir*, and the Minister becomes judge and party at the same time. *M. le président, s’il n’y a pas d’amendement à cette section spécifique, moi, je pense que les droits des planteurs et des manufacturiers seront complètement bafoués.*

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, another issue on which clarification is required is at clause 6 of the Bill. It is clearly stipulated that -

“The supervising officer shall designate such officers as may be necessary to assist NAPRO...”

That word ‘designate’, Mr Speaker, Sir, can give rise to a lot of favouritism. He will designate on the basis of what? What would be the criteria for such designation? We just have to cast a glance at clause 7 of the Bill - which is in front of us - which describes the powers of these officers which are really wide ranging because they can,

“(...) at a reasonable time, enter any land, factory or the premises. They can carry out any search. They can take samples of regulated products. They can collect data. They can inspect any record, book or document. They can seize and detain any regulated product. They can carry out investigations, swear information and conduct prosecution.”

So, these are really wide ranging powers and, Mr Speaker, Sir, these officers with such powers will be ‘designated’ without any clear-cut criteria. I find this unacceptable. *C’est même arbitraire!*

With regard to the Meat Authority, the Meat Act is not repealed as I said, as only the licensing part goes to NAPRO. It appears, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there are certain problems at the Mauritius Meat Authority. Only recently the president of the Mauritius Labour Congress stated that *“rien ne va plus à la MMA.”* Last year, there was an accidental death of an employee who was killed by an ox. It seems that nothing has changed and the unions’ request *pour que le sol soit revêtu d’antidérapant* had not yet been considered. The president of the MLC has further stated that the MMA does not have, as at now, a General Manager nor does it have an Administrative Secretary or even a Health and Safety Officer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know whether, as at today, there are persons responsible, but I do not think we can manage without a Manager or an Administrative Secretary, etc.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the presentation of this Bill marks the end of an era. Only history will recall that Mauritius used to grow tobacco. As for tea, Mr Speaker, Sir, the manufacturers are selling their products

on the local market, with no external competitor. As I said earlier, we do not know how long this will last, but let us pray that we do not see imported tea in our country, otherwise *le paysage mauricien va changer*.

I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have said that I am for this Bill, but provided the Minister gives clarifications on the issues raised.

I wish to thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(5.46 p.m.)

Mr Faugoo: Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all to thank the only Member from the other side of the House, from the Opposition side, hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, for her intervention on this present Bill. I confirm, I reiterate again that our action today - it is true as she puts it - is from decentralisation to centralisation because in all quarters, in all sectors today, decentralisation no longer appears on the order of the day.

As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, our action today reflects the economic reality of today in both sectors: the tea sector and the tobacco sector. In a context of globalised economy characterised by fierce competition, we can only take one example here, that of a classic example of the closure of the British American Tobacco in 2009. In fact, because of economic conditions, because of competition, because of increased cost of production of tobacco in Mauritius, they have simply and purely shifted from Mauritius to Kenya. This has resulted in so many actions that we, the planters and all the stakeholders, have had to take, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I will try to answer some of the issues which have been raised by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. I will try to give as much clarification as I can. The first point which she raised was the doing away with the Boards: the Tobacco Board and the Tea Board. In fact, this is the very essence of the amendment, of the reform that we are bringing. This is exactly what we did in the case of the sugar sector, bringing six institutions under one umbrella, that is, the MCI, and I said earlier in my main speech, we have cut cost by 87.5% as far as Boards and members are concerned. So, this is one point. In fact, we are doing away with Boards.

The hon. Member asked how will the voice of planters and other stakeholders be heard. I have discussed this when we were preparing the Bill. Not every aspect of the Bill must go in the parent law. This can be done by regulations; this is one. Secondly, I understand, and I think it is correct, that we are going to put a consultative committee at the level of NAPRO, independent of the Ministry, that is, the office which we are creating; a consultative committee which will comprise all the stakeholders, including the growers, the planters and the cultivators. That will be a forum where their voices can be

heard. So, they will not be denied of the opportunity of being heard or putting forward their grievances. There will be a platform that will be created at administrative level, which is the proper way to go about it because there is no Board. As I explained, for obvious reasons we are doing away with Boards. So, we will have what we call a consultative committee, an enlarged committee which will take on board the planters and also all other stakeholders where their voice will be heard.

The second point which the hon. Member raised is on importation of tobacco, whether the licence to import will be granted by one single person, that is, the officer-in-charge, as it used to be granted by a committee where the committee was chaired by the MRA.

Now, there is nothing which is going to be left to one person under the present law. I can assure the hon. Members in the House that everything that is going to be done will be done under the supervision of the officer-in-charge, of course, but also the officer-in-charge is answerable to the Supervising Officer of the Ministry. The licences will be recommended by a committee again. There will be an administrative committee set up; they will recommend, and it will be issued by NAPRO. So, there is no problem whatsoever in connection with issue of licences.

Another point which she raised is on the issue of licence under clause 9. She stated that licence is going to be issued on conditions as NAPRO thinks fit. Again, she said it should not be left to one person. And indeed, she is right, Mr Speaker, Sir. It should not be left to one person, and it would not be left to the officer-in-charge. Again, it will be based on conditions as recommended by the committee, which I said, will be set up. The officer-in-charge might be in presence of the committee, he might form part of the committee, but it will be a larger committee comprising responsible officers of NAPRO, and may also include, I must say, not necessarily limited to members or officers of NAPRO. For example, if we are issuing a licence for the importation of meat or meat products, I cannot see how an officer of DVS, a Veterinary Officer would not be present; he has to be present. So, again, we cannot put in the Bill today that the committee is going to be composed of officers of NAPRO, and also a person from DVS. This is going to be done accordingly, and this is going to be done as it is done today, administratively. We have a committee at the level of the Ministry, which issues import permits, and it is not one person. There are members from the Meat Authority, officers from DVS, and officers from the Ministry. So, it is a committee which oversees the issue of permits again, Mr Speaker, Sir. The issue of revocation was also raised. Revocation will also be dealt as in the question of issue.

She also spoke about the appeal against decision of NAPRO. Clause 21 stipulates that –

“(1) Any person who is aggrieved by -

- (a) any decision of NAPRO (...) may appeal (...) to the Minister within 21 days(...).”

She compares this to section 49 of the Tobacco Ordinance of 1930, under section 49 of the Act which is going to be repealed by the present Bill. The appeal from the decision of the Board was to the Minister. She is right in a way. The Board was independent and a person could appeal from the decision of the Board to the Minister. I must say today also that NAPRO is going to be an independent office. There is nowhere in this Bill where power is given to the Minister, except for the appeal. No power is vested. There is no approval that should be sought from the Minister either on appointment of officers or granting of licences or any other licence that maybe granted under the present Bill. The Minister has no power. The office is independent. This is why any aggrieved person can appeal from the decision of NAPRO, that is, the office to the Minister. Again, this is reinforced further, Mr Speaker, Sir, under clause 21, where the person can go and apply for a judicial review to the Supreme Court on appeal. This is also a guarantee which is being given to the person. I must say that the Minister is not judge and party because the Minister is not involved at all in the process and issue of licences. So, this does not stand again, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Under clause 6, she spoke about the Supervising Officer designating officers of the NAPRO. I will just put a question, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have the National Plant Protection Office, which is similar to the office which we are creating today. How are the officers of the NPPO appointed? It is the same. It is the Supervising Officer because they are in the public service, they are officers posted in the Ministry who are going to be deputed at this particular office by the Supervising Officer, who is in charge of the Ministry after all. This is exactly, as I said, even for the appeal not only at the NPPO. There are so many legislations where the right of appeal is the same from the independent office to the Minister responsible of the subject, Mr Speaker, Sir.

On the contrary, we are reinforcing what is in the Tea Board Act, which creates the Tea Board and also the Tobacco Board. We are reinforcing. Because what is the point of having regulations when you cannot enforce them? In fact, we are going further than what was provided for under the Tea Board and the Tobacco Board. We are putting a full section and giving powers to officers so that what we regulate, we can see that it is enforced in reality. This is exactly what we are doing.

So, I think I have done with all the points that were raised by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

**THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS REGULATORY OFFICE BILL
(No. I of 2013)**

Clauses 1 to 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 7 (Powers of officers)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill”.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Chairperson, I move that in clause 7(1)(a), the words “or reared,” be deleted.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 9 (Issue of licence)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill”.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Chairperson, in clause 9(2)(c), I move to insert, after the words “producer of tea”, the word “products”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 10 to 21 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 22 (Offences)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill”.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Chairperson, I move that in clause 22(1)(c), the words “slaughterhouse licensed under this Act” be deleted and replaced by the words “person who has been issued with a licence under this Act to operate a slaughterhouse”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 22, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 23 to 25 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 26 (Consequential amendments)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill”.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Chairperson, I move that in clause 26(1)(b), the word “(f)” be deleted and replaced by the word “(g)”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 26, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 27 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 28 (Commencement)

Motion made and question proposed: “that the clause stand part of the Bill”.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Chairperson, I move that in clause 28(1), the word “(1)” be deleted and replaced by the word “(2)”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 28, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Bill, as amended, was agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office Bill (No. I of 2013) was read the third time and passed.

Second Reading

**THE MAURITIUS SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
(TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) BILL**

(NO. III of 2013)

Order for Second Reading read

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Temporary Provisions) Bill (No. III of 2013) be read a second time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the welfare of animal is presently governed by six different legislations which have been enacted at different times. These are the following -

1. The Animal Destruction Act 1918;
2. The Animal Diseases Act 1925;
3. The Artificial Insemination of Animals (Control) Act 1946;
4. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1957;
5. The Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals 1971, and
6. The Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Officers' Powers and protection) 1972.

The House will note, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the oldest legislation dates back to 1918 and the latest to 1972, that is, 95 years and 41 years respectively. Mr Speaker, Sir, I must point out that the context and issues relating to welfare of animals has evolved greatly since the first legislation which dates back as I have said to 1918 and undergone deep changes as a result of societal attitudes towards animals. New attitudes, challenges and opportunities have emerged and these call for our attention and need to be addressed. In fact, the present day institutions, policies and legislative frameworks fall short of today's requirements.

In this context, my Ministry has embarked on an innovative, profound and holistic reform programme for the sector. Our new approach will impose a duty of care and responsibility on owners of pets and animals.

Animal Welfare cannot be achieved without responsible ownership, which requires knowledge, skills and long term commitments to animals.

Resources devoted to animal welfare are scarce and limited. Our concern is to avoid duplications, streamline processes, adopt owner friendly procedures and cut down on costs and finally optimize on available resources.

Animal Welfare also means keeping abreast with evolution in medical care for animals. Presently, we do not have the required facilities and competencies. Fortunately, our call for international assistance has received positive response. We can rely on international friendly organisations.

The Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Temporary Provisions) Bill constitutes the first major step of the reform programme that I have initiated with the aim of delivering the essential building blocks as regards animal welfare in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, the MSPCA is a body corporate set up under the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1971 and 1972 with the following objects, namely to -

- (a) promote kindness and to prevent or suppress cruelty to animals;
- (b) organise the catching and disposal of stray dogs, and
- (c) do anything which the society considers to be conducive or incidental to the attainment of its objects.

The MSPCA manages three clinics, namely at Rose-Hill, Union Park and Calodyne to provide for animal care and treatment. The Society also carries out literary activities, sensitisation campaign, stray dog catching, pet shows, dog shows and dog training.

Revenue generated from services provided at the hospital, donations as well as the yearly Government grant of Rs3.5 m. are used by the MSPCA to finance its activities including dog catching.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the MSPCA is presently managed by a Council consisting of 18 members elected every two years at its annual general meeting. The last election was held in July 2012 when the present Council was constituted. The Act also provides for a Secretary to service the Council as well as to oversee the day to day business of the Society. The Secretary is appointed by the President of the Society on recommendation of the Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has received representations regarding the MSPCA and I will briefly mention the main ones -

- to start with, the size of the Council with 18 members itself impedes on effective decision making;
- it has also been brought to my attention that the election process is not fair as it is not carried out under the supervision of an independent body;
- Moreover, it has been reported that abuse is made of the proxy system in place. The election process is not satisfactory and requires review. These issues will be addressed in the Animal Welfare Bill, which is under preparation and will be introduced soon in this House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, MSPCA is the Body responsible for registering dog breeders. It is, however, noted that some members of the MSPCA Council are also registered as dog breeders with the MSPCA. This, in my view, may give rise to conflict of interest.

Dog breeding today is a lucrative business and certain dog breeders are denied opportunities both in breeding and dog shows. This is particularly prevalent in dog shows organised by the MSPCA. These dog shows act as a business platform for certain breeders.

As regards dog shows, there is no legislation regulating such activity. In this case too, I have received representations that there are abuses in terms of exorbitant participation fees charged to participants and the requirement for affiliation with the *Fédération Canine Centrale* (FCC), a non-governmental association registered with the Registrar of Associations, in order to participate in such shows.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the issue of a Pedigree certificate is also another cause of concern. Presently the legislation does not provide for an authority to issue pedigree certificate nor does my Ministry recognise any organisation for the issue of same.

My Ministry has received complaints that the *Fédération Canine Centrale* (FCC) has proclaimed itself as the authority to issue Pedigree certificates. Some members of the MSPCA Council are also members of the FCC. One of the conditions imposed by the MSPCA for registration of puppies of pure breed is to have a birth certificate delivered by the FCC.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will agree that the stray dogs are a real nuisance to Mauritius. This has been a matter of concern to Government for quite some time. Accordingly, Government has provided a sum of Rs10 m. for financial year 2012 as well as 2013 - that is, Rs20 m. altogether - to intensify the campaign for the control of stray dogs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of the additional resources made available by Government, the MSPCA has failed to meet the target set for the control of stray dogs.

The situation has worsened since January 2013 as the MSPCA has ceased to pursue the agreed established dog catching programme. The MSPCA is using only one van for dog catching and the number of stray dogs caught for the first two months of 2013, that is this year, is 676 as compared to 1,857 for the corresponding period last year, bearing in mind that the initial target - which we agreed to the Ministry and MSPCA - was to catch 2,500 stray dogs on a monthly basis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will now elaborate on the objectives of the MSPCA (Temporary Provisions) Bill. The objectives of the Bill are -

- a) to provide for the setting up of an interim Management Committee of the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) with a reduced membership. In fact, only five, from 18 we are bringing it down to only five members;
- b) to abolish the post of Secretary and to appoint a full fledged Director for the overall management of the Society, delivery of services and the running of the three Animal Hospitals, and
- c) to recognise the activities of the MSPCA to be in line with its stated objectives, as per the law and regulations, and also to reflect that of Government policies in this particular sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the present MSPCA Act dates as far back as 1971. From its inception to date, new issues have emerged, especially regarding issues beyond prevention of cruelty, caring of animals, obligations of pet owners and new technologies for treatment of animals among others. Hence, there is an impending urgency to review the Act itself with a view to give a new orientation and sense of direction to the MSPCA.

This Temporary Provisions Bill goes in this direction. It will make provision for the setting up of an Interim Management Committee which will consist of five members only. It will also have as main responsibility to reorganise, restructure and set up a sound and transparent financial and audit system at the MSPCA.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned earlier that my Ministry has embarked on a profound reform programme on Animal Welfare.

We are presently reviewing the existing legislations including the MSPCA Act with regard to animals to come up with an Animal Welfare Bill. The Animal Welfare Bill will address issues in relation to welfare of animals, dog control including dangerous dogs, pedigree and dog shows.

In respect of animal welfare, my Ministry is adopting a holistic approach and moving towards a more humane and modern legislative framework. We are proposing to limit dog catching to only essential circumstances and places, and adopting a policy for mass sterilisation. So, we are shifting, in fact, from one programme, that is, of dog catching and killing to dog catching and neutering and releasing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This shift in policy and gigantic step is a result of the numerous consultations my Ministry had with stakeholders both at national and international level. In this exercise my Ministry has been able to galvanise support from competent international bodies in India, UK and USA in terms of technical expertise, human and financial resources to implement the programme.

One of the major tasks of the Interim Management Committee will also be to prepare the ground for the major shift to mass sterilisation and to create a platform for all stakeholders for its implementation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the present dog catching and killing method adopted by the MSPCA has not proved to be effective to control stray dogs so far. In fact, this has been the cause of bad publicity from overseas Animal Welfare groups towards Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the forthcoming months my Ministry in association with the Humane Society International and the International Animal Welfare and Protection Coalition will undertake a major dog population survey in Mauritius. Such a survey has never been carried out in Mauritius and the number of stray dogs estimated by the MSPCA is very doubtful. The proposed survey will be useful for the Ministry for policy formulation and decision making especially for the implementation of the mass sterilisation project.

Last, but not the least, my Ministry is going ahead with the construction of a modern Animal Hospital which will provide a state of the art facilities including pathological services, surgical operations in hi-tech operation theatres, equipped laboratory for clinical diagnosis and ward for animals under observation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is undergoing a profound cultural change in all walks of life including the human – animal relationship. In this process of cultural change we cannot remain unresponsive to change.

This Bill is a first step and requires the comprehension and support of one and all.

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

Dr. A. Boolell rose and seconded.

(6.17 p.m.)

Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Speaker, Sir, about a year ago the Daily Mail Online carried an article on Mauritius, and I will seek your indulgence to just quote from the Mail Online.

“The dogs on death row in paradise: One English woman's battle to take on a holiday island which cruelly kills thousands of pet dogs a year.”

About 80% of these dogs are our pet dogs. Dogs which are collected to make up the numbers required for the MSPCA to be able to justify the Rs3.5 m. being given, to justify their existence and, in addition, to justify the Rs400 per dog which is caught. So, they catch your dog and your pet dog gets

killed. In this article, which I will not quote any further, the word 'dogpound', 'pound' can only be described as a concentration camp for dogs. There was further an undercover investigation.

So, today, when the hon. Minister is coming up with this idea of moving the existing Council out and moving an Interim Committee in, I fully agree with it. The only thing is why is this coming so late? There have been umpteen questions and the MP from this side has always, I think, been most commonly hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee who has been asking parliamentary questions. I remember one answer where the hon. Minister said that, despite an ICAC investigation on the Council, he found that there was no conflict of interest between the Council and the canine organisations, following advice from the State Law Office. I just wonder what kind of advice the State Law Office gave when they investigated the links between this MSPCA and the other canine organisations, but be as it is, however much we want to be polite towards the MSPCA, I find that the hon. Minister instead of saying straight that he is sacking the current group and bringing a law to replace 18 people who were not elected according to the rules of the game, having made use - as the hon. Minister himself has said - of the proxy system to its limit whereby some members who are candidates even pay for the membership fees of others to create this kind of fake membership. So, I think the hon. Minister should, at least say, I am getting rid of them, I want a new start in life, and an Interim Committee will have a Chair and will have five members. I hope, in addition to one being from the Veterinary Council of Mauritius, that the three members include somebody from the Registrar of Associations, to make sure that all those who will vote eventually to set up the new Council there should be somebody from the Registrar and somebody maybe from MRA.

There are some issues of controversy that the hon. Minister has brushed on. He is not satisfied with the pet shows, the dog shows and the *salon du chien*. One only has to look at the reports which have been published for the MSPCA to find that there are no figures given for dog shows. The only figure which gets published is pet show, and I am assuming maybe the pet show covers the dog show, when actually there are pet shows and dog shows. According to the MSPCA Act, the *salon du chien*, the dog shows have to be organised by the MSPCA. So, what happens is that the MSPCA, having entered in some form of dichotomy, - or may be dichotomy is too polite - an incestuous relationship with two other organisations, has delegated its responsibilities towards holding of dog shows to one organisation, whose very president and members of the executive committee are also on the MSPCA and, to make things even better, another one has come up with an organisation called 'Animalia', which imports dog food, pet food, dog toys. It's a good business that is going on. That is why I mentioned about the MRA.

(Interruptions)

Well, I think we should have somebody from Health; maybe a dog psychiatrist. This does exist. There is something called a dog psychiatrist.

(Interruptions)

You might even have a dog psychiatrist on that Board.

(Interruptions)

At the end of the day, one of these organisations has been given the responsibility of Pedigree certification. To us, Mr Speaker, Sir, one dog looks very much like the other one. But an organisation which comes up without a Pedigree Act is going to certify and to have your dog certified true blood, blue blood, red blood or purple blood...

(Interruptions)

That's a venous blood coming back.

(Interruptions)

Blood which returns to the heart is rather purple. The one that goes away from the heart is red.

(Interruptions)

To get back to the business of the day while you don't have a pedigree Act, the hon. Minister will agree that this organisation is actually pedigreeing your dogs and you are paying pedigree prices. Also, there seems to be a kind of monopoly with the same people when they are on the three Boards; then, there is a monopoly for the breeders. For those among you, who maybe are not satisfied with your own little mongrel collected from your constituency, let me tell you what the prices of a dog are.

(Interruptions)

A French dogue costs Rs100,000; a dogue *de Bordeaux*, Rs80,000; a Doberman, Rs40,000; a Great Dane, Rs40,000. You can well imagine that it pays to breed dogs rather than kids. Your kids might leave you; your dogs are there to be sold. There is monopoly of some breeders; those who are breeding independently cannot breed unless they pay their respect financially to the members of the MSPCA who are on the *Fédération Canine du Chien*, on Animalia and on the MSPCA. With regard to registration fees - I hate to talk about it - I would have liked to be able to go into figures and tell you what are *les recettes du salon du chien*. Dogs which will speak to you in French or English, God knows.

There is one thing which is more alarming. Have you not noticed recently, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there is a certain amount of theft at the level of dogs? Actually, the names of those who buy are recorded and are known. The minute you buy an expensive dog, you have got to take insurance, otherwise you have got to mind the dog rather than the dog minding your house because the dog might get stolen. This is the kind of business that is going on. At the same time, we are having the other figures; the dog

catching business, where the hon. Minister has said he is not satisfied with the figures given. But then this is the way the MSPCA has been going on and functioning.

Then, we have the elections at the MSPCA - I think I have mentioned the elections at the MSPCA. I would like the hon. Minister, when he is actually setting up an Interim Committee, to have a time frame on the duration. We do not want any Interim Committee to have a certain degree of permanence and stay there forever because there is a lot of great racketeering and great financial business and, at the end of the day, the consumer, the dog lover has to be protected.

There are also other items coming up - animal way - which would be, I think, the clinical trials on animals. I think most MPs have been receiving communications to that effect where the monkeys, the macaques will be exported. The MSPCA should be reminded that their role is to be proactive and get involved in all animals - not MPs; but all animals - and protect all species of animals. In anticipation of what is coming, I think the MSPCA demands not only a cleanup, it demands a reshaping, and I sincerely hope that we use this opportunity to, at least, clean up one organisation, which in the past had been very well run. The hon. Prime Minister was a member of the MSPCA before he joined politics. Then, he decided this one will be better as a home. It was a club of gentlemen. These days, I doubt what kind of a club it is. I think I have said enough, and I do not wish it, Mr Speaker, Sir, to be a case of 'dogs bark but the caravan goes on'. But, as was told in history, les étables d'Augias n'avaient pas été nettoyées pendant 30 ans, et il a fallu Hercule pour les nettoyer. Je crois que l'honorable ministre a un bon rôle : être Hercule et nettoyer ces écuries d'Augias.

Merci.

(6.27 p.m)

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me first of all thank my friend, hon. Dr. S. Boolell, for his intervention on this present Bill. From the tenor of his speech and also the issues which he has raised, I believe that he is in agreement with the amendments which I am bringing to the House.

In fact, I recall that before the break of the last session of this House, he told me in the corridor - if I am allowed, with his permission, to say so - why I am protecting the MSPCA. I told him to have some patience, and he will see whether I am protecting the MSPCA or I am doing away with MSPCA - in a way to say.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are here today with the first stepping stone, as I said, the first action which we are taking. He asked me why I do not say it loud and clear that I am cleaning, I am doing away with the actual team, the actual Council and replacing it by another one. I will be wrong if I do that; if I do just that; taking those people from there and replacing them by other people. What I am doing, Mr Speaker,

Sir, is to do away with the Council for the reasons which I have mentioned earlier in my speech, but with a new vision and mandate altogether, to look into the sector altogether; what changes need to be brought, and not only for animal welfare. I mentioned earlier that we are adopting a holistic approach to all the business in this particular sector, from issuing of Pedigree certificate to breeding activities, granting of licences for breeding activities, from dog shows and pet shows to also disease control in a more efficient manner. We are also, as I said, not only planning; we are working on this. We have gone quite a long way ahead for the construction of a modern animal hospital; where there is none! Today, in 2013, we don't have an animal hospital in Mauritius. What we have is like a small dispensary where only basic health care is given. It is not a hospital; it cannot be called a hospital because it is not. So, we are coming up with the construction of a modern hospital.

On the question of dog control, as I said, we need to educate and sensitise the public. Only last week I was in London and I met a vet there. In fact, he is the owner and Director of an animal clinic. He told me that 50 years ago, other countries used to face the problem which Mauritius is facing today, and they have done away with those problems.

The problem of stray dogs, for example, in a modern country does not arise, because owners are educated, owners are responsible. Owners know the exact responsibility when they decide to rear a pet. This is not so in Mauritius; we have a long way to go.

Again, he said, what he had to do is to treat broken bones 50 years ago. And for the past 50 years, he has done away with this. No dog comes into his clinic with broken bones, because there is no accident, because of the education and sensitisation programmes which they have carried out, Mr Speaker, Sir. Owners do not go to the hospital because of diseases, for example, skin disease in those countries. They have done away with this, but we are still struggling with these factors, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Today, they go for other kinds of problems like cancer, heart problem, complicated surgeries and these kinds of problems. They are ahead of us in all spheres. So, we are working in this also, Mr Speaker, Sir.

As I said, now, as far as controls of stray dogs are concerned, we are all conscious of the environmental problem, especially Mauritius being a tourist destination which the country faces with stray dogs. It is a big problem which has been there for quite some time, but, as I said earlier, the programme which was set in place for so many years has not shown positive results. The catching and killing of dogs have not shown any result, neither here nor in any other country, Mr Speaker, sir. They have shifted from catching and killing to catching, neutering and releasing. It might sound a bit crazy, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In so many countries this has shown that in the long run, this is the programme by which we can get rid of the stray dogs.

As I said, we are also doing away with the present committee because the election which was held six months ago, I believe, was tainted, because they abused on the proxy system. So, it is not only replacing the committee members by other members - I am going to as I said. This is an interim committee.

A very valid point which was raised by hon. Dr. S. Boolell is the question of time. I, myself, asked this question. I discussed this issue with the officers of my Ministry. I said I do not want to replace this committee by another committee on a permanent basis because there would be no election. I said we have within a reasonable time, and I am giving a guarantee. I am assuring the House that within months I am going to be here again with the Animal Welfare Bill, which will take care of most of the issues which have been raised in this House today. Within a month I will come back to the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, and, as I said, for the construction of the hospital; we are working on this. So, this is a first step towards modernisation of the sector, and a profound change and reform of the sector, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

(At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair)

COMMITTEE STAGE

(The Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

The Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Temporary Provisions) Bill (No. III of 2013) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Temporary Provisions) Bill (No. III of 2013) was read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Tuesday 23 April 2013, at 11.30 a.m.

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

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

(6.37 p.m.)

MATTER RAISED

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS – EIILM UNIVERSITY – FOUNDATION COURSE

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): M. le président, je souhaiterais entretenir les collègues de la Chambre ce soir d'une question très grave qui nous interpelle depuis quelques semaines déjà.

L'histoire débute juste après la proclamation des résultats du *HSC*, quand, sur les ondes des radios, nous notons une publicité assez inhabituelle où l'on entend une voix féminine, certes celle d'une jeune fille qui vient d'échouer le *HSC*, informant ses parents qu'il n'y a nul besoin de s'inquiéter, elle n'a pas besoin de redoubler le *HSC* puisque, désormais, EIILM offre un *foundation course* qui lui permettrait d'accéder à l'université et à des études supérieures.

Cela nous avait évidemment grandement étonnés. C'est vrai que, quelque temps avant, l'autre frère - il y a un frère qui dirige EIILM, comme nous le disait tout à l'heure le ministre - étant ministre, nous annonçait qu'il y avait un *one A-level policy*, que désormais, dans le but de démocratiser l'accès à l'université, il suffirait d'un seul *A-level* pour entrer à l'université. Et nous allons donc entreprendre des recherches pour comprendre comment - parce qu'on se dit, cette jeune fille qui va aller à EIILM sans le *HSC*, avec un seul *A-level*, avec un *foundation course*, imaginons qu'elle obtienne un diplôme quelconque d'*EIILM* - va-t-elle faire pour intégrer la fonction publique, par exemple; comment va-t-elle faire dans le secteur privé. Mais oublions le secteur privé. La fonction publique ! Et nos recherches nous mènent, surprise, surprise, à une circulaire en date du 22 novembre 2012. Je ne sais combien de députés de l'autre coté de la Chambre en sont conscients.

Une circulaire du *Senior Chief Executive* du ministère de la Fonction publique adressée à tous les *Supervising Officers* à l'effet que, je cite -

“Government has decided that the qualification requirements for entry grades in the public service be reviewed so that the schemes of service for such positions specify only the highest qualifications required for the positions.”

La circulaire poursuit –

“The above decision therefore constitutes a major change in the current policy for specifying qualifications and would entail amending a considerable number of schemes of service, particularly at entry grade, so as to specify only the highest qualifications required.”

Et tout cela to be effective as from January 2013. Non content de bousculer tous les *schemes of service* de la fonction publique, *responsible officers are also kindly requested to ensure that parastatal organisations falling under the aegis of their respective Ministries comply with the above Government decision*. Evidemment, M. le président, c’est ce qu’on appelle faire un enfant dans le dos de la population, parce que personne n’en a parlé. Personne n’en était conscient. Aucun journal, aucune radio, certainement pas la télévision nationale. Personne n’a parlé de ce changement fondamental pour ce qui est du recrutement dans la fonction publique, et immédiatement ce qui nous a interpellé c’est cette troublante coïncidence. On s’est demandé : y-a-t-il une relation de cause à effet entre le *Foundation course* EIILM et la soudaine décision du gouvernement d’amender les conditions d’entrée ? Troublante coïncidence, mais au-delà, M. le président, c’est une décision très grave quand nous la situons dans le contexte. Le contexte d’un rabaissement du niveau dans l’éducation, de ce que d’autres ont appelé un nivèlement par le bas.

Rappelez-vous ce qui s’est passé durant les deux à trois dernières années. D’abord, l’accès au HSC ; avant 2000, pour accéder au HSC, il fallait avoir un *School Certificate* avec *five credits, including English*. Lorsque je suis ministre de l’Education entre 2000 et 2005, face à des représentations concernant l’injustice faite à ceux qui ont déjà plus de dix huit ans - vous savez qu’on ne peut pas rester dans une institution secondaire passé l’âge de vingt ans. Donc, ceux qui arrivent, à dix huit ans, à réussir le *School Certificate* sans cinq *credits* subissaient une injustice -avec l’accord du gouvernement, j’amende les conditions pour faire de sorte que, dans des cas d’exception, un étudiant, ayant plus de dix huit ans, qui, après la première tentative, a quatre *credits*, on le permet exceptionnellement de passer en HSC. Un étudiant a plus de dix huit ans qui, à sa première tentative, n’a que trois *credits*, très exceptionnellement, vu l’âge, on le permet. Mais ce sont des cas approuvés au cas par cas, exceptionnellement. Cela était fait provisoirement parce qu’on allait diversifier les filières post *School Certificate* avec la création de polytechniques sur le modèle singapourien. Mais, à partir de 2011, les critères sont revus et le niveau est abaissé. Il suffit désormais de trois *credits*, et même dans certains cas de deux *credits*, avec l’élève ayant droit d’opter au niveau principal HSC pour une matière où il n’a même pas un *credit* au *School Certificate*. Conséquence catastrophique.

Pourquoi l’obsession du nombre ? Cette fameuse idée de démocratisation, *one graduate per family* ; alors n’importe qui peut passer en HSC. Les résultats nous le savons ; les statistiques du MES nous le démontrent. Quelqu’un qui n’a pas un *credit* dans une matière – un bon *credit* dans une matière -

va très probablement à l'échec et aura perdu deux années de sa vie. Mais ce n'est qu'un exemple. L'autre exemple maintenant c'est évidemment l'accès au supérieur. Avant 2012, pour accéder à l'université, il fallait le *Higher School Certificate*, c'est-à-dire, *passes two principals, two subsidiaries, or two 'A' levels* d'un certain niveau. On demandait deux 'D' je crois comme le minimum. En 2012, ne voilà-t-il pas que le ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur annonce la politique de *one 'A' level*. Désormais, pour donner l'accès à tout le monde, à tous à l'université - un peu le modèle français, mais le modèle français il faut avoir le baccalauréat ; après il y a l'accès quasi automatique à l'université, mais ici ce n'est même pas cela. *One 'A' level* et puis vous allez dans une université, vous embarquez sur une *foundation course*, et voilà le tour est joué, vous pouvez aller faire une licence. Donc, ce qui nous a troublés c'est que tout cela arrive en même temps ; on pourrait dire dans un mouchoir temporel. La politique de *one 'A' level*, la politique de la circulaire du 22 novembre, et le *foundation course* de EILM ; étonnant pour dire le moins ; intrigant. Cela nous interpelle. Alors, c'est à se demander, M. le président, si la démocratisation à la source travailliste ne rimerait pas avec affairisme. C'est cela la question. C'est grave. C'est grave parce que nous sacrifions la qualité à la quantité. Je prends à témoin monsieur Bunwaree - pas le ministre Bunwaree, l'autre monsieur Bunwaree qui préside le *staff association* de l'université de Maurice - qui s'inquiétait du fait que, mis à part les cours de médecine et de droit qui sont en très grande demande, pour tous les autres cours à l'université de Maurice, il y avait une baisse de niveau inquiétant. Grave parce qu'il y a le chômage qui guette. Je crois que les responsables de cette nouvelle politique ont oublié de quand date l'exigence du *HSC* pour un gradué. Cela remonte à 1979. A l'époque où il y a une floraison de gradués chômeurs; il y avait même une association de gradués chômeurs à l'époque, et le Premier ministre d'alors, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, mit sur pied une commission avec un représentant de l'opposition et un représentant de la majorité gouvernementale ; et on débouche sur cette recommandation que, désormais pour l'emploi dans la fonction publique, tout détenteur d'un diplôme universitaire devra prouver qu'il a deux 'A' level. Ce que, face au chômage massif à la fin des années 79, dans sa sagesse, le Premier ministre, le docteur Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, décida, aujourd'hui, dans leur sagesse, les princes du jour sont en train de défaire, alors que le chômage guette, alors que désormais les chiffres du chômage ont dépassé la barre de 8%, alors qu'il y a une tendance à la hausse au chômage parmi les diplômés qui n'est pas reflété dans les statistiques officielles, alors que les chômeurs répertoriés par *Statistics Mauritius* seuls 37% sont inscrits auprès des autorités. Et malgré cela, l'on dénombre 7,000 diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur au chômage, c'est-à-dire, 16% du total des chômeurs. Et ici, c'est l'obsession du nombre. Tout le monde entre à l'université.

Mais le troisième point, M. le président, et je vais essayer d'aller un peu plus vite, le *foundation course*; cette politique a donné lieu à un véritable Bonanza de *foundation course*. C'est le ministre Jeetah qui, un peu plus tôt, nous donnait les noms des institutions qui désormais offrent le *foundation course*...

Dr. Jeetah: On a point of clarification...

Mr Obeegadoo: No, I cannot give way on a point of clarification...

Dr. Jeetah: I have some figures. I can bring some light to his argument. He probably is not aware of the situation.

Mr Obeegadoo: Désolé M. le président, I will not give way. Government can designate this Minister instead of Minister Dayal to respond.

Je disais, M. le président, que le drame, comme aujourd'hui d'autres collègues l'ont évoqué, c'est qu'il y a différentes institutions qui offrent différents *foundation courses* de durée différente, de contenu différent, avec différents enseignements, différents examens, chacun mené comme bon lui semble par des institutions à l'exemple d'EIILM. EIILM offre un cours pour la première fois cette année d'une durée de cinq à six mois ; avril à septembre. On ne paie qu'un dépôt de dix mille roupies, mais seulement après on s'est engagé pour une licence à quatre vingt dix mille roupies par an pendant, je ne sais plus, trois ou quatre ans, mais tout est sous le contrôle d'EIILM. Personne ne sait comment cet enseignement va être dispensé, quel sera le niveau des élèves; l'examen est dirigé par EIILM. Il n'y a pas d'audit par une institution externe.

Ce matin j'ai parlé d'un communiqué officiel de la Commission pour l'éducation tertiaire en date du 21 ou du 22 février qui dit que ce *foundation course* n'est pas accrédité par la *Tertiary Education Commission*. C'est grave, M. le président ! Alors, qu'à la place nous avons le *gold standard*, des 'A' levels que nous ont légués les Britanniques, et que la plupart des pays du *Commonwealth* continuent à adopter.

L'impact sur la fonction publique, M. le président ! Notre fonction publique, l'excellence dans la fonction publique c'est l'épine dorsale de la bonne gouvernance. Une des bonnes choses de la colonisation britannique - et on le voit aujourd'hui en Afrique - c'est ce service civil, cette fonction publique qualifiée, efficace. Je dis une vérité, M. le président. Je ne dirai pas plus ; mais que les anciennes colonies britanniques ont en commun. Aujourd'hui, c'est bien cela qui est menacé. Et les conséquences ! Imaginez-vous que demain, un enseignant de Science sociale, d'Économie, de Sociologie pourrait ne pas avoir le *credit* en Anglais au niveau du *School Certificate*. Grâce à la nouvelle politique, il aura été promu en HSC avec deux ou trois *credits* sans l'Anglais. Il pourrait ne pas avoir le *General Paper* au niveau du *Higher School Certificate*. Grâce à la nouvelle politique, il obtient un 'A' level, et puis il passe chez EIILM ou une autre de ces institutions - je prends l'exemple d'EIILM - et il obtient sa licence d'Économie. Demain, il enseignera nos enfants, sans, ni devoir détenir un *credit* en Anglais, ni même

détenir le *General Paper*. Imaginez-vous, M. le président, les conséquences! Voilà où nous mène cette politique!

Démocratisation, enfant pauvre, c'est cela la solution : de permettre à quelqu'un de ne pas avoir le niveau, qui n'a pas le niveau, d'avoir un diplôme universitaire et de devenir enseignant. M. le président, les enfants pauvres méritent mieux que cela. Le pire c'est l'incohérence, la contradiction. Alors qu'ici on nous dit *only the highest qualifications*, le *Medical Council* a décidé que, désormais, en amont, si vous n'avez pas trois 'C' au niveau du *HSC*, votre diplôme universitaire, qu'il provienne de l'Angleterre, de la France, de Harvard – je ne sais trop quoi - ne sera pas reconnu. Donc, d'un côté pour les médecins, il faut avoir trois 'C', de l'autre côté pour devenir enseignant, vous n'avez même plus besoin d'un *credit* en Anglais au *School Certificate*. Voilà, l'aboutissement, M. le président, de cette politique catastrophique!

M. le président, je ne vais pas tarder pour conclure.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister Lormus Bundhoo, please!

(Interruptions)

No, I am sorry! I am on my feet! Please, sit down! The hon. Member is broaching a specific matter, and then there will be the response from the Minister.

(Interruptions)

I am sorry, there is no debate. Hon. Minister Lormus Bundhoo, please, I am on my feet. Resume your seat, please!

(Interruptions)

No, I am sorry! You are not allowed to intervene, hon. Minister Lormus Bundhoo. The hon. Member will broach the topic, and then there will be the response from the Minister on this side, *un point c'est tout!* Please, go ahead!

Mr Obeegadoo: I do not understand why they do not trust the Minister Dayal to answer on behalf of Government. Please, have some trust in your colleague! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the more they interrupt the more time I will take. I want to be fast, but they have to stop interrupting.

The Deputy Speaker: Please!

Mr Obeegadoo: M. le président, le non respect des règles démocratiques...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence, please!

Mr Obeegadoo:...ne m'empêchera pas de parler.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, go ahead, hon. Member!

Mr Obeegadoo: M. le président, je disais, donc, que je suis d'accord qu'il faut évoluer. On ne peut plus exiger, par exemple, le *CPE*, d'aller vérifier le *CPE* pour un poste qui demande un diplôme universitaire. On ne peut plus exiger qu'il faut 'X' nombre de *credits at one and the same sitting*, c'est du passé.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister Jeetah!

(Interruptions)

Allow the hon. Member to make his point, then Minister Dayal will respond to him. I am sorry, hon. Jeetah, you cannot intervene; you cannot interrupt the hon. Member.

Mr Obeegadoo: Merci, M. le président. Je disais, donc, qu'il faut évoluer. Tout cela c'est bien, on peut évoluer, mais il faut exercer une certaine prudence. Il faut deux choses dans notre fonction publique. D'abord, c'est l'excellence dans le recrutement. Le meilleur critère pour garantir l'excellence, ce sont les résultats académiques.

Deuxièmement, il nous faut de la transparence. Cette nouvelle politique va permettre à des gens bien moins qualifiés que d'autres d'être nommés, d'être promus, au grand dam du public qui va, à tort ou à raison, se poser des questions quant à d'autres influences, d'autres ingérences dans le processus de recrutement.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Obeegadoo: M. le président, ce que nous demandons, c'est le maintien de ce qui a marché depuis 1968, depuis l'indépendance, les 'O' *levels* comme diplôme de fin du premier cycle secondaire, les 'A' *levels* comme le diplôme valable internationalement, comme diplôme de fin d'étude secondaire, comme qualification à être tenue, dont on tiendra compte pour l'accès à l'enseignement supérieur et pour l'accès à la promotion.

(Interruptions)

Donc, M. le président, je suppose que mes propos doivent faire très mal pour qu'il y ait une telle agitation sur les bancs de la majorité.

M. le président, permettez-moi de terminer. Je voudrais laisser un peu de temps au ministre Dayal, même si ces collègues ne lui font pas confiance, pour répondre à mon interpellation.

The Deputy Speaker: No, this remark is unwarranted, hon. Obeegadoo. Please, round off.

(Interruptions)

And allow enough time for the Minister to respond.

Mr Obeegadoo: M. le président, ce que nous sommes en train de dire c'est que la vraie démocratisation de l'éducation ne se fera pas de cette manière, mais la vraie démocratisation exige des opportunités d'apprentissage pour tous par le biais de la diversification des filières *post School Certificate* et la modernisation des conditions d'accès aux diplômés du *School Certificate* et du *Higher School Certificate*, mais pas le nivellement par le bas. M. le président, l'avenir exige que nous n'allions pas vers une éducation rabais, non plus une fonction publique dévaluée, mais que nous fassions primer l'excellence et la transparence pour garantir le fonctionnement correct de notre fonction publique.

Donc, notre appel aujourd'hui, c'est l'appel au gouvernement de revoir cette politique inepte, de préserver le niveau de notre fonction publique par le gel de cette nouvelle décision, et au contraire de prendre le temps de lancer un grand débat public, de se concerter avec l'opposition, afin que nous puissions avancer ensemble vers la modernisation de la fonction publique. Mais, par pitié, ne mettez pas en péril l'avenir de notre jeunesse et l'avenir de notre pays.

Merci, M. le président.

(6.59 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr S. Dayal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, I should like to thank the hon. Member for raising this point so that we can clear the air for once and for all. We do not want to dwell on what happened during the years 2000-2005 with regard to education; *nivellement par le bas*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with a view to providing our students with the opportunity to pursue and complete their secondary education up to the Higher School Certificate, the advanced level, the criteria for admission into Lower VI has been reviewed from four credits to three credits by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know that modernity scares a few people - and, of course, they are on the other side - because nothing is static; it is dynamic. In addition, in line with the Government's

objective to increase access to tertiary education, the entry requirements for admission to tertiary education institutions have also been reviewed by the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology for the following categories of students –

- (i) students possessing one ‘A’ level subject after successfully completing a foundation programme would embark on an undergraduate programme. Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the number of students enrolled in foundation courses institutions - UTM: 38; *Université des Mascareignes*: 43; Charles Telfair Institute renowned: 46; Middlesex: 63; EIILM: 50, and in all it is 240.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I continue –

- (ii) Mature students of at least 25 years of age and possessing at least a Cambridge School Certificate with credits in at least four subjects, including English, and students admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning and possessing at least a Cambridge School Certificate with credit in at least four subjects, including English and at least three years relevant working experience.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on 11 June 2010, after taking cognizance of the abovementioned measures and the fact that upon successful completion of their studies either at HSC or Advanced level or at University level, most of the persons concerned would certainly look for job opportunities in the Civil Service. Government invited the Ministry of Civil Service to consider reviewing the scheme of service of all entry grades in Civil Service to be in line with the entry requirements of tertiary institutions. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to point out that on 17 May 2011, in reply to a Parliamentary Question B/350 asked by hon. Mrs L. Ribot, with regard to the new minimum criteria for admission into Lower Six, the then Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, hon. Gungah, informed the House that a committee chaired by the Ministry was working on the review of the qualification requirements in schemes of service for entry grades in the Civil Service. The committee eventually made the following proposals –

- (a) in order not to overburden the item ‘qualification’ in schemes of service, it would be more appropriate to specify only the highest qualification required for the post. For instance, only a Cambridge School Certificate or a Cambridge Higher School Certificate or a Degree or a Master’s Degree, as appropriate, would be mentioned, and this principle would also apply to all posts in Civil Service;

- (b) specific and relevant skills and aptitudes should be included under the item 'qualification' in schemes of service so as to ensure the selection of candidates with the right profile, and
- (c) the onus of determining the criteria for carrying out the selection exercise would rest with the Public and Disciplined Forces Service Commission.

These proposals, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, were sanctioned by Government in April 2012. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand that the previous standing practice for recruitment in the Civil Service was to specify that all academic qualifications in addition to the highest one required for the post. For example, for a job requiring a postgraduate qualification, all the lower qualifications at SC, HSC and Degree level had to be specified in the job profile, and maintaining such a policy would surely debar many candidates possessing a degree from being considered for such posts. Besides, it is the international trend to ask for the highest qualifications when advertising vacancies to posts requiring a postgraduate or doctoral degree. For instance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the post of Director Office for Africa and Least Developed Countries under the aegis of the World Met Organisation is open to a holder of a Ph.D. with experience in the relevant fields. This is also the case in the Public Service of Singapore where job profiles specify only the highest qualifications in addition to the skills and competencies.

The Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, therefore, could not be insensitive to the situation by maintaining the *status quo* in the qualification requirements of posts at entry level. We simply do not want to treat these persons differently by denying them access to job opportunities. This is one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. After consultation with the stakeholders concerned, the need to review the policy on the qualification requirements of entry grades was felt necessary.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is to be pointed out that notwithstanding the abovementioned new measure and taking into consideration the fact that a large number of job seekers are degree holders generally, the best qualified candidate is selected for a job though the entry requirement, maybe at the level of School Certificate or a Higher School Certificate. Moreover, the new policy with respect to qualifications would not have a negative impact on the standard and quality of service delivery in view of the fact that candidates joining the Service with such qualifications should also possess the basic skills and competencies required for the job concerned. On the other hand, the onus of determining the criteria for carrying out the selection exercise would continue to rest with the appropriate Service Commissions. The new measure taken should, therefore, not be construed as one leading to a devaluation of the job, but rather as one in conformity with the principle of ensuring equal opportunity to all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, prior to finalising the reviewed policy, the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms had consulted the recognised Federation of Trade Unions of the Civil Service.

The Ministry also issued a Circular Letter to all Heads of Ministries/Departments since 22 November 2012, requesting them to initiate action to amend the schemes of service for entry grades on the respective establishment to specify only the highest qualification. The measure will also concern comparable posts in parastatal organisations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is estimated that across the Civil Service some 600 grades will be concerned with the new measure introduced. The procedure for the amendment of schemes of service for the various grades in the Ministries/Departments are being referred to the Ministry of Civil Service which will seek the agreement of the Public Service Commission after consultation with the Federation of Unions in the Civil Service, in accordance with the Public Service Commission Regulation.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

At 7.19 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 23 April 2013, at 11.30 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

NATIONAL DISASTERS - NATIONAL AID COMMITTEE

(No. B/117) Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to national disasters, he will state if consideration will be given for the setting up a National Aid Committee to coordinate local aid and to monitor and ensure an even distribution and utilisation of Corporate Social Responsibility funds in the aftermath thereof.

Reply: In line with the CSR guidelines, Companies may use their CSR funds to finance projects implemented following national calamities.

The recent flash flood has shown that CSR Companies, public institutions, NGOs and Civil Societies have spontaneously contributed to support government efforts in providing assistance to flood victims. In order to ensure that such assistance is channeled to victims promptly as well as in the most effective and efficient manner, the Advisory Technical Committee on CSR will be requested to look into the setting up of appropriate coordination mechanisms between CSR action with that of other agencies and Funds such as the Prime Minister's Relief Fund and the National Solidarity Fund.

PRB REPORT 2013 – ERRORS, OMISSIONS AND ANOMALIES COMMISSION

(No. B/123) Mr P. Roopun (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the Commission set up to look into the Errors, Omissions and Anomalies of the Pay

Research Bureau Report 2013, he will state if it has submitted its report to Government and if so, when, indicating when it will be made public, giving details as to the implementation thereof.

Reply: (Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms) (Mr S. Moutia): The committee set up to look into the Errors, Omissions and Anomalies of the Pay Research Bureau Report 2013 has submitted its report within the given time frame.

I am informed that the implications of the recommendations made therein are being looked at and the report will be submitted to Cabinet as soon as possible for a decision including the details of its implementation.

STC - PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - DEMURRAGE FEES

(No. B/145) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the transport of petroleum products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to the number of trips carried out by vessels belonging to Betamax Ltd., as at to date, indicating in each case the –

- (a) quantity of oil transported, and
- (b) demurrage fees paid.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the contract agreement between the State Trading Corporation and Betamax Ltd contains a confidentiality clause. However, in a spirit of transparency and good governance, I am providing the information requested by the hon. Member as follows.

I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that between 18 August 2010 and 02 March 2013, vessels belonging to Betamax Ltd have conducted sixty-one (61) trips to transport 2,819,529.85 metric tonnes of petroleum products.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that the total demurrage paid to Betamax Ltd. amounts Rs 54,791,566.29.

I am tabling the detailed information in respect of each of the 61 trips.

CONSOLIDATED FUND - FUNDS

(No. B/146) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Consolidated Fund, since 2011-2013, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the amount of funds –

- (a) received or estimated to be received from the –
- (i) *Maurice Ile Durable* Fund;
 - (ii) Corporate Social Responsibility contribution paid to the Mauritius Revenue Authority;
 - (iii) Universal Service Fund for information and communications technology development, and
 - (iv) National Lottery, and
- (b) disbursed from the proceeds of the National Lottery for the servicing of the national debt.

Reply: Regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that in Budget 2011 the then Minister of Finance provided for the transfer of surplus funds from the *Maurice Ile Durable* Fund to the Consolidated Fund. Accordingly, an amount of Rs635.7 m. was transferred. No such transfers were made in 2012 nor are expected in 2013.

Concerning Corporate Social Responsibility, the amount collected by the Mauritius Revenue Authority in 2011 and 2012 were Rs 116.4 m. and Rs129.9 m. respectively. For this financial year, an amount of Rs140 m. is estimated to be collected.

Regarding part (a) (iii), I wish to inform the House that the contribution made to the Universal Service Fund for information and communications technology development by telecommunication service providers is not credited to the Consolidated Fund. The Universal Service Fund is managed by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA), which falls under the aegis of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology.

Concerning the National Lottery, an amount of Rs614.7 m. and Rs579.9 m. were credited to the Consolidated Fund in 2011 and 2012, respectively. For Financial year 2013, an amount of Rs741m. is expected from National Lottery.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that section 85 of the Gambling Regulatory Authority Act provides that money from proceeds of National Lottery should be used to finance the implementation of projects relating to community development, the promotion of education, health, sport, and culture, for reimbursement of public debt and for such other purposes as may be prescribed. In fact, any money not spent under the approved projects and programmes automatically reduce Government borrowing requirement and therefore contribute towards the servicing of the National Debt.

The National Lottery came into operation in November 2009. I am tabling a breakdown of amount spent. Amounts spent from the proceeds of National Lottery in 2009 were nil. In 2010 a total of Rs171.5 m. was spent of which Rs144.7 m. was for the acquisition of the Medpoint clinic.

The House will note that an amount of only Rs 7.3 m. was spent on approved projects, much less than projected because of project implementation delays. In 2012, Rs414 m. was spent on approved projects and it is projected in 2013 to spend some Rs661 m.

Accordingly, the amount used for the reimbursement of public debt were Rs607 m. and Rs 166 m. respectively. An amount of Rs741 m. is expected from the proceeds of the National Lottery, out of which Rs80 m. will be used for servicing of the national debt.

The House is aware of the tremendous effort made by this Government in the pursuance of social objectives. Indeed, in budgets 2012 and 2013, I have provided for substantial increases have been provided for. Thus compared to 2011, in the 2013 budget expenditure for –

- Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions has increased by 19%, i.e from Rs10.8 bn to Rs12.8 b;
- Ministry of Education and Human Resources by 28% i.e from Rs9.2 bn to Rs11.8 bn;
- Ministry of Health and Quality of Life 23% i.e from Rs7.1 bn to 8.7 bn; and
- while expenditure for Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development has increased by 82 % over the same period.

FOREIGN CURRENCY - PURCHASE

(No. B/147) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development) whether, in regard to foreign currency, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the total amount thereof purchased by the Accountant General or any other Government Department, in 2012, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) rate of purchase thereof in respect of each trade;
- (b) impact thereof on the –
 - (i) rupee exchange rate, and
 - (ii) inflation rate, and
- (c) reaction of the Bank of Mauritius in relation thereto, as at to date.

(Withdrawn)

REPUBLIC OF INDIA – VISA ENTRY

(No. B/148) Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the requirement of a visa for any Mauritian to enter the Republic of India, he will state if our respective Governments have been holding negotiations for a waiver thereof, and if so, indicate where matters stand.

Reply: The reply is yes.

As a matter of fact, the issue of a visa-waiver agreement on the basis of reciprocity has been raised at the highest political level. The Indian side has indicated that our request will receive due consideration.

During his State Visit to India in February last year, Dr. the Hon. Prime Minister raised the matter with the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh.

Furthermore, H.E. the President of the Republic of Mauritius, in the course of his State Visit to India in January this year, took up the issue with Indian dignitaries, including the Indian Minister of External Affairs, hon. Salman Khurshid.

For my part, I have highlighted this request during my meetings with Indian personalities. I drew attention to it during the working session I had with hon. Anand Sharma, Minister of Industry, Commerce and Textiles of India, who was on official visit to Mauritius in January.

Additionally, our High Commission in New Delhi has been regularly following up on this matter with the Indian authorities.

The current situation regarding issue of visa is as follows -

- i. at present, Mauritian nationals who propose to travel to India must apply for the appropriate visa at the Indian High Commission. However, Mauritius is one of a restricted list of 10 countries [*Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Jamaica, Maldives, Mongolia, South Africa, North Korea and Uruguay*] whose nationals are not charged any fee for the grant of Indian visa and subsequent extensions;
- ii. Mauritian nationals who are holders of a Mauritius diplomatic passport are exempted from visa requirement for a period of stay in India of up to 90 days. Additionally, a Mauritian national who is a PIO (Person of Indian Origin) Card holder does not require visa to enter India for a period of stay of up to 180 days, and

- iii. holders of a passport issued by the Government of the Republic of India do not require visa to enter Mauritius, provided they meet usual immigration requirements (i.e. the visitors must hold a valid passport, valid return or onward passage tickets to their country of origin or residence, and evidence of sufficient funds to cover the cost of their stay) They may stay up to a maximum of six months in Mauritius for visit/tourism purpose in a calendar year. For business purpose, they are allowed an aggregate of 120 days' entry permit in a calendar year provided that the stay during each trip does not exceed 90 days.

As matters stand, the Government of India is yet to review its visa policies in the light of which our request would be addressed. We understand that this review would involve several concerned Ministries within India.

The House will wish to appreciate that visa policy is a sovereign right of every country and we should respect this right. Therefore, we will continue to pursue this matter with India, keeping in mind this right and the principle of reciprocity.

ST HUBERT - VILLAGE HALL

(No. B/149) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the reconstruction of the Village Hall of St Hubert, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Grand Port, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Grand Port that the St Huber Village Hall has been demolished since the building was in a derelict state and since November 2010, a building at Royal Road, St Hubert has been rented to temporarily house the Village Hall.

I am informed that the Council is agreeable to reconstruct a new Village Hall at St Hubert on the site whereat the old one was found, subject to availability of funds.

CPE – FAILURES - PRE VOCATIONAL STREAM

(No. B/150) Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the new policy to encourage students having failed the Certificate of Primary Education examinations at their first attempt to join the pre vocational stream at secondary level, he will state the -

- (a) rationale thereof;
- (b) number of students concerned therewith, indicating the number thereof which have opted for the pre vocational stream;

- (c) implications for the repeaters for the Certificate of Primary Education examinations in primary schooling, and
- (d) consequences for the pre vocational sector of secondary education.

(Withdrawn)

FOND DU SAC - FLOODS - VICTIMS

(No. B/152) Mr A. Gungah (First Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre D’or) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the families of Fond du Sac who have been victims of the floods of 13 February 2013 and who have lost their belongings, she will -

- (a) state if her Ministry has conducted a survey in relation thereto, and
- (b) obtain from the National Solidarity Fund, information as to if it has received requests from these families to be granted financial assistance, and if so, indicate where matters stand.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that the Ministry does not conduct any survey *per se* with regard to victims of flood. According to established procedures, victims of flood call at the Social Security Offices in their locality immediately after to apply for flood allowance payable under Social Aid Regulations. My Ministry relies on Police Reports to effect such payment.

With regard to the families of Fond du Sac who have been victims of flood of 13 February 2013, my Ministry has paid flood allowance to 54 families involving 216 members for a total amount of Rs31,968.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed by the National Solidarity Fund Board that it has, since 05 March 2013 to date, received 46 applications in writing for financial assistance from residents of Fond du Sac. As these applications were not supported by relevant Police Reports, the National Solidarity Fund has requested the applicants to submit same to enable it to process the applications.

BISSOONDOYAL ESPLANADE PROJECT - COST

(No. B/153) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Bissoondoyal Esplanade Project, he will -

- (a) table copy of the technical report of Gibbs Ltd. in relation thereto, including the details of all the water exits and

- (b) state the -
- (i) name of the consultants therefor, and
 - (ii) estimated cost thereof.

Reply: Following the heavy rain of Saturday 30 March, 2013 giving rise to flooding in Port Louis and particularly Bissoondoyal Esplanade, the Consultancy firm GIBB (Mtius) already involved in consultancy service for ongoing projects, is undertaking a proper study to address the problem of flooding at Bissoondoyal Esplanade.

The preliminary report of the study has been submitted yesterday and is indeed very revealing. The findings of the preliminary report are astounding. For example, along Signal Mountain, lateral roads upstream of Jeetoo Hospital and Ruisseau Creole, existing masonry drain of size 5600 mm wide by 1500 mm deep constructed years ago stopped well ahead of required cut off drain at foot of Signal Mountain. Over time the open masonry drain was obstructed with soil deposit and maintenance was not carried out by Local Authorities. There is inadequate structure along Signal Mountain to channel water towards existing drains.

There are many other instances of obstruction going to the extent of having a garage constructed on top of an existing drain. The situation is simply disastrous.

Another glaring example is the obstruction of the drain parallel to Pouce Stream due to the construction of KFC Commercial building. The problem is aggravated with the network of pipe crossing under the building preventing free passage of surface water runoff.

The Preliminary Report of the study is damning on the failure of the Authority concerned to take remedial measure.

I would like to inform the hon. Member that on 24 January 2013 a Notice under the Environment Protection Act was served on the Municipal Council of Port Louis for poor maintenance of canals. I am arranging to lay on the Table of the National Assembly a copy of the relevant Notice.

Following the flooding of Saturday 30 March 2013 in Port Louis without delay urgent action was taken by my Ministry for cleaning of drains and rehabilitation works. Some 300 tons of debris which were obstructing the drains system were removed. Works orders amounting to Rs63 m. have been issued for upgrading, improvement and rehabilitation works.

The preliminary report of Gibbs (Mtius) which has been recently received is under study. As soon as the report will be finalised, I will arrange to table a copy of it together with the drawings.

RUISSEAU DU POUCE - SLAB

(No. B/154) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Ruisseau du Pouce, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if consideration will be given for the -

- (a) removal of the infrastructure built thereon, and
- (b) replacement of the bridge on the M1 Motorway by a curved bridge so as not to hinder the water flow and the discharge thereof to the sea during storm and flash rains.

Reply: I am informed that the slab covering the Ruisseau du Pouce in many places were constructed at different points in time. A preliminary report submitted by Gibb Ltd clearly indicates that these coverings constitute obstructions to free water flow in Ruisseau du Pouce and they will have to be removed.

(9) For example the structure housing the KFC on top of the drain should be demolished. My Ministry is awaiting the final report which will be available in a week's time.

With regard to part (b) of the question, it has been observed that the bridge did not overflow during the heavy rainfall on 13 February 2013 and 30 March 2013. Therefore, the bridge does not hinder the flow of water and its discharge to the sea. In fact, the discharge area of the bridge is 36 sq mt and is much higher than the intake area from Le Pouce Stream and Canal Le Pouce combined which is approximately 16 sq mt.

At any point in time, even during construction, more than 20 sq meters of space was readily available for the easy flow of water.

The bridge is thus being widened while retaining its original hydraulic capacity.

STC - HEDGING LOSSES

(No. B/155) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the hedging losses incurred by the State Trading Corporation, he will state where matters stand as to the inquiry carried out thereinto, as announced, since 2009.

Reply: I am advised by the State Trading Corporation (STC) that in February 2009, its Board appointed Mr. John Dobson, a consultant from UK to review the hedging transactions carried out by the STC, to make recommendations on subsequent hedging and advise on criteria for the setting up of a Hedging Committee in respect of Petroleum Products.

In April 2009, the consultant submitted his Report and concluded that the transactions were executed correctly and STC did what any other organisation would have done in these circumstances and I quote -

“During this period the price of Gas Oil rose from about USD 90/bbl to about USD 160/bbl, and it was only when the price reached its high point that the committee managed to see that “future price increases cannot be sustained by the local economy”. This is traditionally known as “disaster hedging” and is a perfectly valid strategy. The country was indeed protected from the USD 200 + prices that were being talked about, though as it turned out, unnecessarily”.

One of the main recommendations of Mr Dobson was to set up a Risk Committee comprising representatives from the Ministries of Finance and Business, a Government “expert” in the relationship between oil price and the country’s economy. However, the Risk Committee was not set up as the Ministry of Finance advised that it did not have the necessary expertise to form part of that Committee.

Moreover, it is to be pointed out that as the STC has not had since then to resort to hedging, the need for the setting up of the Risk Committee did not arise.

KNOWLEDGE-BASED TRAINING CENTRE - SCHOOL OF HAIRDRESSING AND BEAUTY CARE

(No. B/156) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the procurement of goods and services in relation to the setting up and the running of a school of hairdressing and beauty care at the Knowledge-based Training Centre, in Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, information as to the procedures followed therefor.

Reply: In regard to information on the procedures which were followed by the ex-IVTB about the procurement of goods and services for the setting up and running of a school of hairdressing and beauty care at the Knowledge-based Training Centre, I have been informed by the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development as follows -

- (i) Quotations were invited by the then IVTB for the selection of a Consultant to assist the ex-IVTB in the setting up and operation of the Hairdressing and Beauty Care Unit. Nine training centres registered with Mauritius Qualifications Authority in the field of Hairdressing were invited on 26 March 2009 to submit their proposals.
- (ii) At the closing date (10 April 2009), proposals were received from 3 training centres namely,
 - (a) Rachel Hair Style Ltd

- (b) Sharmed Ltd
 - (c) Amit School of Hairdressing Co. Ltd
- (iii) The Appraisal Committee set up by the then IVTB recommended that only one bidder namely, Sharmed Ltd. met the requirements of the then IVTB and that the contract be awarded to the company. At its meeting of 30 April 2009, the ex- IVT Council gave its approval for the award of the contract to Sharmed Ltd at a fixed price of Rs 4,920,000 which includes -
- (a) designing the layout of the facilities
 - (b) finalising the curricula, the list of furniture, equipment, tools and training materials
 - (c) training of Trainers contentwise and delivering training
- (iv) As regards purchase of equipment and consumables, the Consultant submitted a list on 22 June 2009 and quotations were invited from three overseas companies on 25 June 2009. The names and addresses of these overseas bidders were submitted by the Consultant. The closing date for submission of bids by courier was 20 July 2009 (1330hrs). By the closing date, none of the three bidders had submitted their tenders in original as per requirement. However, one of the companies emailed a copy of their quote prior to closing date and informed that the original had been sent by courier. At the closing date, no original bid was received by courier.
- (v) The advice of the Procurement Policy Office (PPO) was sought as to whether the bid received by email could be considered. The PPO had, on 22 July 2009, advised that -
- (a) No award could be made based on the bidding process as no bids were received as at the closing date and time
 - (b) The ex-IVTB may have recourse to direct procurement subject to section 25 of the Public Procurement Act being satisfied and the price is fair and reasonable.
- (vi) The Consultant recommended that it would be more economical if the hairdressing equipment were purchased directly from China and to include the equipment for Beauty Care also. On 24 July 2009, the PPO which was consulted, advised that the ex-IVTB could have recourse to section 21 of the Public Procurement Act, which provides for “Emergency Procurement” and *inter-alia* deals with situation of “extreme urgency” which should be determined by the Supervising Officer of the ex-IVTB. The reason put forward by the then IVTB was that there

was urgency for procurement of these equipment as the courses on hairdressing and beauty care were due to start end August 2009.

- (vii) As Courses in Hairdressing and Beauty Care were due to start on 31 August 2009, the then Director proposed that the Assistant Manager, Procurement and the Consultant proceed to China to purchase the equipment and accessories. The Procurement and Finance Committee agreed to the above proposal on 27 July 2009.
- (viii) On 28 July 2009, the Chairman of ex IVT Council gave its approval for Assistant Manager, Procurement and the Consultant to proceed to China. The ex-IVT Council endorsed the decision on 30 July 2009 for the Assistant Manager, Procurement and the Consultant to proceed to China for the purchase of equipment and accessories.
- (ix) Equipment and accessories were purchased from Yue Sun Cuttin Factory Ltd in China for the sum of US \$ 59,653.03. The equipment and accessories reached Mauritius on 16 September 2009.

I wish also to inform the House that I have been informed by the MITD that ICAC has initiated an investigation in relation to the setting up and operation of the Hairdressing and Beauty Care Unit at the Knowledge based Training Centre. The outcome of the investigation has not yet been communicated to the MITD. The matter is being followed up.

ASSOCIATION OF JEWELLERS - CUSTOMERS - VAT

(No. B/157) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection whether he will state if he has received representations from the Association of Jewellers in relation to the double payment of Value Added Tax by customers wishing to repair their jewellery.

Reply: I am given to understand that since 01 October 2006 all Jewellers registered under the Jewellery Act should also register under the VAT Act. Moreover with effect from 01 January 2013, guidelines have been issued by the MRA regarding the methods for calculating VAT on jewellery.

On 26 February 2013, the Jewellery Advisory Council had received representations from some Associations of Jewellers on the guidelines issued, which according to them are affecting their business. Their grievances in fact pertain to VAT imposed on jewellery provided by the customers for trade in transactions and not repairs as stated in the question.

As the issue of VAT does not fall under the purview of my Ministry, the Jewellery Advisory Council and the Associations of Jewellery would be having a meeting with the MRA shortly to clarify the matter.

TUNA CANNING INDUSTRY - FISHERS – DEMONSTRATION

(No. B/158) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Fisheries whether he will state if he has been informed of the grievances of the fishers who recently held a demonstration in front of the Tuna Canning Industry of Riche Terre, and if so, will he state the actions taken, if any, by his Ministry in relation thereto.

Reply: At the very outset I would like to inform the hon. Member that an alleged case of pollution of a river passing near the premises of the Princess Tuna Mauritius Ltd and the Marine Bio-Technology Ltd in Riche Terre was reported on 11 June 2012. Surveys and relevant analyses were effected. Consequently, I replied to PQ B/601 on 23 October 2012 on this issue.

On 29 March 2013, my Ministry was informed by the Mauritius Export Association (MEXA) and by the Princess Tuna Mauritius Ltd that a demonstration, led by the Syndicat des Pêcheurs, was held in front of the canning factory.

I was also informed that the fishers who were from Baie du Tombeau and Terre Rouge claimed that they had been affected by the alleged pollution and were requesting for a copy of the results of the analyses effected in relation thereto.

The Media and Public Relation Consultant of Princess Tuna Mauritius Ltd requested for a meeting with the fishers and other stakeholders to clarify the issues and to submit the results of the analyses effected during the surveys.

A meeting with the fishers and other relevant stakeholders was consequently scheduled for 03 April 2013. However due to the recent flash flood, the meeting could not be held. My Ministry has now rescheduled the meeting for 17 April 2013.

FISH AUCTION MARKET - OPERATIONAL

(No. B/159) Mr J. C. Barbier (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Fisheries whether, in regard to the Fish Auction Market, he will state if it is now operational and, if so, since when and if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed that the Fish Auction Market is not yet operational. I would like to inform the House that an invitation for Expression of Interest for the operationalisation of the Fish Auction Market was launched locally as well as internationally on 18 November 2011. The potential bidders were

required to invest and install the necessary electronic auctioning and associated equipment. Unfortunately, by the closing date no response had been received. The Expression of Interest was launched again on 18 May 2012 and by the closing date, there was no response again.

I am further informed that the Cooperatives Division of the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives has the necessary networking for the operationalisation of the Fish Auction Market. Discussions are ongoing between my Ministry and the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives with a view to entrusting to the latter the operation of the Fish Auction Market.

FLOODS – VEHICLES - DAMAGE

(No. B/160) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the owners of the vehicles which have been damaged in the recent floods and who are not eligible for compensation by the insurance companies, he will state if Government will consider taking measures to assist them.

Reply: Pursuant to section 55 of the Road Traffic Act, it is mandatory for all private owners of motor vehicles to have a valid insurance policy. The extent of risks that should be covered is at the discretion of the owner, subject to the insurance policy providing for at least third party risks.

There is available in Mauritius, a wide range of insurance policies for motor vehicles being offered by 12 insurance companies licensed by the Financial Services Commission to offer General insurance. Thus, in addition to third party risks, they all do offer comprehensive cover (*tous risques*) including riots, floods, etc..

According to information obtained from the Financial Services Commission, as at 8 April 2013, 318 claims for compensation under motor insurance have been received by 11 insurance companies arising out of the flash floods of 30 March 2013. The Financial Services Commission has requested all insurance companies to “*deal with the flood claims as expeditiously and fairly as possible*”.

With regard to those vehicles which are not eligible to compensation by the insurance companies, I am informed that the information is not available at the Financial Services Commission and Insurers’ Association. However, the information is being compiled from other sources.

We wish to express sympathy for the loss incurred by owners of vehicles who are not covered under any insurance policy for flash floods. But, currently there is no established compensation mechanism for such cases.

As the House is aware, my colleague the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development has in the last budget announced the setting up of a Compensation Fund for ‘*hit*

and run” cases. I will request the FSC to discuss with the Industry and other stakeholders on the advisability of extending the mandate of the proposed Compensation Fund to cover such victims of flash floods and possible ways of financing.

FSC will also be requested to discuss with the insurance industry on how best to educate motor vehicles owners on vehicle risks cover and risks management. In addition, FSC will be advised to strengthen its guidelines to ensure that the policy holder is given clear information by insurance companies on the risks actually covered and the risks not covered under the various options offered.

ABSOLUTE POVERTY – FAMILIES

(No. B/161) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to absolute poverty, he will state the number of families found in this category, according to latest figures.

Reply: In his reply to PQ No. B/146 on 22 May 2012, my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development informed the House that “an absolute poverty line of \$1.25 per day per person has been developed by the World Bank for least developed countries and an absolute poverty line of \$2 a day per person for developing countries, to assess and monitor global poverty”.

I am informed by the Statistics Mauritius Office that according to the Household Budget Survey 2006/07, the proportion of poor households as per the absolute poverty line of \$2 a day per person is less than 1% of the total population.

This Government has gone further. It had established a household earning less than Rs4,000 as the absolute poverty threshold. This ceiling was increased to Rs5,000 in 2010 and has further been increased to Rs6,200 in February 2012.

According to a survey carried out in 2007 by the then Trust Fund for Social Integration for Vulnerable Groups, 7,157 households were found to be in absolute poverty.

Another survey was carried out by the National Empowerment Foundation and it was revealed that as at December 2011, the number of households in absolute poverty was 7,016.

Following the increase in the poverty threshold in February 2012, to Rs6,200, a new survey carried out by the National Empowerment Foundation has revealed that 11,571 households were in absolute poverty.

FLACQ MARKET – GOODS - SECURITY

(No. B/162) Mr P. Roopun (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Local Government & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the New Flacq Market, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the District Council of Flacq, information as to the measures taken thereat -

- (a) to deal with cases of fire outbreak, floods and other calamities, and
- (b) for the security of the goods and chattels of the stall holders after working hours.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Flacq that the new Flacq Market is provided with a Fire Alarm System comprising break glass type manual call points, smoke and heat detectors and siren sounders electrically linked to a control indicator panel in strict compliance with the Fire Certificate issued by the Fire Services Department.

As regards flooding, I am informed that the Council regularly maintains all the drains and the rivers in the vicinity of the market. It is to be noted that the market has been provided with sufficient drains network to evacuate water run offs.

As far as other calamities are concerned, I am informed that the market is insured for the sum of Rs200 m. against risks namely fire, lightning, explosion, flood, tidal wave, cyclone, lock outs, earthquake, volcanic eruption and even aircraft explosion.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that goods found in the food courts, craft market, the fixed vegetable market and meat section and left on site after working hours are properly enclosed to ensure safety. Furthermore, there is watchmanship and security service on a 24/7 basis at the market to ensure safety and security to sellers as well as members of the public.

DRAINS WORKS – CONSTITUENCY-WISE

(No. B/163) Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Rs 500 million allegedly spent on drains works, since 13 February 2013, he will give a list of the drains works carried out, constituency-wise, indicating in each case, the -

- (a) cost thereof, and
- (b) name of the contractor therefor.

(Vide reply to P.Q. No. B/140)

JIN FEI PROJECT – ROAD NETWORK

(No. B/164) Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land

Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Jin Fei Project in Riche Terre, he will state if works are being carried out for the construction of roads thereat, and if so, indicate if the prior approval of the authorities have been obtained, including an Environment Impact Assessment licence.

Reply: I am informed by the Board of Investment that the Mauritius Jin Fei Economic Trade Cooperation Zone relates to the setting up of an economic zone in Mauritius over an extent of land of 500 arpents (211 hectares) at Riche Terre, which will comprise an industrial zone, a trade and logistics zone, an information and business zone, a residential zone and a hospitality/leisure zone.

According to the provisions of the agreements, the Jin Fei promoters are responsible to develop on-site infrastructure that includes road and utilities comprising power, water and wastewater.

The total length of the road network in the Jin Fei zone is estimated at 12.44 km upon completion of the total works in the zone.

I am informed by the BOI that to date, the Jin Fei promoters have constructed 6.75km of road which comprises the following -

- a main road of length equal to 3.65km and 14m wide;
- other roads of length 3.1 km and 8m wide, and
- utilities works alongside the roads.

The Total investment in road works, to date, amounts to Rs342 m. (USD11.39 million).

The remaining length of road to be completed is estimated at 5.69km.

The construction of roads is not a scheduled undertaking under the Environment Protection Act (2002) and thus does not require an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Licence.

DILO POURRI, LE MORNE – ROAD NETWORK

(No. A/48) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the completion of the road network at Dilo Pourri, in Le Morne, undertaken by the District Council of Savanne and Black River, since 2010, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to where matters stand.

Reply: I am informed that the Black River District Council had undertaken the construction of a road network at Dilo Pouri in year 2010. The Black River District Council has now informed that a certain length of the road cannot be completed due to the following constraints -

- (i) there is an encroachment on the proposed road alignment by a CIS structure;

- (ii) the topography of the site is awkward and would require heavy cutting of the hill slope in order to link the two parts of the reconstructed road. Such a project would also cause prejudice to adjoining lots uphill to have access to this road, and
- (iii) the implementation of this part would require a complex engineering design requiring consultancy services.

Moreover, I am informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that the lessee who has encroached on the proposed road alignment has been granted an alternative site since February 2010. However, despite several requests made to the lessee to remove the CIS structure, the attempts have been unsuccessful due to resistance of the occupiers.

COTTEAU RAFFIN – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. A/49) Mrs J. Radegonde-Haines (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the project for the surfacing, fencing and lighting of the Cotteau Raffin football ground, in Constituency No.14, Savanne and Black River, he will state where matters stands.

Reply: As per this Ministry's records, the football playground at Cotteau Raffin is not managed and/or maintained by this Ministry.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF BEAU BASSIN/ROSE HILL - STATE LAND - FOOTBALL PITCH

(No. A/50) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if his Ministry has received a request from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill for the vesting of a plot of state land therewith for the purpose of constructing a football pitch and the associated amenities and, if so, indicate –

- (a) when, and
- (b) the location and extent of land identified therefor.

Reply: I confirm that an application has been received, in February 2013, at the level of my Ministry for the vesting of a plot of State land at Coromandel from the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill through the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands, subject to its availability, for the construction of a football ground without mentioning details of the associated amenities.

In March 2013, my Ministry requested for additional information on the amenities and facilities likely to be provided namely the category of football ground, provision of cloak room(s)/toilet block(s), seating and parking facilities.

In this respect, a site meeting was held at Coromandel on Friday 12 April 2013 with all stakeholders concerned and a plot of an approximate extent of 12000m² has been identified for the project. The subject site forms part of Land settlement under the control of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security and needs to be deproclaimed prior to its vesting in the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands.

The Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill is being requested to indicate whether funds are available for the construction of the football ground.

On confirmation, the land will be vested in the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands to be put at the disposal of the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill for the implementation of the project.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION - RECRUITMENT

(No. A/51) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the Civil Service, he will state the number of recruitment effected under the delegated powers of the Public Service Commission, since 2005 to date, indicating in each case, the –

- (a) public institution, ministry or department concerned;
- (b) post therefor, and
- (c) method of recruitment used.

Reply: The relevant information is being sought from the various ministries/Departments of the Civil Service and will be compiled and placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as possible.

PORT LOUIS SOUTH & PORT LOUIS CENTRAL - FOOTBALL PLAYGROUNDS

(No. A/52) Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, he will state if consideration will be given for the construction of synthetic football playgrounds thereat.

Reply: It is not envisaged to construct synthetic football playgrounds in Constituency No. 2 for the time being.

You may wish to note that the Port Louis region already has a synthetic football playground at the St François Xavier Stadium.

JOHN KENNEDY STREET, VACOAS - BRIDGE & SLABS

(No. A/54) Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the John Kennedy Street, in Vacoas, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Road Development Authority, information as to if -

- (a) consideration will be given for the widening of the bridge found near the Alain Store and, if so, when, and
- (b) the slabs found at its junction between the Nanapragassen Road are uneven, thus representing hazards and, if so, indicate if remedial measures will be taken.

Reply: The width of the bridge near Alain Store on John Kennedy Street at Vacoas is 5.5m. The approach road to the bridge is 5.8m. The bridge is provided with footpath.

This road is in an urban environment and, for safety reasons, it must not be converted into a high-speed road. The width of 5.5m is adequate to allow two vehicles to pass safely at a reasonable speed. The Road Development Authority does not, therefore, propose to widen the bridge for the time being.

The Road Development Authority has been requested to look into the matter and slabs will be levelled during the week.

CITÉ VUILLEMIN NHDC HOUSING ESTATE - SEWERAGE

(No. A/55) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities whether he will state if his Ministry has been informed of the persistent sewerage problem at the Cité Vuillemin NHDC Housing Estate, and if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Waste Water Management Authority, information as to if remedial measures will be taken in relation thereto.

Reply: I am informed that the NHDC has on 10 April 2013 awarded a contract to Sotravic Ltée for the rehabilitation of the wastewater infrastructure on Cite Vuillemin NHDC Housing Estate. The works will start by the beginning of May 2013 and will be completed in 9 months' time. Pending the rehabilitation works, the WMA is carting away wastewater from the housing estate on a regular basis. The WMA has intervened on 144 occasions from October 2012 to date.

NHDC - VALUE ADDED TAX - EXEMPTION

(No. A/58) Mr K. Li Kwong Wing (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the National Housing Development Corporation Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to if -

- (a) it has been exempted from the payment of Value Added Tax and if so, since when, and
- (b) the names of the suppliers and contractors thereof, indicating if they have -
 - (i) been charging Value Added Tax, and
 - (ii) not been paid their Value Added Tax claims, and if so, indicate the amount due, in each case.

Reply: With regard to part (a) of the question, the National Housing Development Company Ltd. is exempt from the payment of VAT under Section 66 of the Value Added Tax Act. However, in August 2006, following amendments brought in the legislation, as provided for in item 14 of the Ninth Schedule of the VAT Act, the NHDC was exempted from VAT for the construction of housing estates. The above Act was further amended in December 2011 so as to exempt the NHDC from the payment of VAT for the construction of “social housing” instead of “housing estates”.

Subsequently, in December 2012, further amendments were brought to the legislation to enable the NHDC to be exempted from VAT as from 22 August 2012, for all contracts for construction of social housing and any improvement or repairs of a capital nature in relation thereto.

Regarding part (b) (i) of the question, the contractors entitled for refund of VAT are SNB Construction Ltd., Jurassic Water Proofing Ent. Ltd., Nissi Construction Ltd., Mauritech Ltd. and Mecatronics Ltd. However, only SNB Construction Ltd., Nissi Construction Ltd. and Mecatronics Ltd. have claimed VAT. Payments to these contractors will be effected when they will submit their respective final accounts and after agreement by the NHDC on the amounts.

As regards part b (ii) of the question, the amount of VAT payable to the abovementioned contractors on value of works certified by the NHDC is as follows -

<u>Contractor</u>	<u>Amount (Rs)</u>
SNB Construction Ltd. (5 contracts)	2,923,851.23
Nissi Construction Ltd. (3 contracts)	7,318,364.23

Mecatronics Ltd.

4,293,485.10

(1 contract)

GRAND'BAIE – CCTV CAMERAS - TRIMMING OF TREES & STREET LIGHTING

(No. A/61) Mr A. Gungah (First Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre D'or) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Closed Circuit Television Street Surveillance System installed in Grand'Baie, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Pamplemousses/Rivière du Rempart District Council, information as to if it has received any request from the Police Department for the trimming of trees and an increase of the bulb capacity of the lighting system and, if so, indicate if remedial measures have been taken, and if not, why not.

Reply: I am informed by the District Council of Rivière du Rempart that no request has been received from the Police Department for trimming of trees in respect of the closed circuit Television Street Surveillance System in Grand'Baie.

I am informed that the classified road in Grand'Baie whereat CCTV Cameras are fixed, are under the jurisdiction of the Road Development Authority whereas the Coastal Road falls under the purview of the Council and trimming of trees which obstruct these cameras, is carried out as and when required.

As regards the increase in the bulbs capacity of the lighting system, I am informed that there has been no such request from the Police Department. It is to be noted that the current bulb capacity as initially requested by the Police Department prior to implementation of the CCTV project, is 70 watts Sodium High Pressure.

**MINISTRY OF CIVIL SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS – WEBSITE -
STAFF LIST**

(No. A/62) Mr A. Gungah (First Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre D'or) asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the staff list posted on the website of his Ministry, he will state -

- (a) if it is up to date and, if not, indicate -
 - (i) the reasons therefor; and
 - (ii) when it will be updated, and
- (b) the frequency at which it is updated.

Reply: The staff lists posted on the website of my Ministry are, in accordance with established practice, updated twice a year, the first time in the month of March and the second time in the month of August of the same year. The update, in fact, involves uploading of fresh staff list provided to my Ministry by the respective Ministries/Departments, to reflect changes that have occurred since submission of the previous list.

The updated staff list for 2013 has not yet been posted in my Ministry's website, in view of changes in salary scales following implementation of the PRB 2013 Report and other changes being foreseen with the forthcoming report of the committee on Errors, Omissions and Alleged Anomalies. Exceptionally, this year, the updated staff list would be available in my Ministry's website around June or July 2013.

MITD - MINOR STUDENT - ALLEGED ABUSE

(No. A/63) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the alleged case of abuse of a minor student of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, he will state if consideration will be given for copy of the report of the Fact Finding Committee to be tabled.

Reply: Following the Statement I made on the main findings and recommendations of the Fact Finding Committee (FFC) on Tuesday 09 April 2013, Government has decided to institute a high level Inter-ministerial Committee which will examine the whole report and look into the implementation of the recommendations of the FFC.

Government has also decided that, in view of the fact that the medico-legal document referred to in the FFC report contains information of a strictly private and medical nature on the minor, the report will not be made public and as such it is considered not appropriate to table it.

VACOAS - METHADONE SUBSTITUTION THERAPY - COMPLAINTS

(No. A/64) Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Methadone Substitution Therapy, he will state if he has received complaints in relation to the distribution of methadone in the region of Vacoas, and if so, indicate the outcome thereof.

Reply: The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has received three (3) complaints regarding dispensing of methadone at Vacoas where this exercise is

carried out through mobile caravan in the compound of Vacoas Police Station between 8.00 am to 9.30 am. daily. As at 15 April 2013, 268 beneficiaries were taking their daily doses at that Dispensing Point. The three complaints concern the loitering and anti-social behaviours of some methadone beneficiaries.

The Ministry has reinforced existing measures at the dispensing site, namely -

- (i) referral NGOs have been requested to strengthen their counseling and education programmes;
- (ii) a team of Peer Leaders comprising rehabilitated drug addicts offers their services at the Vacoas Methadone Dispensing Point by sensitising the methadone beneficiaries regarding their behaviours and they ensure that the beneficiaries leave the dispensing point immediately-after they receive their daily dose;
- (iii) NATReSA has embarked on a campaign for counselling and supporting methadone beneficiaries to enable them to integrate the mainstream society;
- (iv) regular meetings are being conducted with the Police to take appropriate actions to discourage the loitering of methadone beneficiaries in the vicinity of Vacoas Methadone Dispensing Point;
- (v) guardrails are installed at the time of dispensing at Vacoas in order to ease the flow of beneficiaries when they come to take their doses; and
- (vi) the CCTV cameras installed at the Vacoas Police Station are also being used to monitor the behaviours of methadone beneficiaries.

Furthermore, a team of experts from "Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève" (HUG) who recently visited Mauritius to evaluate the situation regarding the Methadone Dispensing Programme, has just submitted its report and the recommendations are being considered for implementation.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF PORT LOUIS - VEHICLES

(No. A/66) Mr P. Jhugroo (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the vehicles of the Municipal Council of Port Louis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council –

- (a) a list thereof attached to the Public Infrastructure and Public Health Departments respectively, indicating in each case the -
 - (i) type, make and model thereof, and
 - (ii) date of purchase and
- (b) information as to if consideration will be given for the provision of one -
 - (i) street lighting van, in view of the expansion of the Council area and
 - (ii) 4 x 4 or double cab van to the lighting section, for works other than maintenance of street lighting.

Reply: The information requested by the hon. Member at part (a) of his question is being placed in the Library.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Municipal City Council of Port Louis that in view of the expansion of its area, it is envisaging the acquisition of the following vehicles –

- a lorry mounted with Telescopic Aerial Platform of working height of 160 metres.
- a pick up van Double Cab rear cargo bed for the transportation of lighting materials as well as personnel of the lighting section.

STANLEY & ROSE HILL - FLOOD PRONE AREAS

(No. A/67) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to Constituency No.19, Stanley and Rose Hill, he will state if, following the torrential rains of February 2013, a survey has been carried out to identify the flood prone areas thereat, and if so, indicate the measures taken to prevent the recurrence of floods thereat.

Reply: Following the torrential rains of 13 February 2013, a site visit was effected by technical staff of the National Development Unit and the following sites were identified to be flood-prone -

S.N	Name	Locality
1	Adjacent to Lycée Polytechnique G. Forget	Camp Levieux
2	Near Begonia Block D Madras Avenue	Camp Levieux
3	Near Begonia Block B Madras Avenue	Camp Levieux
4	Pirhanas Avenue	Camp Levieux
5	Road Opposite Dorado Catering Services	Camp Levieux
6	Ratsitatane Avenue Corner Arianne Avenue	Camp Levieux
7	Dr Bour Road	Rose Hill
8	Cnr Luckeenarain/Deplevitz	Plaisance
9	M. Vithilingum Avenue	Roches Brunes
10	Gabriel Pitot Road	Rose Hill
11	Morc. Goolamally	Trefles

Appropriate way leaves are being sought while concurrently survey and design are in progress.

Works orders will be issued once the way leaves are secured.

FIRE SERVICES - FIREFIGHTERS, SUB-OFFICERS & STATION OFFICERS - RISK ALLOWANCE

(No. A/68) Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the payment of a monthly risk allowance to Firefighters, Sub-Officers and Station Officers performing operations duties, as per paragraph 29.1.7 of the Pay Research Bureau Report 2013, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Government Fire Services, information as to if same has been paid and, if not, indicate –

- (a) why not, and
- (b) when same will be paid.

Reply: I am informed by the Fire Services Department that arrears of risk allowance to Firefighters, Sub-Officers and Station Officers for the month of January to April 2013 are being paid on the payroll of April 2013.

VIEUX GRAND PORT & ROSE BELLE - FLOOD PRONE AREAS

(No. A/69) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to Constituency No.11, Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle, he will state if a survey has been carried out to identify the flood prone areas, following the torrential rains of February 2013 and, if so, indicate the measures taken to prevent the recurrence of floods thereat.

Reply: Following the torrential rains of 13 February 2013, two sites have been identified as flood-prone in Constituency No. 11. These are Allée Jacques Road, Nouvelle France and Rivière des Créoles.

At Allée Jacques Road, improvement of drain is underway whereas at Rivière des Créoles, a retaining wall is being constructed to prevent the recurrence of flood.

M1 MOTORWAY - CUREPIPE ROUNDABOUT-PLAISANCE ROUNDABOUT - STREET LIGHTING

(No. A/70) Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle) asked the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the street lighting system on the M1 Motorway, from the Curepipe roundabout to the Plaisance roundabout, he will state if he has been informed that several sections thereof are out of order and, if so, indicate if urgent remedial measures will be taken to ensure visibility at night.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I made on 20 November 2012 to parliamentary question B/677 and wherein I indicated that the street lighting system on M1 Motorway from Midlands to Plaine Magnien roundabout was out of order mainly due to the loss of underground cables over a total stretch of approximately 10 kms.

I am informed by the District Council of Grand Port that, taking into consideration the safety of users, the street lighting on all the roundabouts along the Motorway from Midlands to Plaine Magnien have been established and are operational whereas the Balisson roundabout, La Rosa roundabout and La Vigie shoulder lanes have been provided with overhead cables in order to energise the street lighting network.

I am also informed by the District of Grand Port that –

- in February and March 2013, overhead cables of a total length of 9.1 kms have been fixed from Midlands to Plaine Magnien mainly along the stretch where cables were lost.
- a total of 5.4 kms of overhead cables have been replaced from Nouvelle France roundabout to Plaine Magnien/SSR Airport and as at date 429 street lanterns out of 849 have been connected and the remaining connections are in progress.
- by early May 2013, all the street lanterns would be connected including the repairs of street lanterns.