

# MAURITIUS

## FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**Debate No. 3 of 2009**

**Sitting of Tuesday 14.04.09**

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. Office of the President –**

The Annual Report of the National Human Rights Commission for the year 2008(In original).

**B. Prime Minister's Office –**

Certificate of Urgency in respect of The Trafficking in Persons Bill (No. III of 2009).

**C. Ministry of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities –**

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Wastewater Management Authority for the year ended 30 June 2008 (In original).

**D. Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment –**

The Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Government of the People's Republic of China (In original).

**E. Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping –**

(a) The Report of the Director of Audit and Financial Statements of the Road Development Authority for the year ended 30 June 2003.

(b) The Report of the Director of Audit and Financial Statements of the Road Development Authority for the year ended 30 June 2004.

**F. Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources –**

The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the National Archives Research and Publication Fund for the year ended 30 June 2008.

**G. Ministry of Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter –**

The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 39 of 2009).

**H. Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment –**

The Travel Agents and Tour Operators Workers Remuneration Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 38 of 2009).

### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Mr Speaker:** The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/174 has been withdrawn.

# **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS - SELECT COMMITTEE - SETTING UP**

**(No. B/172) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a Select Committee to look into the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly on radio and television, he will state where matters stand.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have stated in my reply to PQ B/1274 in November last, the modernisation of the Public Address System and the improvement of the lightings of the House was a pre-requisite for the live telecast of the proceedings of the National Assembly.

As Members can see, the E-Parliament project has now been completed and is fully operational. The old audio system which had been there for the last 42 years had outlived its usefulness. Hon. Members will agree that the new arrangements are much better. At least, they can hear me very well.

I understand that the new Digital Recording and Public Address Systems are fully compatible for the live telecast of the proceedings of the House which can easily be grafted as another component to the new ICT structure of the National Assembly. I also understand that the webcast of live debates through the website of the National Assembly with archiving facilities may also be considered.

Mr Speaker Sir, now that the new ICT infrastructure is in place, I propose to finalise the terms of reference of the Select Committee with you, and the other parties concerned and thereafter, I shall come up with the appropriate motion to the House for the setting up of the Select Committee.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether a time schedule forecast has been worked out for the Select Committee?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, I have discussed with Mr Speaker. We have a draft proposal for the motion and we are ready to go forward with it.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the issue is of national interest, can we know whether there will be consultations with the Opposition concerning the modalities and the setting up of the Committee?

**The Prime Minister:** I think the Select Committee wants to propose it. There will be Members from the Opposition side as part of the Select Committee and we'll look at the modalities which can be very tricky, but we'll have to look at them.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Select Committee will have recourse to foreign expertise in view of the fact that in many countries this exercise is being done with a certain number of set criteria? This is what we call *le cahier des charges*, for the broadcaster and the producer.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think this was mentioned last time. One of the models we can look at is certainly the UK where it was done on an experimental basis, first, for one year, then it was further extended. The Select Committee can decide on that as we already have a lot of expertise in the House, including Mr Speaker himself.

**Mr Dooloo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, being given this is a very essential part of our parliamentary democracy, would the Prime Minister consider leaving the whole matter to the House to decide on the modalities under the guidance of Mr Speaker before the setting up of a Select Committee as such? I think the Select Committee should be set up at once to consider all these aspects.

**The Prime Minister:** That is what I mentioned. The Select Committee is going to look into all these aspects.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, pending the appointment of the Select Committee, can the hon. Prime Minister impress upon the MBC...

**Mr Speaker:** No, the hon. Member should come with a substantive question.

## 2000 LISBON SUMMIT - EU/AFRICA STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION

(No. B/173) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the 2000 Lisbon Summit, he will state the measures and initiatives taken by Government to implement the European Union-Africa Strategic Plan of Action.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me, first point out that the first EU-Africa Summit was held in Cairo in April 2000 and the second EU-Africa Summit was held in Lisbon in December 2007. I attended the latter Summit along with the then Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation.

The 2007 Lisbon Summit developed a new concept of the EU-Africa relationship in the light of many important changes that have taken place since 2000 with regard to democratisation, the emergence of new international and global challenges and interdependency among States. In addition, the African Union has been established creating a new continental framework addressing African issues and the membership of the European Union has increased to 27. Also, China's economic expansion in Africa has marked it out as the emerging power on the continent.

At the Lisbon Summit, the Lisbon Declaration and Joint Strategy were adopted. These provide a long-term vision for a strategic partnership between the two continents. The Strategic Partnership foresees three levels of cooperation, namely at domestic, bilateral and global levels and encompasses four clusters of policy priorities which are –

- (i) peace and security;
- (ii) governance and human rights;
- (iii) trade and regional integration, and
- (iv) key development issues.

The Joint Strategy is to be implemented through successive Action Plans that seek to identify short-term priorities (2–3 years) and the actions required to achieve such priorities.

At Lisbon, Heads of States and Government agreed on a first Action Plan with eight thematic partnerships and projects for the period 2008 to 2010.

With a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Joint Strategy and the first Action Plan, the African Union has held regional meetings in 2008 in Maseru, Lesotho, Ouagadougou and Burkina Faso.

Following this, the AU Commission has invited Member States to communicate their interests in the various partnerships and to submit a list of concrete projects.

Mauritius has submitted ten projects throughout Mission in Addis Ababa for consideration under the EU-Africa Joint Strategy. These projects span a variety of themes and include –

- ◆ The development of a Regional Shipping Line and the acquisition of a “*porte conteneurs*” to serve the Indian Ocean region.
- ◆ To improve the potential for Port Louis to play a regional logistics role and serve as a regional hub for ports.
- ◆ To help our institutions to comply with EC's Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards.
- ◆ To develop a proper Quality Management System in Fruit and Vegetables in Mauritius, *inter alia*, through the setting-up of an ISO 17025 laboratory for testing of pesticide residues, establishment of a national database of producers and supply chain operators, capacity-building and technical assistance.
- ◆ The setting-up of a Special Education Needs Development and Resource Centre.
- ◆ The setting-up of a Central Data Centre to realise the Government vision for provision of World Class Quality Education.
- ◆ The setting-up of a Regional Training Centre for the training of trainers and supervisors/tutors in industry.
- ◆ Development of a Diaspora Information Centre and Institutional Network.

- ◆ The purchase of Wave Rider buoys for the Meteorological Service and the provision of technical assistance.
- ◆ The purchase of weather equipment for collection and processing of data like wind speed and direction, air temperature, rainfall, solar radiation, etc. by the Meteorological Services.

The projects submitted by Mauritius, as well as those submitted by other Member States, are currently being examined by the eight partnership groups set up.

We have been advised that the EU-Africa Troika meeting, which is scheduled for June 2009, would consider a Road Map for each of the partnerships. Subsequently, once this is done, when the EU-Africa Troika meets in November 2009, it will come up with guidelines in respect of projects that may be considered under the first Action Plan.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether Mauritius has made any proposal to be part of one or any of the eight expert groups that have been put in place?

**The Prime Minister:** I have just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have made ten proposals.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Prime Minister did not get me well. I am not speaking of projects, but of all the eight thematic issues that have been identified. I would like to know whether Mauritius has submitted any offer to chair one of those expert groups.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, normally, it is for the Summit to decide who will chair. If they ask us to chair, we will do so. But, I don't think they will specifically ask us to chair any of the expert groups.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am putting this question because I have learnt that there was an offer to chair the energy expert group. I just want to know whether the hon. Prime Minister could confirm if this is ongoing, and whether we have made any offer to chair that expert group on energy.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we would be delighted to chair. I am not aware whether any such offer has been made.

**Mr Dulloo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the matters that was discussed in the course of that Summit was the Economic Partnership Agreement, which was then at the interim stage, and the hon. Prime Minister would remember that the President of the Commission, Mr Barroso, undertook to meet Heads of States, especially following the intervention of Senegal, in order to revisit the EPAs which were being finalised. May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there was any follow-up? He has mentioned the meeting of the Troika in June and November. I would like to know whether Mauritius is ensuring that this reviewing of the EPA be considered.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have done this. I should add, just to clarify the previous point about the energy project, that we have not been asked to chair, but we have said that we would be interested to chair.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I come back again to the question of hon. Dulloo on this issue of the EPAs. As the hon. Prime Minister is aware, this issue concerns regional integration. The great complaint of the African countries is that these EPAs, as they are being negotiated now, leads to what has been called the balkanisation of Africa, and that this is against the Constitutive Act of the African Union, which aims at a continental integration. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, at the forthcoming meetings at the highest level, concerning...

**Mr Speaker:** Can I draw the hon. Member's attention that we are talking of the Summit? Because there is a Minister who is in charge of international trade. If the hon. Member is talking of the Summit, he is fully entitled to do so.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, you know me very well; I don't mix oranges and apples! It's about the Summit. These issues were canvassed at the level of the Summit. Being given the importance of this issue of the EPAs to African integration, which is vital to countries like Mauritius, especially in this time of economic crisis, I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he will undertake to take up this issue of the EPAs and African integration in the context of the Constitutive Act of the African Union at

the next highest level meeting.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we are well aware of this, and I know that the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs & Regional Co-operation has drawn attention - we have also drawn attention - to this. In all frankness, I must say that we are unhappy about the situation. The hon. Member mentioned balkanisation and, in fact, that is what is happening. Everybody is as if looking for his own interest in trying to forget the big picture. We have brought out attention to this, and we are very much against it. We thought we should act at once. But, unfortunately, this is not what has been happening, and I will certainly take up the matter again.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister will agree with me that we have a huge impact of the economic and financial crisis on the African economies. May I ask him how this is going to be considered; whether this strategic plan should not be reviewed in the light of this huge impact of the financial crisis, and how this is going to be taken care of in the future meetings?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I totally agree that this should be reviewed. Even at the SADC Summit, I mentioned informally that we should also have a meeting to see how to coordinate our action in view of the new challenges, especially the financial crisis that is taking place in the world. I totally agree with the hon. Member. But, whether this will happen or not is another matter.

**Mr Dooloo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, at the Summit, the hon. Prime Minister delivered a very strong speech. That speech was not available at the Ministry when I was there. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he would circulate to the House the speech he delivered then, which contains certain proposals from Mauritius and also the position of Mauritius on vital issues?

**The Prime Minister:** I am sorry to hear that, except hon. Dooloo, probably nobody else has appreciated the speech. I will certainly make sure that it is appreciated by all Members of the House.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister just stated that one of the pillars of this EU-Africa joint strategy is about the millennium development goals. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister what is being undertaken at national level to achieve those millennium development goals, in particular, the reduction of poverty by 50%, by the year 2015?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I must say that during the Conference on Poverty Alleviation held in Mauritius, which was at the level of SADC and people in the region, we were congratulated for being one of the few countries which is actually doing something about poverty alleviation with concrete results; we are continuing to do this and this is a matter that we always take up. Because what is important is that we don't just make speeches, but we actually see results in poverty alleviation.

#### CRÈVE COEUR - LANDSLIDE - INQUIRY

(No. B/174) **Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the landslide which occurred in Crève Coeur last year, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if statements have been made by some inhabitants thereof to the effect that their respective residence were damaged as a result thereof and, if so, if inquiries have been carried thereinto and the outcome thereof.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### CCTV SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM - PUBLIC PLACES

(No. B/175) **Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the installation of CCTV Surveillance System in public places, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police a list of the places where same has been installed as at to date, indicating



when the project is expected to be completed.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that the first CCTV Street Surveillance System has just been installed at Flic-en-Flac and I will be officially inaugurating the project on Friday 24 April 2009, together with the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications. The installation works started on 05 January 2009 and were completed on 31 March 2009. 83 cameras have been installed across the village of Flic-en-Flac, including 9 cameras on the public beaches at Flic-en-Flac and Wolmar. The Main Control Room is located at the Police Headquarters Operations Room, but there will be a Sub-control Room - in fact, there is a Sub-control Room at Flic-en-Flac Police station. The control rooms will be manned on a 24/7 basis and all the 83 cameras will be recorded for retrospective viewing. Currently, the operators and the technicians are underworking practical training offered by the contractor - the Mauritius Telecom and the Central Electricity Board. The estimated cost of the project is Rs43,828,266, and I should add that the Tourism Fund has contributed Rs25 m. to this project.

The CCTV Surveillance System Project for the regions of Grand' Baie and Port Louis is being implemented with the assistance of the Government of the People's Republic of China through an interest-free loan of about Rs135 m. I should say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, in fact, I had taken up the issue during my official visit to China in November 2008. I have taken up the issue with the Chinese Premier and this is what led to the agreement for them to give an interest-free loan of about Rs135 m. 271 surveillance cameras will be installed in the city of Port Louis and 69 others at Grand' Baie and, again, we will adopt the same procedure. A Sub-control Room will be based at the Grand' Baie police station and it will be linked to the Main Control Room at the Police Headquarters in Port Louis.

The design of the system has been completed by the Chinese Authorities and, in January this year, a delegation from the Mauritius Police Force proceeded to China to look at the design and to approve it - which they have done. The Chinese Authorities will now proceed with the tendering exercise for the project. The CCTV Surveillance System at Port Louis and Grand' Baie is expected to be operational by early next year. The estimated cost - and I say, the estimated cost - of the project is around Rs120 m.

**Mr Jhugroo:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister which unit will be responsible for the monitoring of all these CCTV cameras?

**The Prime Minister:** I did not hear the question.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Will a special unit be created?

**The Prime Minister:** There will be a special unit, but also I especially wanted to make sure that we don't reach a system when you see that something has happened on that day and you find that the camera was not working or the recording was not done. We want to make sure that this does not happen, because this has happened in the past. That is why there is also a private contractor involved in the process- somebody who has experience in CCTV Surveillance System.

**Mr Jhugroo:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many police officers are following this training course?

**The Prime Minister:** I don't have the details as to how many police officers are being trained, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, as I said, this is not just police, there will also be the contractor who is supervising. He, himself, I must say, was highly placed in the French police.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the footage can be adduced as evidence in the courts in the case of children?

**The Prime Minister:** We are looking at this also. There is another question on evidence for children in courts. In fact, this is being looked at. If we need to amend whatever we have to amend, we will do so, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister is aware that, in the United Kingdom, in spite of the fact that CCTV cameras for security purposes are doing a very good job, there has been some concern

expressed by various quarters regarding the invasion of privacy of homes through the use of CCTV cameras. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether ...

*(Interruptions)*

What is the problem?

**Mr Speaker:** Carry on!

**Mr Cuttaree:** Obviously, I am saying that we welcome this initiative. But, what I want from the hon. Prime Minister is some assurance that this is not going to be used as a tool for the spying of people.

**The Prime Minister:** I can tell the hon. Member that, in fact, I take the privacy matters very seriously, that is why we want to bring laws in Mauritius to protect privacy matters. One of the things that we were told about privacy by a very eminent lawyer who had come to Mauritius to look at our Human Rights Laws - and I think he was looking at some other laws that we were doing - is that he was surprised, in fact, that we have so many - in our Constitution like the Human Rights Laws in Europe - safeguards for basic fundamental human rights. But he thought that we could strengthen the privacy laws. In fact, we were looking at all this when we were looking at the media law that we wanted to bring. As I mentioned, I think, in the past, there was a very eminent QC, Mr Jeoffrey Robertson - who I think some Members of the Opposition know - who has already done a report on that. We have been examining the report and, in fact, we are looking at it very actively. But, the hon. Member is right to say that; I must tell him, in fact, that I am also concerned that this is not abused. In fact, I can tell him, for example, that for the cameras on the motorways, I have insisted that the angle be put on the numbers, so that nobody knows who is travelling with whom...

*(Interruptions)*

... and doing whatever they have to do. We have to protect the private life of people, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister for how long the image will be stored in the hard disk at the control tower?

**The Prime Minister:** I have no idea how long it will be stored but, I suppose, like everything else, it will be stored for a reasonable time. I can find out and let the hon. Member know.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that in our prisons and other detention centres, we have the facility of CCTV surveillance system but, yet, the evidence obtained cannot be used as evidence in court?

**Mr Speaker:** No! The hon. Prime Minister has just answered the question, that he is going to look into the law as well.

**Mr Varma:** What about the detention centres and prisons? The CCTV....

**Mr Speaker:** No! That is irrelevant as it does not relate to the question.

**Mrs Martin:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the cameras are only going to be used after reviewing post-incidents, or they are going to be used as well for rapid intervention and, in which case, whether thought has been put to increase the number of intervention units in the vicinity where the cameras are being placed?

**The Prime Minister:** First of all, for the first part of the answer, the answer is both for rapid intervention and post-incidents. Very often, in the UK, for example, it is on post-incidents that they look at issues.

As for the increase in the units, - I think the hon. Member mentioned that - the problem is we will try to, but we will have to do with what we have and the procedures that we have laid down to have more Policemen, which is being done at the moment.

**Mr Speaker:** I must remind hon. Varma that the question relates to CCTV Surveillance System in public places, not in prisons. Next question!

*(Interruptions)*

#### **CARO LALO, VALLÉE DES PRÊTRES - GOATS AND HENS - DROWNING**

**(No. B/176) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to one Mr P. of Caro Lalo, Vallée des Prêtres, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if he has reported that 27 goats and 200 hens, belonging to him, have drowned in a river near his residence, following the heavy rainfall of 30 March 2009 and, if so, will he state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the circumstances thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not sure that really hon. Members should ask the hon. Prime Minister such questions. I accept that hon. Members have a legitimate right to ask questions, but questions about how many hens and goats.....

*(Laughter)*

This is a private matter which has occurred due to flooding and the police are enquiring into the matter.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know why people on the other side of the House are laughing. This is a very serious case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Don't mind about their laughing! So long as they are laughing, it's all right

*(Laughter)*

**Mr Jhugroo:** It concerns my constituency. There is flooding there. I want to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether Mr Peerun will be compensated by the Government.

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry, this is a hypothetical question. The inquiry has to be done first and, once the inquiry has been done, then the hon. Member can come with the question of compensation.

**Mr Dulloo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this concerns the livelihood of a small livestock breeder. May I ask the Prime Minister - because it is a natural calamity falling under the responsibility of his Ministry - whether Government is extending, right now, any support to the small breeder for him to continue his economic activity to earn the bread for his family and, if not, whether some form of compensation as asked for is being considered?

**The Prime Minister:** I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the farm of that particular breeder is situated at the foot of a mountain and it is about 50 metres, I think, from the river. He has had recurrent problems. Every time, there have been flooding or heavy rainfalls, he has had problems. AREU is looking into the matter. They have advised the breeder to transfer the animals to another area where it is possible and, I think, they are looking at this. They have also, I know, advised him that the area where he breeds those animals should be a dry area because there is a risk of them getting pneumonia when it is not a dry area which can be fatal in fowls and all those things. This is being done.

**Mr Dulloo:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether any site has been identified and proposed to him right now or if this is contemplated?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think AREU is looking into the matter. They are advising and then I will see what happens.

#### **PUBLIC PLACES - SMOKING - PROHIBITION**

**(No. B/177) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the prohibition to smoke in public places, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police,



information as to the number of persons booked, since the coming into force of the Regulations in relation thereto.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 01 March 2009 to date - date on which part of the Regulations came into force - 57 persons have been booked under these Regulations.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister if he has received any representations from any association or organisation complaining about the severity of the law?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I have, in fact, even from individuals. Some people have said if both husband and wife are smokers, why they can't smoke in the car. We are looking into this matter.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can we have a breakdown regionwise?

**The Prime Minister:** Why does the hon. Member want to know it regionwise?

**Mr Gunness:** I mean districtwise.

**The Prime Minister:** I have it here, but I still don't understand how that is relevant. Is the hon. Member going to say that in some regions they smoke more than others?

**Mr Gunness:** That's not my intention because I want to know in the east region how it compares to the west, for example.

**The Prime Minister:** As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are 57 cases. I can give the regions. If the hon. Member wants the regions, I will have to go through the list. I have no objection to give it, but it will take time. Rose Hill:6, Mahebourg:4, Grand Bois:2, Chemin Grenier: 2, Vacoas:6, Curepipe:5, Eau Coulée: 1, Moka:1, Airport region:1, Grand' Baie:1, Piton: 1, Rivière du Rempart: 8, in the Line Barracks region of Port Louis:6, Fanfaron:1. I am sorry, they have not classified it; I see there is another additional case at Mahebourg. There are 4 more cases at Line Barracks, one at Pope Hennessy, 3 more cases at Line Barracks, 2 more cases at Port Louis and another case at Line Barracks.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there are any minors who are involved and whether there are any foreigners who are involved?

**The Prime Minister:** The answer to both questions is yes.

**Mr Jhugroo:** The hon. Prime Minister just mentioned that foreigners have been fined. Can I know how many tourists have been fined for smoking within the premises of the hotels?

**The Prime Minister:** I don't know whether any tourist has been actually fined, Mr Speaker, Sir, because they don't give the details.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers. The Table has been advised that Question Nos. B/209, B/215, B/216, B/217, B/218, B/219, B/223, B/236 and B/253 have been withdrawn. Hon. Bhagwan!

#### **TOBACCO BOARD - CHAIRPERSON - ALLEGED CORRUPTION**

**(No. B/196) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether in regard to the Chairperson of the Tobacco Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to if any allegation of corruption has been leveled against him and, if so –

- (a) the grounds thereof, and
- (b) if he is still in office.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Tobacco Board that the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has lodged a provisional charge against the Chairperson on 26 February 2009 on ground of

conflict of interest. The matter has been called *pro forma* on 07 April 2009. The case will be called anew on 25 June 2009.

The Chairperson has stepped down on 02 March 2009.

#### CEB - CONSUMERS - CLAIMS

**(No. B/197) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether in regard to the consumers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to if they have been issued claims in excess of their consumption and, if so –

- (a) the total amount thereof for the months of December 2008 and January 2009;
- (b) the number of consumers concerned, and
- (c) if any such occurrence had been reported in the past.

**The Deputy Prime Minister (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that it has not invoiced any customer in excess of actual consumption of electricity for bills issued in February 2009, representing consumption for the period December 2008 and January 2009.

Following representations from residential customers on the February 2009 bills, Government requested CEB to look into and address the matter. The CEB decided that pending an inquiry into the matter, all domestic customers should pay the amount they were charged in January 2009 if lower than the bill for February.

The CEB appointed a Fact Finding Committee chaired by Mr Gerard Hebrard, Deputy General Manager to look into the matter.

I am informed by the CEB that –

- (i) from data for previous years, the consumption of electricity for residential customers in the month of December has consistently been the highest and has been increasing year by year. For example, for period December 2006 to January 2007, consumption for residential customers was 59 GWh, for December 2007 to January 2008, it was 63 GWh and for December 2008 to January 2009, it was 67 GWh;
- (ii) for December 2008, the situation has been compounded by an exceptional increase by 1 to 2 degrees Celsius in air temperature and higher relative humidity;
- (iii) the practice at CEB is to read meters between 28 and 35 days. The average meter reading period for the January bill was 28 days and the bill for February was for 34 days. This has always been the practice at CEB, resulting in a lower bill followed by a higher bill or vice versa;
- (iv) however, due to a number of consecutive non-working days and bad weather conditions in December and January, about 13,000 domestic consumers have been billed for a period exceeding 35 days, averaging 37 days, and
- (v) where complaints have been received, the meters have been checked and found to be in good working condition.

The CEB Board will take cognizance of the report of the Fact Finding Committee and take appropriate action.

I am taking this opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, to remind the population to save and use energy efficiently and judiciously.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether this is the first time that such a situation is prevailing at the CEB and whether he can confirm that there are consumers who have been billed more than double their usual electricity bill?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have given the details as they have been communicated to

me. There has never been any excessive billing as I have said. If the amount is excessive, the explanation can be given and has been given to all the customers who have complained. The main issue, to my mind, so far, is the late billing of between 35 and 40 or 42 days which, as I have said, is, on average, 37 days. I will agree with the hon. Member that there have been complaints not only for doubling but trebling of bills. One investigation where somebody complained that this usual bill was Rs3,000 and that it went up to Rs12,000 during that period, the investigation showed that it was a *campement* that had been leased to strangers and that it had been used fully during that month. So, there are explanations. As I have said, there have been lots of misinformation and disinformation communicated to the media. I will make an appeal to all Members to look carefully at any complaint and make representations, and the CEB will reply to them. If Members have any specific points, they can go to the CEB sub office, and they will be given the required information.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, at least, inform the House how many *campement* owners have been refunded?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** There has been no refund so far, as I have said. Whilst waiting for an investigation to look into the facts of the complaint, the CEB Board has decided to hold on till matters are cleared. Now that we have got a full report, the CEB Board will take appropriate action.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has given us information about previous years, and one can see there is a consistency in what he is trying to say, namely that, every year, during that period, there is a problem because people are consuming more electricity. But why is it that it is only this year? If the same factors appeared in all the other years, why is it that there has been such a big outcry only this year? It does not concern only one *campement*. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister is a Member of Parliament, and I am sure that he, himself, must have had lots of complaints from ordinary people regarding this issue.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** I myself complained, but my wife told me not to, because she had been using the electricity. So, that's it! I am glad that this question had been raised, because it shows the mood of the country in certain sections of the press. It blows up anything and everything that happens and by repeating it, makes it a fact. We are talking about increases in consumption. If we look at last year, it jumped up from 54 GWh to 62 GWh January and February invoice and, this year, it is from 57 GWh to 66 GWh. There has been a big jump in consumption. As I have said, there has been an abnormal hot weather - one to two degrees higher. We are also using more electricity. Let's face it! More people today have fans, air-conditioners refrigerators. It's a fact! I'll make an appeal once again. The bill is high, but it is justified. I would make an appeal that we go on energy saving and best use of energy efficiency.

**Mrs Perrier:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister just answered that there was no refund. I think he got the wrong information from the CEB, because I have personally been refunded. I went to the CEB, because the number of units on my bill rose to more than 600 units. And, for the last six years, my consumption was 410 units on average. At that time, there were seven persons in my house.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member should ask the question now. She has already said that she has been refunded!

**Mrs Perrier:** Sir, I want to explain, as the hon. Deputy Prime Minister said that there has been...

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry. The Standing Orders provide that the hon. Member has to use certain words in order to make her question intelligible, but not make a statement. That is what the Standing Orders provide for.

**Mrs Perrier:** What I wanted to say is that a number of persons who made complaints on the excess billing have been refunded including myself contrary to the Minister's declaration.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not sure whether it is a refund or a readjustment whilst waiting. I would request people to look at the units consumed, and if there is any doubt, to come up to CEB and make complaint. The units consumed are the actual reading of the meters.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Deputy Prime Minister consider laying a copy of the Fact Finding Committee's Report on the Table of the Assembly?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** It had been submitted to the CEB, and I would gladly circulate it afterwards, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the explanations which the Deputy Prime Minister or the CEB came up with was the longer period for which the billings have been made regarding certain consumers. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister confirm the fact that, if billings have been made for 35 to 42 days, as he said himself, that was really excessive, unprecedented and unusual? Never in the past, had the billings been done for such a long time and the officers should be taken to task for that.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** That is absolutely right, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the past, there was a system for the billing, where there was a cut off at 35 days. Unfortunately, a few years ago, when the new system was installed, this ceiling was not introduced; and it has been reintroduced again. Having said that, I take note that the CEB meter reading system should be made accountable. The Board will take this into consideration when looking at the 13,000 customers who had billing more than 35 days, and will act accordingly, I hope.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not a problem with the system. Will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister agree that it is because of wrong planning at the level of the Meter Reading Section that consumers were billed for a maximum number of days for their consumption for the month of December?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said, it is the practice for years and years that bills are issued between 27 and 35 days. If on the previous month, it was an average of 28 days; the next month, it is normal that it should be higher than 28 days. As the hon. Member should know, the CEB cannot issue more than 12 bills in a year.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister the reasons for the late billing?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned in my reply, in December and January we had a number of holidays, but also bad weather. I take the point of hon. Ganoo that we should look into this carefully so that it does not recur.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he will draw the attention of the Chairman of the CEB not to make remarks? When the whole problem was boiling up, he said that the electricity bill had gone up because this was holiday and children were opening the fridge too often. This is ridiculous and I hope the hon. Deputy Prime Minister will bring this to his attention.

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** We have already brought it to his attention.

#### **CITÉ LA CURE - WASTEWATER SERVICES**

**(No. B/198) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the wastewater services at Cité La Cure, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Wastewater Management Authority, information as to if complaints have been registered from the inhabitants thereof concerning the wastewater reticulation problems thereat, and, if so, will he state if a survey has been carried out to assess the extent of the problem, indicating if any project is in the pipeline to remedy the situation.

**The Deputy Prime Minister (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that complaints were received during period October 2008 to March 2009 from inhabitants of La Cure Housing Estates located along Agra, Jumna and Reverend Schenepps streets in relation to blockages in the reticulation network.

The problems reported occurred because of the presence in the sewer network of debris and materials of various types such as used clothes, construction materials consisting of stones, aggregates, pieces of wood and an ingress of rainwater during heavy rainfall.

I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that the sewer blockages are being cleared as and when reported.

About 80% of the sewer network within Cité La Cure has been rehabilitated between 2002 and 2006, following a survey in 2001.

At that time, the remaining 20% at Bernardin de St. Pierre and Reverend Schenepps Streets were considered to be functioning adequately and did not require replacement.

A new survey of CHA and low cost housing estates is being carried out island wide. The survey includes Cité La Cure, especially in the areas mentioned. The report of the survey is expected by mid-May 2009, and rehabilitation works will be carried out based on the recommendations.

I am taking this opportunity, Mr Speaker, Sir, to make an appeal to the public at large not to use the sewerage system as a dumping site and a dustbin.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister how old is the sewerage reticulation in that area?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** It is very old, and I am surprised that, in the last survey, they did not include that part for rehabilitation.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how many complaints have been received and when?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, complaints are received, and I am sure it will keep recurring. We have between 10 and 22 complaints month by month. But if the cause is dumping into the sewer system, it will recur again, and we have to act accordingly.

#### CITÉ LA CURE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE - EXTENSION

**(No. B/199) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to the project for the construction of the Cité La Cure Community Health Centre, he will state where matters stand.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to PQ No. B/176 in April 2008 by my colleague, the then Minister of Health & Quality of Life.

I am informed that the situation is as follows –

- (i) on 27 October 2008, bids for the extension of the Dr. A. Mahler Community Health Centre at Cité La Cure, were invited through open tenders with closing date of 10 December 2008;
- (ii) however, after the evaluation of the bids received in line with section 39 of the Public Procurement Act 2006, the Departmental Tender Committee of my Ministry recommended that a re-tendering exercise be carried out as the lowest bid received was almost 40% higher than the estimated cost, and
- (iii) the tendering documents with updated cost estimates are now being finalised by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm that the bids he is talking about were first launched in 2006, as the works were supposed to start in 2007, and can he give the reasons why works have not started up till now?

**Dr. Jeetah:** In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a number of questions which have been answered. But I can remind the hon. Member that the inhabitants of Cité la Cure requested the extension of this building since year 2000.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I need a reply to the question I have put. Why is it that, in a question addressed to the Minister concerned in 2006, it was stated clearly that construction works



are expected to start in May 2007 and until now works have not started?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to refer the hon. Member to the answers. It's all in there.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Concerning the same question, Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House why works at the Community Health Centre Cité la Cure - and I underline the words 'Cité la Cure' - have not started until now?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has answered the question.

**Dr. Jeetah:** I have just replied to the question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** He has just replied. Next Question, hon. Jhugroo!

#### **TOURISM AUTHORITY - STAFF - RECRUITMENT**

**(No. B/200) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the recruitment of staff at the Tourism Authority, since May 2008 to date, either on a contractual or permanent basis, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, a list thereof, indicating in each case their respective –

- (a) qualifications;
- (b) terms and conditions of employment, and
- (c) addresses.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with its mandate to ensure a sustainable development of the tourism industry, the Tourism Authority has strengthened its monitoring activities as well as set up an additional unit for the implementation of embellishment projects such as –

- (a) upgrading/embellishment of tourist sites;
- (b) rehabilitation of infrastructural facilities;
- (c) painting and maintenance of bus stops;
- (d) planting and maintenance of decorative trees along motorways and public places;
- (e) removal of illegal posters, and
- (f) cleaning of frequently visited sites.

Additional staff has, consequently, been recruited by the Authority in order to properly man these units.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the detailed information in respect of the staff recruited at the Tourism Authority is being compiled and will be laid in the Library of the National Assembly.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Vice-Prime Minister whether procedures have been followed for the recruitment of all the staff?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Of course, Sir.

#### **LE MORNE/RIAMBEL - FISHERMEN**

**(No. B/201) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether he is aware of the difficulties being faced by the fishermen in the region of Le Morne to Riambel and, if so, indicate the remedial measures Government proposes to take in relation thereto.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, fishermen in the region of Le Morne to Riambel have been complaining that certain tourism activities and coastal development works were disturbing their activities.

These tourism activities and development works are as follows –

- (i) kite surfing activities in the region of Le Morne;
- (ii) the construction of a new bridge at Macondé, and
- (iii) the creation of two swimming zones and a boat passage in the lagoon in front of Tamassa Hotel at Bel Ombre.

Moreover, a few fishermen of Bel Ombre are having difficulties to get access to the sea from the coastal road to carry out their fishing activities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to tourism activities at Le Morne, my Ministry convened an inter-ministerial committee comprising the Ministry of Tourism & Leisure and External Communications, the Ministry of Environment & NDU, my Ministry and the Tourism Authority on 01 December 2008. Following the meeting, the Tourism Authority has been requested to ensure that there is a proper supervision of tourism activities in the region. I am informed that a monitoring unit has now been set up by the Tourism Authority to supervise kite surfing activities near Le Morne.

The construction of the bridge at Macondé is nearing completion. The EIA approval provides for measures to be taken and conditions to be fulfilled to protect the marine environment. Monitoring of the EIA conditions has been conducted together with the Ministry of Environment and NDU, and reports have indicated that the undertaking has not caused prejudice to fishermen in that no adverse impacts were noted on the marine environment. Officers of my Ministry and the Ministry of Environment & NDU effected a site visit on 09 April last and reported that the water in the vicinity of the bridge was clear after officers have requested the contractor to stop works at sea pending remedial measures being taken to contain sedimentation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the project at Tamassa Hotel, I am advised that the promoter has been instructed not to continue works until the Environment Monitoring Plan and the Programme of works were submitted to the Ministry of Environment & NDU. This decision was taken following representations made by fishermen in June 2008. I understand that the promoters have had consultations with the fishermen of the region and have submitted an EIA application, which is currently being examined by the Ministry of Environment and NDU.

Regarding the problems of fishermen at Bel Ombre, site visits and meeting were held with the Ministry of Housing & Lands. The Ministry of Housing & Lands has now proposed two public accesses to the sea in the region. This proposal was communicated to the fishermen on 20 March, this year, and they are all agreeable thereto.

**Mrs Perrier:** M. le président, j'aimerais revenir sur Macondé et les pêcheurs de Baie du Cap. Est-ce que le ministre peut confirmer s'il a reçu une lettre de protestation le 06 avril dernier?

**Mr Faugoo:** I am not aware of any representation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, last week, at Adjournment time, I raised the issue of the Macondé bridge. Can the hon. Minister say whether, in fact, there has been a letter which had been issued before that by the Ministry of Agriculture to the fishermen concerned, to say that any infrastructural work at sea has to be discussed with fishermen of the region first? Can he explain, therefore, the absence of dialogue with fishermen of that region?

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of the letter which is being referred to now. Surely, I will look into it. If there is anything, I will deal with same.

**Mr Barbier:** Mr Speaker, Sir, normally, for whatever works which need to be carried out at sea, we need an EIA certificate for that purpose. In this case, where the Ministry has asked to stop works, may we know whether there was any EIA certificate delivered for such works to be carried out?

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this project is a public one and it was exempted from EIA application as such. But nevertheless, there were conditions which were imposed by the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit. Through all the observations and numerous visits which have been made, both by my Ministry and that of Environment, they have followed and complied with all the conditions.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will come to the construction of the Macondé bridge and the consequential prejudice that is being caused to the fishermen. Would the hon. Minister kindly organise a site visit so that he, himself, might see that the complaint of the fishermen is very simple? The sea is being reclaimed after the bridge for about 1 km and huge boulders are being placed on the side of the sea for several meters wide. And this is destroying the bait, the *goémon*, the small fishes, the *casiers* of the fishermen and so on. This is what they are complaining about! Would the hon. Minister care to come himself - I know he has sent Mr Mathieu Laclé, his adviser - and talk to the fishermen in the area, please?

**Mr Faugoo:** I have taken good note of the points raised by the hon. Member. But I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this bridge is in the public interest. It was a priority project. Secondly, it is a flooding area, and thirdly, I must say that the fishermen don't fish in that particular region. They keep their boats and maybe they catch baits, etc. I must say if there is a direct impact on the activities of the fishermen, this should be reflected in the results. From the reports that I have, the catch in that region has increased from 5 kg to 9.5 kg in 2008; from 3.6 kg to 8.8 kg for 48 fishermen who are registered in that area. What I am saying today is that there is no impact which - we have observed - reflects in the catch. But, nevertheless, I have taken all the points which have been raised. And we have to make sure that they are given all the facilities. If there is any at all which has escaped us, it will be dealt with.

**Mrs Perrier:** M. le président, le ministre vient de répondre qu'il n'y a pas d'impact sur la prise des pêcheurs sur leur travail. Or, les pêcheurs protestent vigoureusement et ont des preuves que leur travail a été pénalisé par le projet de Macondé. Nous sommes tous conscients que ce projet de Macondé est un projet d'intérêt général, mais pas au détriment des pêcheurs. Le ministre est-il aussi conscient que le fait d'avoir jeté des roches jusqu'au Rocher de Macondé représente un danger pour les pêcheurs? Parce que c'est le chemin que les pêcheurs prennent pour sortir et entrer dans le lagon en temps de houle. C'est un endroit extrêmement dangereux ; la passe est remplie de roches. Ils doivent contourner le Rocher de Macondé pour pouvoir sortir du lagon.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** The question is very clear, let the hon. Minister answer.

**Mr Faugoo:** I think I have already answered some of the questions which the hon. Member has raised. But, on the issue of rocks, there are certain temporary steps that have been taken for the construction of the bridge. They are going to be removed from where they have been placed for the time being.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Minister confirm that, in fact, the construction of the Macondé bridge will facilitate the work of the fishermen in that region?

**Mr Faugoo:** In fact, it will help the fishermen, the people of the region and the country as a whole, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as we have just said, we are not against the construction of the bridge. But I raised the matter last time and I told the hon. Minister that a letter has been issued by his Ministry and he is saying that he has not seen the letter. I will give him a copy of that letter, if need be. But on the second question of access to the sea, as far back as March last year, the question of access was raised. Now the hon. Minister is saying that two public accesses have been made to the fishermen, but from what I learned from the fishermen, those two accesses, in no way, solve the problems of those fishermen. Can he try to look, once again, into this question of access for the fishermen?

**Mr Faugoo:** I will do that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Perrier:** M. le président, je voudrais aussi revenir sur l'aspect de l'impact sur l'environnement. Le ministre vient de dire que malgré le fait qu'il n'y avait pas un *EIA*, les promoteurs ont respecté certaines normes qui avaient été mises en place au moment du contrat. Or, je voudrais déposer sur la table de l'Assemblée des photos qui montrent que, par exemple, les filets de protection, pour empêcher les sédiments de se répandre dans le lagon, n'ont pas été posés par le promoteur et le résultat est que la mer est devenue toute rouge et cela depuis plusieurs mois. J'ai des photos que je voudrais déposer.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order, please! Silence! Silence!

**Mr Faugoo:** In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is repeating what I said in my main answer. I said: “Officers of my Ministry and Ministry of Environment and NDU effected a visit on 09 April last - we are today 14 April - and reported that the water in the vicinity of the bridge was clear after officers had requested the contractor to stop works at sea pending remedial measures being taken to contain sedimentation.” This is exactly what she is saying. When they went next day, they saw that the water was still clear.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member has made her point. She will deposit the photos and the hon. Minister will look into the matter. Hon. Ganoo!

**Mr Ganoo:** The question is not whether the water is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. Even if that is so, the complaint of the fishermen is that they should be compensated because ...

*(Interruptions)*

This is what they are claiming!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Ganoo:** As has been done in the past, for example, by the Wastewater Management Authority, in the case of Baie du Tombeau ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Put your question!

**Mr Ganoo:** In that case also, because their *casiers* have been damaged, they are being deprived of small fish and *la boîte*, this is causing prejudice to them. That is why they are claiming compensation.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, how do we explain that the catch has increased if all these have affected the fishermen? As I said, we have followed the EIA conditions. As I said today, some “*filets de protection*” was supposed to be placed by the contractors which were not done and we have requested them to stop the work, which they did. As far as compensation is concerned, this is not on the agenda of the Government.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Last question!

**Mr Faugoo:** Let me just add one thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are lots of schemes which are being put at the disposal of these fishermen to empower them to go off lagoon by the Food Security Fund and there are so many other schemes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we may discuss lengthily on this issue, but would the hon. Minister kindly agree to receive the fishermen and explain to them the situation?

**Mr Faugoo:** Avec plaisir, M. le président !

**Mr Ganoo:** I thank the hon. Minister for reminding the House of the schemes. But, in this case, the majority of these fishermen are over 60 years old. In view of that fact, can the hon. Minister rather consider the issue of compensation?

**Mr Faugoo:** The question of fishermen over 60 is a different issue, but still I will look into the matter.

### ILE AUX BÉNITIERS - EIA CERTIFICATE

(No. B/202) **Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the *Ile aux Bénitiers*, he will state where matters stand as to the proposed development project submitted by the lessee thereof, indicating if an Environment Impact Assessment certificate has been issued in relation thereto.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in July 2008, Soolaman Nubheebucus Company Ltd, the present lessee of *Ile aux Bénitiers*, submitted a proposal for a hotel development project on the islet. The project proposal comprises, among others, 160 villas, 4 restaurants and a shopping gallery. The proposal is still under consideration at the level of my Ministry. Consultations are ongoing with the different stakeholders.

In regard to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Certificate, I am informed that so far no certificate has yet been issued by the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Minister what is the annual rental of *Ile aux Bénitiers* per *arpent* and whether it reflects the market value?

(Interruptions)

**Mr Speaker:** I will allow the question exceptionally although it does not arise from the main question.

**Dr. Kasenally:** If a proper question is put on that subject, I shall answer.

**Mr Ganoo:** Has the hon. Minister received representations from associations in the area, for example, from La Gaulette Pleasurecraft owners?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Yes, Sir. Whatever representation made is being considered by my Ministry and we are going, eventually, to meet all stakeholders, as I have already said, to ensure that everybody *sort gagnant*.

**Mrs Perrier:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that *Ile aux Bénitier* was used by the Mauritian population, not only by the persons of the region? Is he ready to have consultations with the whole country before this project is implemented?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I know very well about the saga of *Ile aux Bénitiers* and a lot of people were using it, and the last Government brutally terminated the lease in April 2003, but it was restored by this Government in September 2005. As far as meeting all the people in Mauritius, you will agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not practicable. But, however, as far as possible, representatives of various interests will be met and we will do it in all transparency.

**Mr Barbier:** May I know from the hon. Minister whether Mauritians and tourists will continue to have access to *Ile aux Bénitiers* whatever project we have there?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Of course, provisions will be made, but nobody can go there and start dismantling things if there is a project. There will be provision, but within the limits of reason.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, *Ile aux Bénitiers* is an islet which forms part of the national property. Is the Minister aware of *l'état de décrépitude sur cette île*? As it is in a state of uncleanness, will the Minister say whether we can have a site visit conducted by the Ministry of Environment to see the present bad state of this islet?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Sir, I am not in presence of the state of the island. I have never visited the islet so far, but let me assure the House that safeguards are being put when this islet is developed to ensure that the environment is maintained. But I must also add that what the hon. Member is saying about *décrépitude* is that some people who have been on that islet have not been behaving properly. They have been throwing all sorts of *détritus*, they have caused a lot of havoc and that is why it needs cleaning up. But there is this company Insigna, which together with Nubheebucus, are trying to make a *bijou* out of this, I hope, for all the Mauritians, of course, but



within the parameters permissible by law.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister said that they are trying to make a *bijou*. When the islet was taken back - I say, brutally - it was supposed to be a project by the Government of Mauritius for the people of Mauritius, but not by the private sector. Sir, can I ask the Minister to look at the present state and liaise with the Ministers of Tourism and Environment and see whether it is in the interest of Mauritius to have an islet in such a bad state?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is not addressed to me.

**Mr Speaker:** I don't know whether it is addressed to the hon. Minister. Next question!

#### FOREIGN TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS - PERMITS

(No. B/203) **Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the granting of permits to Foreign Tertiary Educational Institutions wishing to operate in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as to the criteria used by the Commission for the granting thereof.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Tertiary Education Commission is statutorily responsible for regulating the operation, registration and programme accreditation of Tertiary Educational Institutions (TEI) (both local and foreign). There are currently different possibilities for a foreign TEI to operate in Mauritius. These are as follows –

- (i) incorporating a local company which will offer programme(s) leading to a diploma/degree awarded by any other foreign/local awarding body;
- (ii) partnering with an already established local post secondary educational institution in Mauritius to offer its programme(s) through that institution. In that case, the local institution will become the vehicle through which the foreign institution will operate;
- (iii) setting up of a Branch Campus in Mauritius, and
- (iv) setting up of a separate entity from the parent institution with degree awarding powers at the start of activities.

I am tabling a full set of the guidelines for the operation of a TEI (in Mauritius) which are very detailed. These guidelines are also available on the website of the Tertiary Education Commission.

For the information of the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, however, I can summarise these guidelines, which refer to elements which aim at ensuring that only credible and *bona fide* institutions operate in Mauritius. They refer to sponsorship and governance, location, physical facilities, proposed programmes of study, curriculum, development of academic programmes, academic structure, admissions, fee structure, examination and assessment, quality assurance and student supervision, research, students, staff, national and international collaboration, financial plan, phased development of the institution and marketing and promotion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will agree that the setting up of a TEI locally is not to be taken lightly as the reputation of Mauritius may be at stake. Consequently, the TEC has developed clear procedures for registration of a TEI and programme accreditation in order to ensure quality provision. I am also tabling these procedures.

Nevertheless, we are also aware that business needs to be facilitated if we wish to attract investors in the context of the setting up of a knowledge hub in Mauritius.

The TEC Board is currently reviewing the set of procedures so that the registration of institutions and the accreditation of their programmes are simplified without, however, compromising on quality.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he is satisfied that all tertiary institutions operating in Mauritius have got their courses accredited and that the qualifications and awards received by the

students are recognised by the authorities in Mauritius?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Generally, I must say 'yes'. As I said, the TEC has got that responsibility, but there are problems now and then, which crop up and we take care of them.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he has received any complaints - written or otherwise - from students who are attending such institutions in Mauritius, regarding the nature and the level standard of courses being given?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Yes, we do receive complaints and we take care of them.

**Mr Varma:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many such permits have been granted so far?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I need notice of this question, Sir. I do not have the details.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

#### MAURAS SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY - OPERATION

**(No. B/204) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Mauras School of Dentistry, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as to –

- (a) the date on which the application for its operation was made;
- (b) the date of approval;
- (c) the institution to which the Mauras School of Dentistry is affiliated, and
- (d) the number of students who have completed the Bachelor in Dental Surgery Course from the School of Dentistry.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission that –

- (a) The R F Gandhi A K Trust Ltd, operating as the Mauras College of Dentistry and Hospital and Oral Research Institute sought the approval of the Government of Mauritius for the setting up of a Dental College in Mauritius in September 2001;
- (b) Upon the recommendations of a Technical Committee set up by the then Ministry of Education & Scientific Research, provisional permission was given to the R F Gandhi A K Trust Ltd on 23 August 2002 to set up a 40 seat private dental college for the running of a 5-year BDS (Bachelor in Dental Surgery) programme, comprising a final year internship. Final permission was granted on 10 July 2003 following which the College was registered on 15 August 2003 with the Mauritius Quality Authority as a private post secondary educational institution. With the enactment of the Education and Training (Miscellaneous Provisions Act) in May 2005, the College is now registered with TEC. The registration, which is renewable on a yearly basis, is valid up to 31 July 2009.
- (c) As regards part (c) of the question, the Mauras College of Dentistry is affiliated to the Bhavnagar University, Bhavnagar, Gujarat, India.
- (d) A cohort of 35 students completed the 5-year BDS programme at the College in 2008. They were issued with a Provisional BDS Degree Certificate in August 2008 and awarded their final degree in December 2008.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister which institution was the awarding body?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The Mauras College of Dentistry, as I said, is affiliated to the Bhavnagar University, Bhavnagar, Gujarat, India which is recognised by the University Grants Commission, India enlisted on the International Handbook of the Universities.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there were any complaints from the Bhavnagar University regarding the standards of operation of the Mauras School of Dentistry?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** According to regulations set by international norms, when the students finish their studies, they get registered at the Dental Council. For the Indians, it is in India and for the Mauritians, it is in Mauritius. There is a set of issues that have to be taken care of and looked into. In fact, the Dental Council of India, at one point in time, came for a visit and they underlined a few shortcomings. These have to be looked into. But I must say we have gone above this now and for the first and second batches, those who were registered in the first year and the second year, the problem has been sorted out in India.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister then whether there are new students who are still being admitted to the institution and what will be their fate?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The college is open till June this year and they have to take care of certain shortcomings. This will be looked into and if they have taken care of it, then they will continue.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I then ask the hon. Minister if there have been new students who have got admission this year to the institution?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** They are continuing until the end of June this year.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what proofs were required from the Bhavnagar University by TEC in order to be able to register that institution?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** There is a set of rules. I can circulate that as soon as possible, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the course, it provides for an internship of a year. May I ask the hon. Minister whether the internship was done in Mauritius? Secondly, I would like to know whether the students, who have been awarded the degree, can practise in Mauritius and whether they have been registered at the Dental Council.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, for the first batch, it ended last year - I think it was by November or December last year. These persons are supposed to ask for affiliation to the Dental Council now. I think, there is a question coming on that afterwards.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Can the hon. Minister confirm that this year there has been no new entrant to Mauras School of Dentistry?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have said that there are. According to the shortcomings that have been underlined and that have been submitted to the college, they are looking into the matter and their work is being monitored. If this is done to the satisfaction of the TEC, then they will continue and they are, for the time being, continuing.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister why then he mentioned that the internship and the award for the first two batches have been settled and whether there will still be queries on the award of certificates and registration for the coming batches?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** For intakes of the first two years, it has been settled. For the first year, it is over. For the second year, those who started five years ago, are continuing and then, if everything is settled, the college will continue as if nothing had happened.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is a condition that has been laid down by TEC in order to be able to recognise an institution from India that it should get a certification from the University Grants Commission?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I think the answer is positive.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I then ask the hon. Minister whether this certification from the University Grants Commission was given to the Mauras School of Dentistry?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I have to look into this matter. I believe it should be yes, Mr Speaker Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Does the hon. Member have another question?

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** No, I am still on the same question.

**Mr Speaker:** Carry on! The hon. Member should have been a lawyer; she would have been a very good cross-examiner.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker Sir, in an answer given to a PQ, the Minister of Education stated that there is an International Monitoring Committee that already approved all the different stages: first, second, third, fourth and fifth year and even the internship. May I ask the hon. Minister then what is the difficulty that has cropped up now that the certificates have been awarded and the students have performed their internship?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** There are two things, Mr Speaker, Sir. One is the conditions that are imposed by the Dental Council of India. There is another set of conditions by the International Monitoring Committee. For the second one, there is no problem but for the first one there is a problem. We are waiting for the Dental Council of India to give the go-ahead to the Indians in India so that the Mauritians can follow the same.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the University Grants Commission gives the certification on the basis of the parent - if I may say so - institution. Has that parent institution received all certifications there, before allowing that institution to settle? Then, my question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is: how come this step has been skipped and that the institution is operating here and that now we are waiting for the Dental Council of India to settle the case there?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the problem is that the persons who are qualified, have to ask for the right to practise; and this is done to the Dental Council.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** One last question, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Minister mentioned that now TEC has to be satisfied. Will he inform the House whether there was no representative of TEC sitting on the International Monitoring Committee?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I have to look into this matter. I don't have the reply at hand.

**Mr Speaker:** Next question, hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

#### MAURAS SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY - STUDENTS - REGISTRATION

**(No. B/205) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to the students of the Mauras School of Dentistry, he will state the number thereof, who have been registered with the Dental Council of Mauritius.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Dental Council of Mauritius that –

- (i) it has received applications from 16 newly qualified Mauritian dental surgeons who have completed a course in dentistry at the Mauras College of Dentistry, and
- (ii) it is seeking clarifications from the Dental Council of India prior to the registration of these applicants.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has taken up the matter with the Indian Authorities through our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. My Ministry has received a reply from the Mauritius High Commission in New Delhi, informing that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of the Government of India has issued a notification dated 06 March, 2009, recognising the BDS degree awarded by the Bhavnagar University for the Indian students of Mauras College of Dentistry, who were admitted during the academic sessions 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

We have also been informed that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of the Government of India has made appropriate arrangements for the gazetting of the above notification in the Government of India press.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker Sir, did I get it right that the Minister stated that the Dental Council of India approved registration of Indian students? Has there been a distinction made between Indian students and Mauritian students?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I do not have this information, Mr Speaker Sir. All I have is that the Indian Authorities have requested for the gazetting of this document.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister what is going to happen to the Mauritian students who have completed their internship and who are sitting at home with their certificates? Because it seems that this matter has been settled for Indian students.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, Order, please! Let the Minister answer!

**Dr. Jeetah:** We are all concerned about this case, Mr Speaker Sir. We are in the presence of a problem and we are working towards finding a solution.

It appears that we have reached a step where these students will be able to get their registration to the Dental Council. My Ministry is eagerly awaiting the gazetting and after the gazetting, the Dental Council will be in possession of these documents and the graduates would be able to practise.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister, whether, once again, members of the Dental Council have not been sitting for years on the International Monitoring Committee of the Mauras School of Dentistry?

**Dr. Jeetah:** That is a very good question, Mr Speaker Sir. I asked the same question. There were not only members of the Dental Council, but there were members of TEC and so on. We are now facing the situation and we have to find a solution. I think we are going to see some light hopefully soon.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Will the hon. Minister give a time frame as to when he expects this matter to be settled?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius if one was to gazette the documents, we do it within a day. But, I cannot dictate what would happen in India. I have tried to talk to the Minister of Health in India today, but I understand that he was not available because of the elections. We are looking into the matter very closely.

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

*On resuming at 2.33 p.m with Mr Speaker in the Chair*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Members, I will have, at the very outset, to make an announcement to the effect that PQ Nos. B/242, B/243, B/244 and B/245 have been withdrawn.

#### **CAREER DIPLOMATS - TRAINING ABROAD**

**(No. B/207) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to the career diplomats, he will state the number thereof, who have been recruited, since July 2005 to date, indicating if they have been given training abroad and, if so –

- (a) the names of those who have benefited therefrom, and
- (b) the amount of money disbursed therefor.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since July 2005, thirteen Second Secretaries have been recruited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. In this respect, a first recruitment exercise for that grade was carried out by the PSC in February 2007 on the basis of nine vacancies. Out of this exercise, seven Second Secretaries joined the Ministry in February 2007 and, subsequently, one resigned on 18 February 2009. Furthermore, four additional vacancies which had occurred following the promotion of Second Secretaries to the grade of First Secretaries were reported to the Commission. Subsequently, six additional



Second Secretaries joined since November 2008 to date.

It is the policy of this Ministry to provide overseas training to relevant officers to enhance their skills and knowledge. In line with this policy, three substantive Second Secretaries out of the six from the first batch who joined in February 2007 have already attended courses abroad as follows –

- ♦ Mrs N. Bauhadoor Gordhan and Ms S. Koa Wing attended the diplomatic training course for Anglophone African countries held in Cairo, Egypt from 04 to 15 January 2009 and 15 to 26 June 2008 respectively and all the costs of participation were met by the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation.
- ♦ Mr J. Marie attended a training course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda at the Institute for Diplomatic Studies in Cairo from 25 January to 12 February 2009. The United Nations on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) provided accommodation, meal and subsistence allowances. The cost of air ticket amounting to Rs41,600 was met from public funds.

The other three substantive Second Secretaries of the same batch have been designated to attend the following training courses abroad and a response is being awaited from the organisers on whom rest the final decision for selection of nominees.

- ♦ Mr D. K. Bucktowar has been designated to attend a Diplomatic Training Course on Crisis Management to be held in Malaysia from 12 to 29 May 2009 and the cost of participation will be met by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relation of Malaysia.
- ♦ Mr H. Ramdhian and Miss F. Furzun have been designated to attend the Official Fellowship Programme organised by the International Trade Information and Cooperation to be held in Geneva for a period of 6 months with effect from May 2009 and the cost of participation will be met by the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation of Geneva.

I wish also to inform that the first batch of seven Second Secretaries recruited in 2007 has already followed an induction course on diplomacy as Foreign Trade organised by the Ministry from 15 October to 17 December 2007.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, from the reply of the Minister, I can gauge that most of the time we are relying on foreign funds to train our diplomats. Can the Minister say whether it is the policy of his Ministry to earmark funds specifically for the training of diplomats since this is a very important issue?

**Dr. Boollell:** The hon. lady is right. In fact, the Ministry intends to provide funds to set up an Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Service. Of course, we can work it out with the university and other relevant institutions.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** I agree that diplomats already in the service should be given exposure abroad also, as the Minister has said. Doesn't the hon. Minister think that we should work out a proper project for the setting up of an Academy for the training of diplomats in Mauritius?

**Dr. Boollell:** This is what I have stated. We need to give further thought to the setting up of an Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Service.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House as to where the career diplomats, who have been recruited since July 2005, are posted?

**Dr. Boollell:** Well, most of them are at base, although there are some posted in Embassies where they have to deal with matters which are of great concern to the interest of our country. But having said so, they are all doing a good job and, of course, there are some postings available which need to be filled.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, in the recent past, a request has been made to the Government of India for the setting up of an institute?

**Dr. Boollell:** The hon. Member is right. The services of the Indian Government were sought, but we are also having discussions with the Indian Government on this issue.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree with me that the non-career diplomats also need

training?

**Dr Boolell:** They do undergo an induction course.

*(Interruptions)*

## NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY

**(No. B/208) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to the preparation of a National Energy Policy, he will state where matters stand.

**The Deputy Prime Minister (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the final Energy Policy document prepared by the consultants appointed by the European Union and UNDP was submitted to my Ministry in June 2008 and considered by Government in December 2008.

The recommendations made by the team address all aspects of energy demand, supply and utilisation for the power and transportation sectors and emphasise on the development of renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy conservation at all levels. They also pertain to energy imports, security of supply, diversification of the energy mix, wider use of renewable energy sources, sectoral energy utilisation, transport, energy pricing, environment and education.

The implementation of the policy initiatives has wide ranging legal, financial, social, institutional, and technical implications in the local context.

In December 2008, Government agreed to policy measures outlined in the report for the period 2009-2025, subject to consultations with the relevant Ministries on the time frame for the implementation of the policy measures, taking into account the recent economic developments.

Based on the response from the various Ministries, an Action Plan will be worked out and the National Energy Policy document finalised before June 2009 in line with the commitment already taken with the EU.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the Deputy Prime Minister confirm that the same report he just mentioned, made recommendations with regard to the role of the STC in the import of coal and petroleum products?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, among the many recommendations, this is one of them, and Government has not accepted the report *in toto*. There are about 25 reservations and STC is one of them.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Will the Deputy Prime Minister also say whether in the meantime any study is being carried out with a view to providing individuals who want to install microgenerators in their home and sell the surplus energy?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** It is ongoing. Microgeneration is in two forms: it is photovoltaic and also wind energy; we are working on the grid code for that. It is being presented to the stakeholders and we are moving ahead, but I would like to caution Members in the House about what is in the report. I would quote and I think it is well worth thinking about it. It says: it may take generations to reform the energy sector. It is not going to be overnight.

Secondly, introducing more energy-efficient equipment takes less time and this is the emphasis on which my Ministry and myself were working upon.

Thirdly, changing buildings, energy supply sources and lifestyles take considerable time. We have made a start, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are going along, but we don't expect it overnight, especially as it is expensive to start with. The upfront cost is very high.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether this report has taken on board the possibilities of having wave energy as one of the component of production of energy?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** It does specifically mention that wave energy is not for today, but it is ongoing. I have been warned about a lot of offers for wave energy, but to be cautious. The answer is 'yes', it is on, even elsewhere wave energy is not in the frontline for the moment, but it is one of the component.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether the consultant had contacted people from the university also?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** My information is that a wide consultation, including university has been held and I am glad that the university is taking a lot of interest in *Maurice Ile Durable* and in all the projects that are ongoing, including energy; and next week we are going to have an Energy Saving Week on the campus of the university itself.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister say whether it is still the policy of Government to promote the use of bagasse in making energy?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Yes, I would like to *mettre les pendules à l'heure* in terms of bagasse. Today, every ounce of bagasse that can be used is being used to produce energy, but there are three sites - Mon Loisir, St Aubin and Medine - where the burning of bagasse is not done efficiently. This is the next step to have efficient use of bagasse.

**Mr Bodha:** I have two questions to ask. As regards the funding of the recommendations of the National Energy Policy, which have been approved both by Government and the European Union, can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister how is it going to be done? Is it going to be funded by the European Union, partly by the CEB, or partly by the private sector?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** We are working on it. I think we have to tread cautiously; it will be from all parties.

**Mr Ganoo:** Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister tell us what is the position with the grid code? Is it still in preparation and is there any difficulty?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** As the hon. Member is aware, the grid code relates to production and sale and there is a sort of recoup. It is expensive. As far as I have been told, in Reunion, a unit of electricity costs about seven to eight times more than it costs the average. We have to work on it; that is why I said we have to plan, taking the economic downturn worldwide and I am not talking about Mauritius.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Deputy Prime Minister what has been the recommendation as regards ethanol in the National Energy Policy?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Its recommendation has been to use more and more ethanol from G-10 to G-20 and it is part of the package that is being proposed.

#### NATIONAL PAY COUNCIL - TERMS OF REFERENCE

(No. B/209) **Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the National Pay Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to –

- (a) if its terms of reference has been amended, and
- (b) the number of meetings of the Council held, since July 2008 to date.

(Withdrawn)

#### ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR - SALARY SCALE STRUCTURE

(No. B/211) **Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the entertainment sector, he will state if Government will consider introducing entertainment laws and, if so –

- (a) when, and

(b) it is proposed to work out a salary scale structure for the sector.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of problems prevailing in the entertainment sector due to the absence of a legal framework. The quantum of pay to performing artists in the entertainment sector is a matter of great concern to me. In fact, it has come to my knowledge that there exists some sort of exploitation of artists going on in that sector.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry, with the assistance of UNESCO and the Mauritius Research Council, is presently conducting a study on the cultural industry in Mauritius. The study comprises *inter alia* the status of our Cultural Industry, including the entertainment sector and recommendations for improvement. The findings will enable us to introduce appropriate measures for the development of the sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the final report of the study will be ready by June this year. The recommendations of the study will be validated after consultations with all stakeholders.

I cannot, at this point in time, pre-empt the recommendations, but what I can say is that when an emerging economic sector grows and reaches a certain level, it becomes imperative to have a legal framework to regulate it. This legal framework may also include the question of remuneration of artists and which can only be in line with the new philosophy of the new labour legislation.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell the House whether he is in possession of any draft of the copyright law emanating from the stakeholders such as MASA, the police and the customs?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Yes, we are working very actively on that.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he will agree with me that there should be a contribution of the Ministry of Tourism? Because, in many cases, this is where the cultural industry thrives. As he rightly pointed out, there is a lot of exploitation. For example, many of those sega dancers are getting up to Rs100 for the show, and there are even minors. Something can be done there. There is a lot of scope of what can be done in the cultural and tourism industry.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I fully agree and, as I said, we are going to consult all stakeholders.

**Mrs Perrier:** Is the hon. Minister aware that children are often used for entertainment, especially in the tourism sector? Will the hon. Minister cater for this aspect also in the new regulation?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister give us an idea as to when of these measures are going to be in force?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I said that we have to wait for the report, which I expect to get at the end of the month of June, and then we will have a meeting with the stakeholders. The hon. Member can rely upon me to go as quickly as possible.

#### AIR MAURITIUS LTD - AIRCRAFT FLEET - MAINTENANCE

(No. B/212) **Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the maintenance of the fleet of aircraft of Air Mauritius Ltd., he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Company, information as to –

- (a) the name of the contractor;
- (b) the contract value;
- (c) if an international tender exercise was carried out and, if so, indicate -
  - (i) the names of the bidders, and
  - (ii) the value quoted in each case, and
- (d) if the Company proposes to reduce the maintenance costs of the aircrafts.

**The Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would appreciate that safety is the hallmark of Air Mauritius and that, so far, the Company has maintained a perfect - 100% - safety record. Accordingly, all matters pertaining to maintenance of aircrafts are treated with utmost seriousness. There cannot, therefore, be any compromise on such issues, the more so as the Company is listed on the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) Registry.

The House will further note that this question relates to a commercial and operational matter of Air Mauritius, which, being given its status of a limited company, cannot be dealt with in the House. I am, therefore, unable to provide the specific information sought or to reply to any supplementary question thereon.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state if it is Air Tanzania that is in charge of the maintenance of Air Mauritius?

**Mr Speaker:** I will have to remind the hon. Member that if the hon. Minister has given reasons why he cannot give the information, there cannot be supplementary questions.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister reassure the House that there will be no cut in maintenance?

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to be very clear. There are a lot of people who are trying to denigrate Air Mauritius - I am not saying this for the hon. Member. This is not the time to partake in such things. Air Mauritius has a wonderful 100% safety record and it is doing everything necessary to maintain this. There is absolutely no cut in the type of maintenance. What has been done, with the help of McKinsey, is that MK has renegotiated to its advantage the terms of the maintenance; not the actual maintenance itself.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether some maintenance is done in Mauritius? I would also like to ask him whether he would agree with me that, at some point in time, there was a contract for the maintenance of planes from other companies to be done in Mauritius.

**Mr X. L. Duval:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are various types of maintenance that are done. For instance, just after and before a flight, there is maintenance. MK does this for themselves and also for other airlines that land in Mauritius. I am not aware whether planes come specifically to Mauritius for that.

#### **SBM LTD - HEAD OFFICE - STATE LAND**

**(No. B/213) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the State Bank of Mauritius, he will state if the Head Office thereof is located on State land and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the extent of land;
- (b) the terms and conditions of the lease;
- (c) the annual rental, and
- (d) if the rental value reflects the actual market value.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, the Head Office of the State Bank of Mauritius is located over a portion of State land of an extent of 2223m<sup>2</sup> (that is, 53P).

In regard to part (b) of the question, the terms and conditions of the lease are, *inter alia*, as follows –

- (i) Type - industrial site lease;
- (ii) Purpose - the construction of a multi-storey headquarters building for the State Commercial Bank Limited;
- (iii) Duration - 29 and a fraction years to expire on 30 June 2019;
- (iv) Renewal Clause - may be renewed at the expiry of the lease for two consecutive periods of 15 years, subject to the rent being revised on each renewal to reflect the market value.



In regard to part (c) of the question, at the time of lease, that is, in 1989, the rental agreed upon was at a nominal value of Rs1,000 per annum.

As regards part (d) of the question, the Finance Act provides for the terms and conditions of all industrial and commercial leases to be reviewed, including the annual rental to reflect the market value. A specific provision has been made in the Act to include the State land industrial leases in the City Centre. The State Bank of Mauritius Ltd forms part of this category of leases.

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can we have an idea when the rent is going to be revised?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Following the Finance Act approved in June 2009, there has been consultation with the State Law Office, and there were a lot of issues which had to be sorted out. Finally, we sorted out the problem, and I am expecting that the matter will be resolved probably in three or four months' time. Perhaps the hon. Member would like to know that the rental for the State land - because it will be prime land in the City Centre - might be between Rs8 m to Rs10 m. per annum per acre.

**Mr Guimbeau:** We all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that many big businesses are leasing land in the capital for *pitance*. So, will this include all other industrial sites?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are about 28, and I think that Government stands to gain a fair amount of revenue accruing to that, because there are two on prime land in the City Centre and one is beyond. The one in the City Centre is a bit more expensive. I understand that Harel Mallac is paying about Rs500. This also would be substantially increased.

#### LA CAVERNE & PHOENIX - SOCIAL CENTRE

(No. B/214) **Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a social centre at CTR Lane, St Paul, and another one near the Castel Madrassa at Allée Brillant Road, in Constituency No. 15, La Caverne & Phoenix, he will state where matters stand.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the construction of a social centre or multipurpose complex at CTR Lane, my Ministry, in collaboration with the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, is still looking for a portion of land for this purpose.

As regards the social centre near Castel Madrassa at Allée Brillant Road, I am informed that the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix was, at one point in time, considering the possibility of renting one floor of the Madrassa Building for that purpose. Unfortunately, the request could not be entertained.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that, subsequent to the request of hon. Dr. Kasenally, hon. Chaumière and hon. Dr. Hawoldar and after having gone through the questions, I have been informed that the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix is in presence of an offer to purchase a plot of land of an extent of some 25 perches near the junction of Allée Brillant and Phoenix, that is, close to the Mahebourg Road. I am also informed that, once the land is acquired, the Municipal Council will proceed with the construction of a multipurpose complex, including a social centre.

#### SAVINGS ACCOUNT - INTERESTS - INCOME TAX

(No. B/215) **Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the payment of income tax on interests accruing to the savings account, he will state if he proposes changing the policy thereof.

(Withdrawn)

#### LA VIGIE-SSR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MOTORWAY - FLOODING

(No. B/216) **Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he is aware of the flooding problem on the

Motorway, from La Vigie to the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, especially around the roundabout at the junction of La Rosa, L'Escalier/Souillac, and if so, the remedial measures that will be taken.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **DBM - CUSTOMERS - LOANS**

**(No. B/217) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the customers of the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., who had contracted a loan up to Rs200,000, before April 2003 and who are entitled to the special measures as announced in the Budget 2008-2009, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Bank, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) the total amount of money it represents, indicating the amount for Rodrigues.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **MAURITIUS/RODRIGUES - PUBLIC OFFICERS - PERMANENT TRANSFER**

**(No. B/218) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to the public officers who have applied for permanent transfer and who have been granted same from the Rodrigues establishment to the Mauritius establishment and *vice versa*, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof for period –
  - (i) January 2000 to December 2005, and
  - (ii) January 2006 to date, and
- (b) their job title, indicating their respective previous and present posting.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **RODRIGUES - EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION - ACTION PLAN**

**(No. B/219) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Action Plan of the Empowerment Foundation, he will state the number of projects earmarked for 2008 and 2009 for Rodrigues, indicating –

- (a) the amount of funds transferred to the Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd., as at to date in relation thereto, and
- (b) the beneficiaries thereof, indicating the amount of money disbursed.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **BEAU CHAMP SUGAR ESTATE CAMPS - REGISTRATION DUTY**

**(No B/220) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether he is aware that the buyers of the Beau Champ Sugar Estate camps are now being asked to pay additional registration duty ranging from Rs25,000 to Rs50,000 and, if so, state the reasons therefor.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleagues, hon. Ministers Indranee Seebun and Lormus Bundhoo and the hon. Member Cader Sayed-Hossen have drawn my attention to the problem being faced by some beneficiaries of land at Deep River Beau Champ Sugar Estate camps and an enquiry has been initiated by my Ministry.

I would like to inform the House that five remaining sugar camps at Deep River Beau Champ Sugar Estate are in the process of being phased out and the 180 workers concerned have been allocated land at Cité Boutiques, Beau Champ. 133 of these beneficiaries have obtained their title deedson 10 November 2008.

In accordance with section 26 of the SIE Act 2001 as amended afterwards, beneficiaries of land under the phasing out of camps project, are exempted from payment of registration duty. According to the Registrar-General's Office, 18 beneficiaries have paid registration duty because no mention has been made in their title deeds that they are exempted from payment of registration duty. This is due to an omission on the part of the notaries who prepared the title deeds. Even the sugar estate, which is exempted under the same section of the SIE Act from payment of land transfer tax, was made to pay the tax because of this particular omission.

These beneficiaries have been served a notice under section 28(2)(b) of the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act to pay additional registration duty following a re-assessment of the value declared in the title deeds. Since they are already exempted from payment of registration duty, the question of paying additional registration duty does not arise.

As it is Government policy that beneficiaries of land under phasing out of camps should not pay the relevant duties and taxes, I have consulted the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment to request that the Notice served on the 18 beneficiaries be not enforced.

I would wish to assure the House that the 18 beneficiaries and also other beneficiaries who are yet to register their title deeds will not have to disburse any money.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the papers are in my hand. It is good that the Minister has clearly stated that they don't have to pay anything. Can I ask the hon. Minister to request the Ministry of Finance to send another letter cancelling the previous letter? Because this is creating headache to these people.

**Mr Faugoo:** This is exactly what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir. This letter does not emanate from the Ministry of Finance; it emanates from the Registrar-General. In fact, we are working out with the Ministry of Finance so that we can give instructions to the Registrar-General for the needful to be done and the process of re-assessment and claims is stopped.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the Registrar-General is an emanation of the Ministry of Finance. The heading is Ministry of Finance. I can lay a copy for the Minister. I have brought all the 18 copies.

**Mr Speaker:** It is a Department under the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr Gunness:** These people are having a headache because in the letter it is said that - they have to make an appeal within 28 days. I am going to tell them obviously that they do not have to pay, but they will wait for an official letter and the 28 days are lapsing in a few days.

**Mr Faugoo:** It is not up to the Member to come and tell me how we are going to work out the *modus*. I said that these people are exempted and they are not going to pay. How we are going to do it in practice is something else.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not here to tell the hon. Minister how to do things. I have just put the question ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Please! I don't understand the reaction of the hon. Minister. The hon. Member has just asked whether a letter of instruction could be issued to the Registrar-General's Department, and this is in line with the answer which the hon. Minister has given. That is all.

**Mr Faugoo:** I have said in my main reply, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I am working with the Ministry of Finance to find a way to settle the problem. I cannot give instructions to the Ministry.

**Mr Gunness:** If you will allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, my point is that they have 28 days as from the date they received this letter and they have to make an appeal. They have to deposit 30% of the amount that has been requested. So, these people should have known by now that they do not have to make an appeal and they do not have to deposit that sum of money.

**Mr Faugoo:** Had the hon. Member listened to my answer, Mr Speaker, Sir, he would have known that they won't have to go through all this.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Let me put an end to this argument. The Minister has given an answer in the House. I don't know who is going to write to these people. I think the answer given by the hon. Minister is in itself an undertaking and it may be communicated to the persons involved.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if I understood the Minister properly, he said that some workers have, unfortunately, already paid the registration duty when they should not have done so. It is because of the omission of the notary who failed to mention it in the title deed that this was a transaction done in the phasing out. Can I ask the hon. Minister if he can liaise with the Minister of Finance so that these people be refunded the money which they have paid to Government? In other cases, these people can be refunded that money if they petition the hon. Minister of Finance. This is a technical omission which has not been declared in the title deed and they should be refunded that money which they have paid to the Government.

**Mr Faugoo:** This is very relevant and pertinent, Mr Speaker, Sir, because when the title deeds were presented, they had already paid a certain amount of money. The question of refund will also be taken on board; I have already spoken to the Ministry of Finance and the needful will be done.

#### **LA BRASSERIE TRANSFER STATION - TENDER EXERCISE**

**(No. B/221) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether, in regard to the La Brasserie Transfer Station, he will state if any ongoing work is being carried out thereat and, if so, indicate if a tender exercise was carried out and, if so –

- (a) when;
- (b) the names of the bidders;
- (c) the value of each bid received, and
- (d) the name of the successful bidder.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **AFRICAN UNION, ADDIS ABABA - AMBASSADOR**

**(No. B/222) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade whether, in regard to our Ambassador to the African Union based in Addis Ababa, he will state if he has received representations as regards his conduct and, if so, the measures Government proposes to take.

**Dr. Boolell:** No, Sir.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** May I know from the hon. Minister whether he has taken cognizance of certain different articles that have been published in foreign press about the behaviour of our Excellency based in Addis Ababa?

**Dr. Boolell:** I don't pay heed to articles that appear in the press, Mr Speaker, Sir.

#### **SOLIDARITY LEVY - MONEY COLLECTED**

**(No. B/223) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Solidarity Levy, he will state the amount of money collected for each of the last three years, indicating how these sums have been used.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **MOBILE PHONES - HEALTH HAZARDS**

**(No. B/224) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the

Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to mobile phones, he will state the health hazards that the use thereof represent.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply made to PQ No. B/1064 at our sitting of 05 August 2008. As stated therein, my Ministry usually stands guided by the recommendations of the World Health Organisation on all matters pertaining to health.

Cellular phones operate with radio frequency which is a form of electromagnetic energy. This form of radiation is emitted by cell phones.

Since the introduction of mobile phones, there have been persisting concerns worldwide about the possible impact of mobile phones technology on human health. In this regard, worldwide research is being carried out to evaluate the possible health effects associated with the use of mobile phones. Current scientific evidence indicates that there are very small and reversible biological and physiological effects that do not necessarily lead to diseases and injuries.

The balance of evidence to date suggests that exposure to radio frequency radiations, which are emitted by mobile phones below the safe level, as enshrined in the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines, do not cause adverse health effects to the population in general.

However, given that the issue of possible health effects of mobile phones is very much alive in the mind of the public, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry will continue to follow up the matter with the World Health Organisation and take any action as required.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, although we have respect for the opinion of the World Health Organisation, will the hon. Minister agree with me that there have been certain researches conducted and that there is considerable body of evidence that the microwave radiation from the mobile phones causes brain tumour and disturbs brain functioning among others, that is, the cancer risk?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to go through some of the notes, because I know that the hon. Member comes well-prepared. I see that in 1997, there was, at least, one study that found that RF - radio frequency and not microwave - increased the rate at which genetically engineered mice developed limb trauma. I also understand as a conclusion of this report that says - and I would like to read this, Mr Speaker, Sir - "that there are gaps in knowledge that have been identified for further research to better assess health risk." The point I am trying to make is that research is still on, but, at this stage, we don't have any conclusive evidence to show that it is a health hazard.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have got some documents which I am going to table. My question is: will the hon. Minister agree that the radiation of mobile phone is too strong to be safe and even birds never sit or fly near any transmitter pillar transmitting radiation of mobile phone? Nature is showing the way.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have got my personal concern, but I can only go by what the WHO has to say on health matters; and, so far, there is no conclusive evidence that shows that it can be causing any kind of cancer or any kind of harm to human beings. Research is on and until such time that we have known adverse effects we have to go by the recommendations of the WHO.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I can only hope that we won't wait for people to die before we react. We have got evidence and I am going to table it. Being given that we have considerable evidence and it has been found that it is very risky for youngsters below 20 years because they can have brain tumour, can the hon. Minister consider the advisability of educating and advising youngsters, especially below 20, on limited restrictive use of mobile phones?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Obviously, Mr Speaker, Sir, one needs not abuse of any kind of communication equipment. There is another mention that the further we keep the phone from the head, the better it is in terms of allowing radiation to affect this very sensitive part of the body, that is, the brain. But here again, I would like to reiterate that I can only go by WHO recommendations.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has spoken about research carried out internationally by the WHO. Is it being envisaged to carry out some research locally as well?



**Dr. Jeetah:** It would have been nice to have research at that level in Mauritius. I will have to look into it. I will certainly pass on the suggestion to the Mauritius Research Council.

#### **PETIT VERGER ST PIERRE GOVT. SCHOOL - FOOTBALL GROUND - FENCING**

(No. B/225) **Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, he is aware of the state of the fencing of the football ground, found adjacent to the Petit Verger St Pierre Government School, and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

**The Minister of Youth & Sports (Mr S. Ritoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I thank the hon. Member for having drawn our attention to the state of the fencing of the football ground found at the back of Petit Verger St. Pierre Government School.

I am informed by the Ministry of Housing & Lands that the football ground is not vested in my Ministry and is located on the land acquired for the construction of the school.

The Mauritius Sports Council has confirmed that the fencing and the block walls of the football ground are seriously damaged and represent a hazard for the users of the playground and the inhabitants of the vicinity.

Therefore, as an immediate measure, I have requested the Mauritius Sports Council to remove the damaged fencing and block walls.

My Ministry will liaise with the Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources and the National Development Unit to work out the modalities, including funding, for reinstating the fencing and block walls.

**Mr Dayal:** Can I know from the hon. Minister how soon the work will start? Here are the photos showing how dangerous it is and the fencing is almost leaning against several houses in the vicinity.

**Mr Ritoo:** I will request the Ministry of Education and the NDU so that we can have a meeting and start work soon.

#### **PETIT VERGER ST PIERRE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - TOILETS - UPGRADING**

(No. B/226) **Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Petit Verger St Pierre Government School, he will state if he will consider upgrading the toilets thereat.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that action has already been initiated by my Ministry to implement upgrading works in one of the two existing toilet blocks at the school, the other one being in good condition.

I am informed that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (MPI) is presently carrying out a detailed survey at the school and will, subsequently, submit the cost estimates for the project by end April 2009, that is, in a few days' time.

Tentatively, the works are expected to start around mid-May 2009 and will be completed around mid-August 2009. I am going to take into consideration the question of the fencing around the football ground, because we have found a way out. In fact, I did not have time to discuss with my colleague and I am sure that this will be taken on board at the same time as we are looking after the toilets.

#### **LE POUCE MOUNTAIN, ST PIERRE - RIVER - PLATFORM**

(No. B/227) **Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the banks of the river, near Le Pouce Mountain, St Pierre, which are used by devotees to offer prayers during the religious festivals, he will state if he will consider putting up a platform thereat.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, a site visit will be effected at the site concerned. A decision will be taken

subsequently.

#### ADAMAS LTD - INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

**(No. B/228) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment whether he is aware of the litigious industrial relations prevailing at the Adamas Ltd. and, if so, state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if not, why not.

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is not in the presence of any report of litigious industrial relations prevailing at Adamas Ltd.

However, at my request, officers of my Ministry carried out a surprise visit at the enterprise and I am informed that the industrial relation is harmonious except for a request made by the employees for the establishment of a communication system with management. I am also informed that management is agreeable to the setting of a work council with the assistance of my Ministry.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry did not receive a claim from an employee regarding the payment of commission since last year?

**Mr Chaumière:** No, Mr Speaker, Sir. But I am advised also that there was an industrial dispute regarding one particular person in a letter dated 17 October 2008 received at my Ministry on 21 October 2008. Mrs P. J., a sales clerk, reported an industrial dispute against Adamas on an issue relating to non-payment of commissions since July 2008.

**Mrs Labelle:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry carried out an inquiry in that particular case?

**Mr Chaumière:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. On 29 December 2008, an inquiry was carried out at the undertaking whereby Messrs. Denton, Managing Director, and Mr Benjamin Samba, Manager, were met. They proposed to increase the basic salary of Mrs Jouany by Rs1,500 and to pay a monthly bonus ranging from Rs1,500; and Mrs Jouany requested for a delay in order to take a stand. On 08 January 2009, Mrs Jouany requested that management communicates to her the proposal in writing. As the case was not yet finalised, a meeting was held at the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation on 06 March 2009 with Mrs P. Jouany and Adamas as represented by Mr Samba, Manager. Management proposed to increase the basic salary from Rs8,000 to Rs9,500 effective as from July 2008. As regards the claim of commission, parties opted to negotiate between themselves. A meeting was, therefore, fixed for 06 April 2009 to report developments. At the meeting held at the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation on 06 April, Mr Erol Jouany the husband of disputant stated that his wife passed away on 02 April 2009 and submitted a copy of the death certificate.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this case is a very sad one. It's a case of a woman who has been enduring undue harassment for nearly one year and fell in the office after a dispute and died some days after. I have to bring to the attention of the House that other employees are submitting the same treatment.

**Mr Speaker:** This issue can be raised at Adjournment Time if the hon. Member so wishes because now she is making a statement. She can raise it at Adjournment Time. Now it is Question Time!

**Mrs Labelle:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister aware that this employee was drawing a monthly commission of nearly Rs7,000 and it was decided to bring it back to only Rs1,000 or Rs1,500?

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware. But I have said that my Ministry has taken appropriate measures to inquire into this. There was a meeting which was scheduled on 06 April. Unfortunately, the lady passed away.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there was a redundancy exercise at Adamas recently?

**Mr Chaumière:** I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir.

### ROBIN STREET & MOOTOO LANE, CUREPIPE - PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

(No. B/229) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Curepipe, information as to if it has received a petition from the inhabitants of Robin Street and Mootoo Lane, Curepipe, regarding the obstruction of a pedestrian lane and, if so, indicate where matters stand.

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Municipality of Curepipe that a petition has been received on 07 February 2009 from inhabitants of Robin Street and Mootoo Lane, complaining that the owner of the plot of land situated at the corner of Mootoo Lane and Robin Street had stacked tonnes of stones thus obstructing the pedestrian access.

I am informed that following an investigation carried out by the Municipal Council in the matter it has been found that no mention of any pedestrian road is made in the title deed of the owner of the land. However, there exists only a track on the site.

I am further informed that the Municipal Council is not in a position to request the owner to remove the stones as they are found on his private land.

### UNIVERSITY OF LIMOGES/L'INSTITUT SUPÉRIEUR DE TECHNOLOGIE/THE SWAMI DAYANAND INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT - PROTOCOL - RENEWAL

(No. B/230) **Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the protocol existing between the University of Limoges, *l'Institut Supérieur de Technologie* and the Swami Dayanand Institute of Management which expired in February last, he will state if same has been renewed and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, a protocol Agreement was initially signed on 01 October 1999 for a period of three years and renewed twice up to February 2009 between the Technical School Management Trust Fund and the University of Limoges. The protocol provided for the running of a two-year programme at the '*Institut Supérieur de Technologie*' leading to a "*Diplôme Universitaire Supérieur de Technologie*", co-awarded by the University of Limoges and IST.

Action has already been initiated for the renewal of the protocol and the TSMTF has written to the University of Limoges accordingly. Consultations have already been held with the delegation from the University of Limoges presently on visit in Mauritius to finalise procedures for the renewal of the protocol. An agreement in principle has been reached with the delegation and will be signed very shortly.

As regards the Swami Dayanand Institute of Management, being given that it is an English Medium Institution and runs programmes in a limited number of corresponding fields to those of the University of Limoges, it has established collaboration with the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) of Australia.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether one of the conditions from Limoges is that the TSMTF should be affiliated or be under the aegis of a university so that they can keep on with this agreement?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is a fact and we are reviewing the structure of the TSMTF altogether. In fact, we are going to detach the *Institut Supérieur de Technologie* and the Swami Dayanand Institute from the jurisdiction of the TSMTF and bring them under the jurisdiction of the University of Technology (Mauritius). This will become a reality soon. But we will have to come to the Assembly to amend the legislation. The draft legislation is getting ready at the State Law Office.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the University of Mauritius submitted, I think, in March last year, a draft Memorandum of Understanding? And, may I know whether there is a particular reason why we have not gone forward with the University of Mauritius and decided to do it with the University of Technology?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** There is no difference because they asked for it to go under the aegis of a University and

this is what is being done. It has been discussed lengthily and finally we came to the conclusion to bring the two institutions under the aegis of the University of Technology (Mauritius).

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether it is not a very subtle way to get the fees payable? Because fees under University of Mauritius are free while under the University of Technology fees are payable. Actually, fees at *l'Institut Supérieur de Technologie ne sont pas payants*, and once this will be under the University of Technology, what will happen to fees?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we are looking into the matter. I discussed this with my technicians in the course of the week and we are trying to do our level best for these fees not to be paid in this particular aspect because we are being helped financially by the French Government, and also the TEC will be awarding a budget for it to the University of Technology (Mauritius). But the whole framework of university fees is being looked into.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I have heard the hon. Minister mention that everything will be settled in the coming days. If this is the case, will it be known in the coming days whether the fees will be payable? Because from what I understand, recruitment for IST is already due. Are we going to advertise for the courses in the coming days and, if so, are we going to say whether the fees are payable or not?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The renewal is going to take place in a matter of days as I said and recruitment is going to follow the same pattern as last year for the time being. Then, we are going to look into the matter for the later years.

### STANDARD III ENGLISH AND FRENCH TEXTBOOKS - REPRESENTATIONS

(No. B/231) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the new Standard III English and French textbooks, he will state if he is aware of any complaint in relation thereto and, if so –

- (a) the nature thereof, and
- (b) the remedial measures that will be taken.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for this question. I am indeed aware of representations made regarding the new English and French textbooks of Standard III, including comments from some trade unionists in the press. The bottom line of these representations is that the new textbooks are generally overloaded and the Standard III English and French textbooks, in particular, are complicated and are of too high a level for the pupils.

Be it as it may, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that the new textbooks are premised on the National Curriculum Framework (Primary) which was elaborated after a National Debate on Curriculum Reform in December 2005 in which all stakeholders and all trade unions took part. There was synergy and consensus on the broad curricular issues.

Further, the new textbooks have been written by experienced educators who form part of the subject panels. Before these textbooks were finalised and issued to students, they have been tested on a pilot basis and there was no negative feedback received then.

Consequently, there is no clear indication at this stage that the textbooks are in fact really overloaded or complicated. However, it is admitted that –

- (i) these textbooks follow a new approach whereby life skills and a number of concepts like values or environmental consciousness have been integrated therein, and
- (ii) students with learning difficulties particularly in the ZEP schools may have some difficulty to grasp the new concepts thus requiring additional efforts from the teacher.

As a result thereof, there could have been a perception that the textbooks are complicated when, in fact, such may not be really the case.

Nevertheless, the MIE has been requested to carry out a fresh evaluation of the two textbooks

and submit a report.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House when is the report expected to be ready?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Well, I want this to go as quickly as possible. In fact, this is also a question of days. But, the Ministry is very closely monitoring, Mr Speaker, Sir, the situation of the third and fourth standards with respect to these books, and inspectors may be called upon to provide necessary support to the teachers in case of necessity.

#### **BLUE LAGOON HOTEL - TAXI STAND**

**(No. B/232) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the non-gazetting of the taxi stand for the Blue Lagoon Hotel in Blue Bay, he will state the reasons therefor, indicating when remedial action will be taken.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the taxi stand for Blue Lagoon Hotel has already been gazetted as per Government Notice No. 103 of 2006.

#### **INDIAN RESORT & PLANTATION HOTELS - EMPLOYEES - LAID OFF**

**(No. B/233) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the employees recently laid off at the Indian Resort Hotel and the Plantation Hotel respectively, he will state, in each case –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the date on which they received their notice of termination of employment;
- (c) their length of service, and
- (d) if any offer of compensation was made to them and, if so, the amount thereof.

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of workers laid-off by Indian Resort Hotel and the Plantation Hotel is 41 and 45 respectively.

I am informed that the notices of termination of employment were issued on 10 February 2009 by Indian Resort and on 09 and 18 February 2009 by the Plantation Hotel. Both hotels indicated in their letters that the termination of employment would be with immediate effect.

As regards part (c) of the question, the length of service of the workers of Indian Resort ranges from two months to seven years and for workers of the Plantation Hotel, the range is between 6 months to 10 years.

As regards part (d) of the question, an offer of compensation was made to the laid-off workers, as follows –

- (i) for those reckoning above 10 years services - 10 days' wages per year of service which is equivalent to the recycling fee payable by the employer plus 3 months' wages as gratuity;
- (ii) for those reckoning between 5 to 10 years' service - two months' wages as gratuity in addition to their joining the Workfare Programme, and
- (iii) for those reckoning between 1 to 5 years' service - one month's wages as gratuity in addition to their joining the Workfare Programme.

The above compensation is being paid over and above the indemnity payable in lieu of notice and, for those reckoning less than 10 years' service, over and above the recycling fee payable under the Employment Rights Act.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the workers have, in fact, refused the compensation offered to them?



**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have received the letter from the Hotels and Restaurants Employers Union and the organisation of Hotels and Catering Workers Union of Mr Shanto and Mr Lutchmanen where they say that there has been a special general meeting with the workers which has been held on Friday 06 March, and at the special general meeting, the decision was taken to accept the proposals provided that the total payment be effected at one time.

**Mr Ganoo:** I am sorry to inform the hon. Minister that he might be mistaken. The case he is talking about is the Ambre Hotel where, in fact, these two unions represent the workers of Ambre Hotel. But as far as these two hotels are concerned, they are not represented by any union; and they have refused the compensation. Can I ask him whether the Permanent Secretary of his Ministry will initiate proceedings to sue the employers? Because the employees do not agree that the hotels had laid them off for bankruptcy or other similar reasons.

**Mr Chaumière:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member, himself, came at my Ministry once, with the workers; and there were discussions, especially about the payment of gratuity and all these things. And I must say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that as from then, my Ministry has not received any complaint of that sort.

**Mr Ganoo:** Therefore, can the hon. Minister inquire into the possibility of having his Permanent Secretary refer the matter to court since these employees of these two hotels, not of *Ambre*, are not admitting the fact that the employer is justified in laying them off.

**Mr Chaumière:** Certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir.

#### **BLACK RIVER - SCABIES - OUTBREAK**

(No. B/234) **Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if there was recently an outbreak of scabies in the region of Black River and, if so, indicate –

- (a) when were the first cases detected;
- (b) the number of patients who had reported to the hospital in Black River for treatment, and
- (c) the remedial measures taken to prevent the resurgence thereof.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that scabies is an infestation of the skin and spreads rapidly under crowded conditions where there is frequent skin-to-skin contact.

Regarding part (a) of the question, I am informed that cases of scabies are reported all year round throughout the island. However, it is noted that there has been an increase in the number of scabies reported at Yves Cantin Community Hospital for the months of November and December 2008.

As regards part (b) of the question, the number of cases reported at Yves Cantin Community Hospital for the months of November and December 2008 was around 150. The number of cases has decreased to a monthly average of 60 since January 2009.

Concerning part (c) of the question, Mr Speaker Sir, in line with established protocol, medical treatment is provided to such cases at the level of hospitals and health centres. Counseling is usually given by doctors and nursing officers to the parents/relatives of patients. Furthermore, preventive measures through continuous health education is carried out in all Government primary schools under our School Health Programme.

However, I wish to thank the hon. Member for raising this issue as well as hon. Dr. Babajee from the same Constituency. This has given me the opportunity to make an assessment of the problem, especially in the Black River region. The Mobile Clinic of my Ministry will carry out screening and will also sensitise the people of the region on preventive measures to avoid the spread of scabies.

Simple measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, like the regular washing of hands with soap and water will help to prevent infestation with scabies.

**Mr Ganoo:** I thank the hon. Minister for his answer. But is the Minister confirming that, in fact, since January there have been no reported cases or no patient has gone to Yves Cantin Community Hospital for treatment for scabies?

**Dr. Jeetah:** No, Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned that there has been an increase for the months of November and December and the figure went down to 60 in general.

**Mr Ganoo:** Does the Minister have figures as from January?

**Dr. Jeetah:** I have got the figures, Mr Speaker, Sir. For February, it was 56 and March 63.

**Mr Ganoo:** The Minister has said that there are preventive measures which are being taken. This is what we call *la gale*, in fact, in our *creole*. Can he think of other measures to sensitise the population in that area of how to prevent them from catching this disease?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I did have a meeting with the technical members of my Ministry; and amongst the measures that we have discussed was to see if we could dispense a special soap that takes care of the disease. But I agree with the hon. Member that this is information that people don't have. It is basic rules of hygiene. People are living with their pets inside the house. We are not teaching our kids to wash their hands. My Ministry has taken measures, and we have set ourselves targets to make sure that we bring down these figures. I hope that we will achieve our goals.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Jhugroo, you have got a supplementary question.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether this outbreak of scabies has been in other regions of Mauritius?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I didn't mention any outbreak; I just mentioned trends, maybe because of November and December where more kids stay at home and I have figures for other regions, if the hon. Member would wish to have it.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member can circulate it.

#### REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR - BUTTER BEANS - IMPORTATION

**(No. B/235) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the importation of butter beans from the Republic of Madagascar, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to if officials of the Corporation negotiated with a group of planters through the Malagasy authorities for the purchase thereof and, if so, indicate –

- (a) when;
- (b) the names of the officials;
- (c) if advance payment to the planters and a guaranteed price of 600 USD per ton, as a hedging transaction, were agreed upon, and
- (d) the agreed contract price.

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2007, the world had experienced an unprecedented shortage of food items which were due *inter alia* to the following –

- (i) severe drought in Australia;
- (ii) unavailability of pulses for export from India, and
- (iii) adverse climatic conditions in Madagascar resulting in poor harvest.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these external factors were beyond our control and this is why prices of imported pulses, including broad beans increased in figure on the local market. In this context, the House will recall that hon. Members highlighted that there was more than 100% increase in the price of pulses. This was indeed a fact in 2007. The Government took the right decision to request STC to look for supply of pulses at reasonable prices.

The STC, accordingly, fielded a mission to the Republic of Madagascar to have discussions with recognised authorities there. Consequently, the STC signed a contract with Millennium Challenge Account and TAMI. The MCA is an organisation set up by Government of Madagascar to manage funds provided by the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which is an American Funding Organisation. The TAMI, which was the supplier, is a

cooperative body involved in the production of butter beans.

With regard to part (a), missions were held in September and October 2007. With regard to part (b), the officials involved in the missions were the General Manager, the Commercial Manager and one Board member who were all mandated by the STC Board. Mr Speaker, Sir, it would be unethical to make public the names of the officers concerned.

With regard to part (c), no hedging transaction was effected. However, an advance payment of euro 50,000 was effected to TAMI for the purchase of seedlings. As regards part (d) of the question, a contract price of euro 653.13 (FOB) per metric ton was agreed upon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me inform the House that through this intervention of the STC on the local market, the price of broad bean which was Rs38 per half kg in 2007 was down to Rs24 and ultimately to Rs12 and, at the same time, avoiding shortage on the local market, to the benefit of the consumers.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister inform the House what is the actual price on the world market now?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is very difficult to know the actual price of the broad bean because it changes

**Mr Ganoo:** As at today or yesterday!

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot say actually, maybe an indicative price of half kg of broad beans on the local market is Rs12. So, you multiply it by 1000 kg.

*(Laughter)*

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister confirm whether, in fact, the price per ton is about 200 euros at the moment?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir the retail price per half kg is Rs12., so, if you multiply it by 200 pounds, it gives you the figure.

**Mr Ganoo:** What is the guaranteed price that the officials of the STC agreed to pay to the MCA?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, at that time, that is, in September 2007, it was 653.13 euro (FOB).

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform us whether, among the officials who went to Madagascar to finalise this deal, Mr Ah Fat was one of them?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker Sir, I just said, that it is not ethical...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Gunness. Order, order, please!

**Mr Gunness:** Can I know from the Minister for how many years the agreement between TAMI and the STC is?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker Sir, it was for 600 metric tonnes.

**Mr Gunness:** My question is not for how many tonnes. For how many years is the agreement?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Agreement! The contract was for 600 metric tonnes, Mr Speaker Sir.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker Sir, why does the hon. Minister not lay on the Table of the Assembly the convention whereby it was agreed to deliver 600 tonnes, the agreement is for two years and the price agreed was 700 euro per metric tonne? I lay it on the Table of the Assembly. Can the Minister confirm it? And this is the agreement.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister - when negotiations were going on at that time - whether there were other suppliers prepared to supply the same beans at 400 euro metric tonne ?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the contract, the price I have was 653.13 euro (FOB). I don't have this figure.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker Sir, I will lay another document under the signature of Mr Somaroah, Executive Director of STC whereby it is said that we have requested quotations from several suppliers in Madagascar and have, up to now, obtained the best offer of 400 euros metric tonne, CIF and he writes it to the president through the MCA. Therefore, can the Minister confirm whether there were negotiations with other planters?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Maybe, Mr Speaker Sir, because at that time, there was a shortage of broad beans on the local market. Maybe the price has been decreased Mr Speaker, Sir, because the price fluctuates, and it is like this.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, order, please!

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker Sir, I am talking of the same period. Can I know whether last year, in 2008, the STC has already advanced 50,000 euros for *semence* as per the agreement as the Minister himself said? Can we know whether they supplied beans to Mauritius in 2008?

**Mr Gowressoo:** No, Mr Speaker, Sir, the supply has not come to Mauritius and that is why we had discussions with the Embassy in Madagascar. I asked Mr Lemaire to look into this matter, because there is the political problem. That is why discussion is ongoing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker Sir, there is a political problem now. We are talking of 2008 and there was an agreement in 2007 for two years. We have paid 50,000 euros for *semence* in advance. How is it that in 2008 we were not provided with the beans?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker Sir, it was for the crop of 2008 that there was an advance payment, but the quality at that time was not good and the broad beans were flooded on the market in Mauritius. Then, why do we import and then it is spoiled? That is why we prefer to leave the supply for this year and negotiations are ongoing to have the money back or the broad beans.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister is talking about the quality of the beans which were supplied in 2007. Can the Minister confirm whether, in the agreement, it is written that officers from the STC will go and check the quality? Will he also say whether officers of the STC went there to check the quality of the beans which the Minister himself is saying was of bad quality and how much money was therefore lost?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker Sir, the hon. Member is talking ...

*(Interruptions)*

The negotiation, that is, the agreement of 2007, was 600,000 tonnes.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, order!

**Mr Gowressoo:** When the broad beans came to Mauritius, they were not of good quality and there were re-negotiations to know what would happen to the supply in Mauritius. They accepted to refund 105,000 euros on that product.

The second issue is about the advance payment of 50,000 euros which we gave to the company and for the seeds also. Then, there was also this advance payment for the crop of 2008, but we have already faced the problem for the crop of 2007, that is, the initial one. How are we going to deal with this problem of broad beans, Mr Speaker Sir?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Ganoo:** Can I ask the hon. Minister if he can confirm that at the time of harvest in 2007, the STC had to make unnecessary expenses, in fact, as its officials had to travel to Madagascar, to inspect the shipment and the actual product, as the Minister rightly says, was mostly rotten and only a small portion of the containers had come to Mauritius?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we surely all remember that an hon. Member came in this august Assembly with a packet of broad beans! What we could, we did at that time? If we do not travel to another country to negotiate, how can we do business, Mr Speaker Sir?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Hon Bodha! Hon. Bodha! Do you have a question? Hurry up, time is running up! Three more questions!

**Mr Jhugroo:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned that there has been an advance payment of 50,000 euros and then he mentioned that he is negotiating for 105,000 euros. Can he clarify this point?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Maybe the hon. Member has not listened well. I said that the sum of 50,000 euros is the advance payment for the new crop and the refund on 600,000 tonnes is another issue. These are two different things, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon Gunness, last question!

**Mr Gunness:** I will put a double-barrelled question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I know from the Minister whether the STC wrote to Madagascar saying that it was of poor quality? Is the Minister in presence of the letter where it is said, I quote –

*"(...) Je souhaite mettre en valeur les points ci-après, les agents successifs et représentants de STC à Madagascar ont cautionné la conformité des produits par leurs contrôles réguliers et constants sur place et par le paiement des produits à chaque livraison".*

In the last paragraph it is said –

*"Pendant la période où TAMI a effectué cette première exportation auprès de la STC Maurice, cette dernière a également importé des pois de cap à travers d'autres fournisseurs malgaches".*

Therefore, is the Minister in presence of this? Can we know at the same time - since this is the last question - whether the two other representatives were Mr Ah Fat and Mr Ali?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker Sir, at this point in time, I don't have the letter, but I will check with the STC. I can assure the House that the company has already accepted to refund 105,000 euros and we are looking into the matter. We had discussions with the Embassy to see what is going on, Mr Speaker Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over! Let me inform the House that Parliamentary Question Nos. B/237 and B/238 have been withdrawn.

**MAURITIUS TELECOM - MR R. R. &  
Mr I. C.**

**(No. B/236) Mr N. Bodha ( First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the conflict opposing Mr R.R. and Mr I. C. to the management of the Mauritius Telecom, he will state if he has received a letter dated 31 March 2009, in



connection therewith, from the France Telecom.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **ANAHITA WORLD CLASS SANCTUARY-BEAU CHAMP - TAXI LICENCES**

**(No. B/237) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the National Transport Authority has issued notice for the granting of Public Service Vehicle (Taxi) Licences on transfer to operate from the Anahita World Class Sanctuary-Beau Champ and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to if many surrounding localities have been omitted from the list, indicating the remedial measures that will be taken.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **VERDUN - TERRE ROUGE ROAD PROJECT - CONTRACT**

**(No. B/238) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Verdun-Terre Rouge Road project, he will state –

- (a)* the name of the contractor;
- (b)* the contract value;
- (c)* when works are likely to start;
- (d)* the estimated value of the project by –
  - (i)* the Consultant, and
  - (ii)* the Road Development Authority, and
- (e)* if Government has resorted to direct negotiations.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **MOTION**

##### **SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)**

**The Deputy Prime Minister, (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** 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 Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval)** rose and seconded.

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### **PUBLIC BILLS**

##### *First Reading*

*On motion made and seconded, the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Bill (No. III of 2009) was read a first time*

##### *Second Reading*

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Additional Stimulus Package (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. I of 2009).*

*Question again proposed.*

**Mr C. Sayed-Hossen (Fourth Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE):** Mr Speaker, Sir, when we are discussing the Additional Stimulus Package (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, every single hon. Member of this House knows that we are talking about a financial crisis which has hit the whole world, which affects a financial

system which is unbridled and which has to do more with financial thuggery and highway robbers. And, of course, we are talking about the crisis of the economy. Obviously, this is neither the place nor the time to discuss the origins or the how's and why's of the crisis. But, I think we agree that most, if not all, economists and economic observers, at least, concur on two things, as the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has implied in his speech; first, nobody can assess the final impact of this crisis, and nobody can forecast the duration of this crisis.

At the level of major world economies, the American, British, French, German, Indian and Chinese economy, nobody seems to know how to address this crisis. What's the solution? Nobody knows, Mr Speaker, Sir. However, most major and responsible Governments agree that, at least, Governments have to intervene in business, in industry and in finance. This is what this Bill, introduced by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister & Minister of Finance, is all about.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance has quite extensively explained the technical details of this Bill and how it aims at addressing the threats to our national economy. I will not canvass the same points, and will restrict myself to a few remarks of a general nature and comment on some of the points raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and hon. Jugnauth.

First of all, I must congratulate hon. Jugnauth for having achieved the singular feat of having only *consacré* 5% of his speech to this Bill. 95% of his speech was on 3<sup>1/2</sup> years of economic management. Among others, I will only comment on a few points, Mr Speaker, Sir. He mentioned the private sector bias of this Government. We all know - as well as this House and the whole country - that there has been a national consensus which has evolved over time, over years, over decades, around an economic system based on private property and private initiative; not a collectivist economy, nor a State - driven economy. Hon. Jugnauth supports his statement by arguing on lines according to which, and I quote: "*des cadeaux ont été faits au secteur privé*".

Mr Speaker, Sir, let's have a look at a few of the facts. First of all, on depreciation - what he calls *des dépréciations massives de la roupie*. We all know that, over the past few years, with proper monetary regulation and proper monetary policy, depreciation/appreciation is linked to market and regulatory mechanisms and is the direct result of economic performance. The depreciation of the rupee in 2005, 2006, and 2007 is the direct result of the catastrophic mismanagement of the economy between 2000 and 2005. I am going to recall the statement made by the then Prime Minister, hon. Bérenger, to the effect that *la crise est sans précédent*, and the statement made by hon. Cuttaree that we are losing jobs *à une vitesse vertigineuse*.

Hon. Jugnauth mentioned that this Government is handing over Rs5 billion, *cinq milliards à l'industrie sucrière pour financer le VRS 2. C'est une triste plaisanterie, M. le président!* Hon. Jugnauth says that his Government - at least, the Government of which he was part - was at the origin of the reform in the sugar sector, and God protects our country that they were not at the conclusion of that reform. Otherwise, it would have been a complete catastrophe. We should not forget that at the root of the VRS 2 was the MAAS, that is, the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy, which was drafted by the then Government, by consultants chosen by the then Government, under conditions defined by the then Government. The hon. Member was Minister of Finance and hon. Bérenger, presently Leader of the Opposition, was Prime Minister. We should not forget that. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is this Government and, indeed, this Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navin Ramgoolam, who revisited, with the assistance of the then Minister of Agriculture, hon. Dr. Boolell, the reform project, readapted the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy, and retailored it to serve the interest of the country and of the people. The hon. Prime Minister personally negotiated with the sugar cane sector to ensure that the reform benefits not only the sugar barons, whom the original MAAS was planning to convert from sugar barons into super sugar barons, but also benefits labourers, artisans, small planters and the country in general.

No need to recall, but I would still do it; these negotiations led to the sugar cane sector making major concessions, namely –

- ♦ The opening of up to 35% of shareholding in factories, refineries and distilleries to small planters and other stakeholders.
- ♦ Opening up of shareholding in power producing plants linked to sugar cane and, this is on, despite the unfortunate and unfounded doubts expressed by hon. Jugnauth.

- ◆ The deep review of the conditions of the *métayers*.

We should not forget that *métayers* constitute between two and four generations of very small planters having operated between 25 and 100 years on leased lands, originally very difficult to toil, rocky lands, lands with very difficult access, and marshy lands. They have toiled those lands to bring them to fertility. This review, which the hon. Prime Minister achieved, is giving the *métayers* dignity and putting them on their way to economic well-being. Of course, we should not forget the 2000 *arpents* of land which the MSPA members have ceded to Government for agricultural development and social housing, not including lands, of course, which will be ceded for public infrastructure development.

The hon. Member has also mentioned the increase in the price of sugar on the local market. We have to be responsible and honest - intellectually honest, at least - Mr Speaker, Sir. Every single Member in this House knows that we had and we have to render the sugar cane sector competitive and costs had to be cut. Everybody knows also that the subsidisation of the price of sugar on the local market constituted a heavy cost. We have to bear in mind that the increase in the selling price of sugar not only benefited the corporate sugar sector, but is also benefiting 30,000 small planters who were also subsidising the whole of the Mauritian population in terms of sugar. So, private sector bias, Mr Speaker, Sir! We have always walked our talk, Sir. In our political/electoral manifesto, we stated very clearly that this Government would be working towards the invigorating of the private sector.

In our electoral manifesto, we state very clearly that this Government will be working towards the revigorating of the private sector and, of course, broadening the base of this private sector and we reiterate the same intentions in the Government Programme, read by His Excellency, the President of the Republic in July 2005. We have never hidden our own espousal of the national consensus on the economy being driven by the private sector. We cannot be hypocrites, Mr Speaker, Sir. We do not wear Yves St Laurent suits when we are in office and black leather jackets when we are in the Opposition. This Prime Minister is known for his genuineness, his consistency and his coherence.

I will just mention one other point raised by hon. Pravind Jugnauth, what he talked of a certain committee on public infrastructure, - if I quote him properly - co-chaired by a public officer and member of the private sector. I took the pain to check that. Hon. Pravind Jugnauth mentioned this in his speech: *ce que je trouve incroyable, c'est cette situation*, that this committee be co-chaired by a public officer and a member of the private sector and that, in the absence of the public officer, it is the member of the private sector who chairs that committee. My information - I have checked this and I assert and I state - is that it is totally irresponsible to assert would-be facts that are totally erroneous and based on totally unfounded information. My information is that there is no private sector representative at all on this committee, leave alone a private sector member acting as co-chair. Of course, I will end with that, at least, on this chapter. Hon. Pravind Jugnauth also mentioned that this Government only left, and I quote "*des miettes pour le petit peuple*" and while stating that, he conveniently forgets a number of things, a number of points, among so many others: reduction in direct taxation, whereby the new income tax regime removes from the tax net more than 80% of previous taxpayers; the massive increase in salaries granted by the PRB Award last year; the maintenance and increase in subsidies on basic commodities, in spite of massive increase in their costs and substantial increase in the budget for public health, education, and social security. He forgets, conveniently again, that the NRPT actually only affects the very upper echelon of dwelling owners.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now come to a few remarks made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has mentioned, a number of times, that this Bill is a *fourre-tout*, that it is only a repackaging of old measures; he has gone along that line for about twenty minutes and then he mentioned *une nouveauté*. We have the impression that the hon. Leader of Opposition is the embodiment of Marxian dialectics, Mr Speaker, Sir. He contains his own statements, his own thesis and his own contradiction and antithesis. I am at pains to see which is which. And he says: "*La nouveauté, c'est cette décision du gouvernement d'utiliser l'argent du public pour aider les firmes privées*". Let us be honest, Mr Speaker, Sir, in a very strict sense of the word, yes, we are using public money to help the private sector to survive. But then, we have to see what the private companies represent for the national economy. They represent economic activities, direct and indirect activities, with ripple effects and peripheral benefits. They represent jobs, again direct and indirect. Now and later, they represent economic growth and, by definition, an enhancement of the

standard of living of this country; they represent profits; and from profits, this Government or any other Government derives taxes, and with taxes we finance public assets and public services.

Private companies, Mr Speaker, Sir, represent nothing less than the lifeline of our economic survival. But then the hon. Leader of the Opposition asserts that this Government is fighting for the survival of private companies, as if this was wrong. But then, this is any Government's duty, it is any Government's responsibility, it is any Government's mandate; and ultimately, it is the final rationality of any Government to do that, because on this depends precisely the economic well-being of the population. Let us compare and contrast, Mr Speaker, Sir, the use of public money by this Government and the use of public money by the previous Government. The epitome of the use of public money by the then Government or, at least, its approach to the use of public money is the Illovo deal. In that particular case, there was the possibility for the Government, between 2000 and 2005, to constitute a massive fund, un *trésor de guerre*, through which they could finance the building, development, upgrading and maintenance of schools, of hospitals and of much needed infrastructure and they could constitute a big land bank to address such issues as housing needs and agricultural diversification. Instead of this, Mr Speaker, Sir, the then Government bypassed the legal advice of the State Law Office, sought and retained the advice of private counsel and the result is that public money, which ought to have gone into the public coffers, through mechanisms such as the land transfer tax, registration duty and land conversion tax, they used public money, around Rs7 billion, to enrich one consortium, Mr Speaker, Sir, not for their survival, but for their fattening, not to prepare them to create employment but to put them in a still better position to cash in on land ownership and to continue and go further in speculation on land.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't wish to teach lessons, but I think one needs to be responsible. Such a statement as 'using public money to finance public companies to survive', smacks of demagoguery and it is nothing less than political opportunism, Mr Speaker, Sir! When you are in the Opposition: "*travailleurs avant tout*"; side in with the under-privileged categories. When you are in power: you send the SSU against the same *travailleurs* and you hand out Rs7 billion to five families and you harass and stress 125,000 senior citizens for their hard-earned pension. Providing support through public funds, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the private sector to finance them, to provide public sector finance is no longer a matter of choice. We have to face that reality. It is no longer a matter of choice, but a matter of survival, not only for private companies, but for employees. It has to do with the survival of families and children who depend on the salaries of their parents.

(Interruptions)

**Mr Speaker:** Silence!

**Mr Sayed-Hossen:** Silence is gold! Mr Speaker, Sir, refusing through demagoguery and sheer political opportunism to recognise the need for such financial support not only smacks of demagoguery, it is tantamount to recklessness and we should not forget that recklessness is not simply a matter of attitude. It is not only a lack of sense of responsibility; it is a form of intent. And the consequences of realising such intent are not only expressed in abstract statistics. I would like to quote Nancy Gibbs. She writes: "The damage caused by such recklessness is measured in families disfigured by a sudden fear of the future and parents haunted by the debts we are leaving our kids." Mr Speaker, Sir, we should all be responsible and agree that there is an absolute necessity - it is not even a matter of choice - to assist the productive sector; and in case hon. Members on the other side of the House have not noticed, we are facing a crisis, a crisis which is not of our doing.

Ours is an economy, which is massively and predominantly determined by exogenous factors, which determination, itself, is linked to our lack of a critical mass. We all know that. We are a small country, we have a small population, we have a small market, and we have a very low internal demand. Over and above that, we have a quasi-absence of natural resources. Consequence of that, we depend very heavily on imports. We have a massive import bill and we have a heavy dependence on exports, on foreign currency, on foreign markets for all our production: agricultural, industrial, services and tourism.

As a matter of comparison, Mr Speaker, Sir, our tourism depends up to 98% on foreign tourists. Indian tourism depends only to the tune of 8% on foreign tourists. And, of course, once our markets, mainly Europe and the US, are hit by the crisis, we are going to suffer. So, shocks and crises in our principal markets, US and EU, directly affect the sustainability of our enterprises. No responsible Government can afford that the sustainability of our enterprises be threatened. A responsible Government has to act, to preserve, reinforce



and maintain that sustainability. And this is what the Additional Stimulus Package and this Bill is all about. This is what this Bill is doing; and the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has mentioned lengthily in his speech the conditions that are attached to financial support to companies. Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, let's compare and contrast!

We have said that the Additional Stimulus Package is not only about financial support to the private sector. This is only one part of the story. The Minister of Finance has described very extensively all the mechanisms contained in this Bill, providing support to private sector finance, support production, incentivise export, contribute to drive demand, maintain income support and drive infrastructure development to create jobs and to support demand.

Now, the Leader of the Opposition calls that a *fourre-tout*! What he calls a *fourre-tout* is actually a holistic and integrated approach. Again, contradiction, Mr Speaker, Sir! And the Leader of the Opposition goes on, stating a long list of problems, threatening different sectors, but we know this; and this is exactly what this Bill is all about. Because we have problems, because the productive sector is facing numerous problems, the Minister of Finance has introduced this Bill so that the productive sector be supported.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again, if we carry out a very simple exercise of compare and contrast, we will come to the conclusion, I mean it is not a conclusion, it is a fact. By June 2005, the economy of this country, under the then Government, was on its way to abysmal failure. Growth was in the doldrums. Even in the booming sector like tourism - booming in other countries - the Government between 2000 and 2005 lost 48,500 jobs. Investor-confidence was at its lowest.

Hon. Jayen Cuttaree himself said: '*nous perdons des emplois à une vitesse vertigineuse*' and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, then Prime Minister, said: '*la crise est sans précédent. Nous sommes en état d'urgence économique*'. But there was no crisis in the world then, Mr Speaker Sir. The world economic environment was positive, crisis was only here and actually it was not a crisis. It was a crisis of management, it was a crisis of *savoir-faire* and the crisis of *savoir-faire* is still present among Members on one of the other sides of this House from which this discourse comes.

Listening to what the Leader of the Opposition had to tell us last week, we have the impression that - I think it was mentioned somewhere - '*Le MMM a la solution pour faire face à cette crise économique internationale*'. Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2004, conditions were good. The international environment was good. The Government was led by the Leader of the Opposition now and he brought the country to near chaos and ruin. And now they have the solution to the world economic crisis! Where legions of economists, battalions of highly qualified civil servants, armadas of social and political scientists are still groping in the dark, they have the solutions. Well, if they do, let them come forward. Come forward with proposals and share ideas! We all agree that this is a matter of national interest. Why wait until they come to power? They might wait for a very long time. Let them do like we did between 2000 and 2005. In the Labour party, Mr Speaker, Sir, we constantly, systematically and regularly dissected our economy; we dissected our society; we revisited our development model; we revisited our social model; we rethought our social system and we systematically, through the press, expressed our ideas to public appreciation and to public scrutiny so much so that - I think it was in April 2005 Budget presented by the then Government - a number of our own ideas were included in that particular Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on that particular side of the House, as we can see, we find not only a political opportunism, political demagoguery, but total and absolute intellectual bankruptcy, clothed, dressed up and wrapped up in the garb of would-be defence of *travailleurs*, *travailleurs avant tout*. With such recklessness, Mr Speaker, Sir and such lack of responsibility, sure there will be no *travailleurs* left because there will be no enterprises left.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the key word is restarting the trade flows. "Times Magazine" in an article on 30 March 2009, under the signature of *Peter Gumbel* writes, I quote a very small passage -

"Behind the stomach-churning drop in the world economy is a factor that governments have largely ignored: a slump in trade. The flow of imports and exports has actually contracted more dramatically than the world economy as a whole, because its lifeblood, private sector trade finance - I repeat, its lifeblood, private



sector trade finance - has dried up. This is fixable, since most governments have export-credit organisations dedicated to trade finance. Governments should instruct them to jump-start trade flows until private sector financiers return.”

I repeat, the article says that this is a factor that Governments have largely ignored. This is precisely what this Government is doing, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is exactly what this Bill is all about: providing trade finance to buttress the economy; and it has been doing that over the last months to ensure the capacity to produce and to export at competitive rates, to ensure the supply of foreign exchange to foot our essential import bills.

The terms of the equation for the overall objective, Mr Speaker, Sir, are very simple: maintain and increase export earnings. This is a *passage obligé* of any economic policy. You cannot have *le beurre et l'argent du beurre*, Mr Speaker, Sir. *On ne peut pas faire une omelette non plus sans casser les oeufs.*

This Bill addresses 24 major pieces of legislation and there are 50 major changes. And the Leader of the Opposition says: ‘*rien de nouveau*, repackaging, *fourre-tout*. The objective of this Bill is to make Mauritius even more investor and business-friendly. This Bill is looking beyond the present crisis, Mr Speaker, Sir. Simultaneously, it is addressing immediate short-term problems linked specifically to the present crisis. So this Bill is about crisis management. At the same time, because it is so broad sweeping, because it addresses so many issues which have to do with productivity, with enhancing the friendliness of our environment, it is preparing the country for calmer waters, that is, the post crisis period, as can be ascertained by the very broad spectrum of the measures included.

I can only conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, by congratulating the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the daring and the vision which characterise this piece of legislation.

I thank you very much, Mr Speaker Sir.

*At 4.20 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 4.50 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.*

**Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I wish to reply to some of the points which have been raised by hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen, some remarks which he made on the speech delivered by hon. Pravind Jugnauth. In fact, he said that only 5% of his speech concerned the Bill and 95% to three years of mismanagement of the economy. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why shouldn't we talk of this? The debate is broad based and, if we look at the Additional Stimulus Package document, 95% concern the state of the economy. I think hon. Jugnauth was right when he talked about the state of the economy. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when hon. Jugnauth was not yet in this august Assembly, I intervened in this House on the last three Budgets, which had been presented by the Minister of Finance, and I have had the opportunity to tell the House that the economic policy being adopted is filling the coffers of the economic elite, and that the country and the population are the big losers. Time and official statistics are proving that we are right. Hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen also mentioned, still with reference to the speech delivered by hon. Jugnauth, gifts to the private sector. In fact, hon. Jugnauth highlighted the multi billion gifts that have been obtained by the private sector and, ever since the Minister of Finance came with the document ‘Setting the Stage for Robust Growth’, and going through his three Budgets, it has been only stimulus and stimulus to the private sector. Hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen mentioned private sector bias; he said that we are wrong. I will prove to him that we are right. *Il n'a qu'à attendre, surtout que, lui-même, a présidé un comité technique suivant l'accord MSPA/gouvernement. Et je dirai, avec les amendements que nous sommes en train d'apporter au SIE Act aujourd'hui, comment il y a ce private sector bias.* He also mentioned the price of sugar. We are right when we mention the price of sugar! We know what is the share of the big producers! But do we know what is the share of the small planters? It has not been clearly defined. Up to now, nobody knows! And still, when hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen talks about the NRPT, *j'ai comme l'impression qu'il n'a pas les pieds sur terre.* Time and again, we have said in this House that the middle class people are being ripped off. *Je pense qu'il n'a qu'à attendre pour savoir ce que j'ai à dire sur le Bill.* On this score, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say that, while it has been stimulus to the private sector on the one hand, on the other hand, the population has been scorched to poverty, with a CSO clearly indicating that there has been an impoverishment, with the middle class badly

affected. Now, the Minister is providing additional stimulus through his Additional Stimulus Package and the provisions of the Bill before us, with the intent - I emphasise on that - to shoring up economic performance. From 'Setting the Stage for Robust Growth' to shoring up economic performance, it has been words and words to impress only. But we know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that four years have elapsed. Let us see the results!

We were supposed, according to the Minister, to register an economic growth of 7% in 2008, but not even 6% which he flagged could be attained. The ripples of the international financial crisis have not yet hit the economy fully and, already, we are recording catastrophic data for 2008. The current account deficit has tripled since 2005 and, for 2008, it is abnormally high at 11% of GDP. This is alarming and may lead to the bankruptcy of the economy, given that we are yet to feel the full effects of the crisis. The growth rate of the economy has been revised down to 2% for 2009. But, on the basis of the figures for 2008, this may turn out to be still lower. The Budget deficit will be surging to new records, as above 6%; public debt has increased to 65% of GDP.

The budget deficit will be surging to new records as above 6%. Public debt has increased to 65% of GDP, the Stimulus Package and the losses at the STC and Air Mauritius, DBM, NTC and the continuing wastage at other para-statals are piling another load of debt on the debt wagon already too heavy for the Mauritian economy to pull. There are crude facts, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and these facts tantamount to failure. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister has entitled the Bill the "Additional Stimulus Package Bill", using the word 'additional' to try to convey to us that he was farsighted and that is why he had in his last Budget created six funds to give a boost to economic activities in the country. In fact, what he has been doing is that he has been announcing big capital investments since 2006. Yet, year in, year out, capital investments did not materialise. So much so, that in 2007/2008, the Capital Budget was grossly under spent. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are not saying that. He, himself, acknowledged this and he has said clearly in his document. First, let me say what he says about the NID Fund. He says: "We have already committed some half a billion rupees." Regarding the Food Security Fund, he states: "Land would be prepared." In the livestock sector, he says: "Emphasis will be on schemes, for beef, goat, etc." In the fisheries sector, he says: "Proposals have been made." Very vague, indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! Regarding the Local Infrastructure Fund, once again, he says: "Rs250 m. have already been committed. On the Social Housing Development Fund, Rs300 m. have been committed." Committed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, does not mean that action has been taken and projects are materialising. What I want to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that those funds have not been spent as yet. They have only been committed, seven months have elapsed since the creation of these funds and nothing concrete has happened. And now that money which has been earmarked to be spent over a period of five years will be spent over a period of two years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what can we expect? 70% of the Stimulus Package goes to the construction sector. We can see at page 12 of the document that Government firmly believes that the biggest boost he can give to the economy over the next two years is in the area of public expenditure on infrastructure. However, we note from the last year's figures that the growth in the construction sector will be only 2%. Now, front loading public infrastructure can have a multiplier effect, but provided certain conditions are met. If I take the example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of the Central Procurement Board, procedures for the allocation of contract by the Central Procurement Board, with the number of projects in hand, already the Central Procurement Board is having hiccups in the approval and allocation of projects. What will happen when the Board will be over-flooded with examination of tender documents for so many huge projects? There will be bottlenecks, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Secondly, the Minister has, for the past three years, been talking of fast track procedures. We have heard so many committees being put in place so that there are fast tracks. But we know that this has not given the desired results. And, once again, in this document, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is stated that committees have been set up to address weaknesses in public project implementation. What has been done during the past three years? What has been done at the level of those fast track committees? What has happened if now in the document the Minister is confessing and is saying that it is now that he is addressing weaknesses in public project implementation.

Thirdly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not at all underestimating the capabilities of the staff of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, but the management of such big projects as mentioned in the Stimulus Package requires additional human resources. As at to date, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure has not deemed it fit to have project managers to oversee the implementation of big projects. What will happen again with so many big

projects in the pipeline?

Fourthly, contracts for large projects of national importance, and even medium size ones, are most of the time allocated to foreign firms, especially, in case where soft loans or grants are involved. The firms concerned import labour to the detriment of our local people. The document, at page 27, mentions that a higher preference margin will be given to local and foreign companies employing Mauritian workers for all public sector construction projects. What does that entail? The document, furthermore, only says and I quote –

“(...) urges the private sector to adopt a similar approach over the coming two-year period.”

This, in itself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, reveals that besides only urging the private sector to do so, there is no other guarantee that imported labour will not be resorted to. For all the reasons I have just mentioned, I believe that implementation of projects in the construction sector will take its time if these issues are not addressed promptly and also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because of the absorption capacity of the economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to direct interventions, the Minister has stated, in reply to a Parliamentary Question last week, that already 1,700 jobs have been saved at World Knits under the Mauritius approach, which implies that half of the financing comes from bankers and shareholders and the other half comes from Government. Since it is only now that Government is coming to this House for the appropriate legislation, for an authorised officer to have access to certain data, I wish to ask the Minister whether the company concerned has opened its books to Government. This is a very important issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since public funds are involved.

Can the hon. Minister say whether Government will be able to question the salaries, the fringe benefits and the bonuses of top management of that particular company? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have, in the past, seen *la réticence du secteur privé* to disclose information. Indeed, this has been a very sensitive issue. What will happen, now that public funds are involved?

Regarding representatives on Board of private companies, can I ask the hon. Minister why he has stated, in his document, that Government may - he says ‘may’ - appoint a representative to the Board where it deems this helpful? In my view, this should have been a *sine qua non* condition, since Government is taking a risk with public funds. The Minister himself said, in reply to a Parliamentary Question last week, that Government is taking a risk with public funds. I think there should have been a *sine qua non* condition for Government to have a representative on the Board of management of those private companies, for the sake of transparency.

My observation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the case of World Knits, is that public funds have been disbursed, but the mechanism for tight control has not been set up. That is why I gauge from the Minister’s reply to last week’s Parliamentary Question. We are all for saving enterprises, preserving jobs, *mais il doit y avoir des garde-fous*.

In addition, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have noted some remarks which have been made by the private sector. I mentioned here, recently, the statement made by Mr Ahmed Parkar, the former Chairman of the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce & Industry - he is now the new president of MEXA - who said, and I quote –

“*Si on fait un tie-up entre l’argent alloué et la préservation de 100% d’emplois, cela ne va pas marcher.*”

He said it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. On such an important issue, I think it is imperative that both Government and the private sector see eye to eye through a mechanism which groups all parties concerned. I mean, Government, the private sector and the trade unions. As hon. Jugnauth had stated in his statement, Mr Speaker, Sir, *légiférer pour la préservation d’emplois*.

Now, I come to the amendments that have been made in the SIE Act, which are before us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Minister has taken this opportunity to amend the SIE Act, once again, in favour of big sugar producers, but he has not deemed it fit to restore the equilibrium for the small planting community. When I intervened on amendments, which were brought to the SIE Act in 2007, I stated that, out of the Rs10,000 billion which should be obtained from the European Union for the period 2007-2013, as much as Rs7.5 billion would be dished out to the private sector in terms of subsidies to finance their restructuring programme.

Moreover, fiscal concessions were being offered to the sugar estates in terms of land conversion and other tax exemptions, amounting to about Rs6 billion.

Recently, they have obtained additional revenue- and will continue to get additional revenue - by the increase in the price of sugar on the local market. Thus, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we can see, in clear terms, the share of big sugar producers from the funds which had been obtained from the European Union. Today, we see that amendments are being brought once more to the SIE Act to provide more concessions to the big sugar producers on land conversion and on land transfer tax. If, as the Minister of Finance says, there is a situation of *force majeure* and that Government has to come to the rescue of big sugar producers, why can't he take this opportunity to restore the equilibrium with regard to the small planting community? Has the Minister taken cognizance of the quantum of land which is being abandoned by the small planters? Has the Minister taken into consideration *que le coût des intrants* has become too expensive and prohibitive for the small planting community? Where is the share of the small planters? Besides the measures mentioned by hon. Jugnauth, restoring of the exemption on the first 50 tonnes of sugar, the restoration of full duty-free concessions on 4x4 cabs, I will make an appeal to the hon. Minister to define clearly the share of the small planting community from the funds which have been obtained from the European Union. And, in his next Budget, I would appeal to him to reintroduce subsidies on fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides and pesticides. *Sinon, M. le président, ce sera la mort pure et simple de la communauté des petits planteurs.*

Lastly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to comment on the amendment which is being made today to the Twelfth Schedule, Part II of the SIE Act, which clause 23 of the Bill proposes to amend. *Et, là, je dois vous dire que ce n'est pas la cerise sur le gâteau. Là, c'est le diamant dans la couronne. Incroyable, mais vrai, cet amendement!* A stimulus package is given to boost the economy - we know that - either immediately, within a lapse of time and let's say within a certain frame of time, from three to six months. With the amendment which is being brought, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a stimulus is being given to the big bosses of the sugar industry, but for a boost which is forecasted after five years, and that also any time after five years! It could be ten years, 25 years or 40 years. Can we accept this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Let me explain. And here, I wish to say that it is extremely important for all Members of this House to understand *la portée de cet amendement*, especially all the Ministers who have approved that this Bill be brought to the House when it went through Cabinet, although I concede, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the SIE Act is a very complex legislation, and that with the very many amendments which have been brought to this legislation, it may be difficult for somebody who is not familiar with the legislation to put the bits and pieces together. It is like a puzzle - the big chunks. But I have been able to put the bits and pieces together, and let me put it to this House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to explain that in clear terms. In the usual course of things, and as specified at section 8 of the Twelfth Schedule of the SIE Act –

“Any authority for land conversion lapses after five years if the conversion has not been carried out in the manner specified in the authority granted.”

This is clear. It lapses after five years if it has not been carried out in the manner which has been specified in the authority granted.

Section 8 says, I quote –

“(...) subject to paragraph 9 any applicant shall, within a period of five years after having been granted authority for land conversion, carry out the conversion in the manner specified in the Authority granted, failing which the authority shall lapse automatically”.

Now, let us look at the amendment which is being brought today. What does it state? The amendment says: “paragraph 8 shall not apply”. And the amendment reads –

“where land conversion is for the purpose of a large investment project deemed by the Minister to be in the economic interest of Mauritius and approved as such by Cabinet.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is much, much more than opening the door very wide. Let alone the fact that the term itself, “the large investment project” has not been defined at all anywhere in the legislation. This is very serious, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This amendment now should not stand alone. This amendment, Mr



Deputy Speaker, Sir, should be read along with what is stipulated in section 29 of the SIE Act, which defines instances where land conversion tax is not payable. This includes, *inter alia*, where –

- (i) an application is granted for the purpose of an approved housing scheme in favour of workers employed by an employer who owns a sugar factory or more than 100 *arpents* of agricultural land;
- (ii) it concerns VRS;
- (iii) it concerns the construction of industrial estates, business parks, and shopping malls;
- (iv) the construction of information technology parks;
- (v) the construction of hotels, setting up of golf course and other tourist facilities;
- (vi) the expansion of an industrial enterprise;
- (vii) the setting up of a power station, etc.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir those are instances where land convention tax is not payable. What do we consider as large investment projects? I consider the above, as large investment projects in the economic interest of Mauritius and they are exempted from land conversion tax. When this is linked to the amendment which is before this House, what does that mean? It means that big sugar producers, after benefiting from exemption from the land conversion tax by millions, by billions, they will be able to keep their projects in abeyance *sine die*; they will be - I repeat - able to keep their projects in abeyance *sine die*. They can use this authority given any time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after five years, any time after ten years, any time after twenty five years, any time after forty years without any time frame.

*M. le président, plus capitaliste que cela tu meurs!* This is the biggest gift that Government could have given to big sugar producers; and I cannot understand, I am sorry to say, but I think hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing was not in Mauritius, maybe she should have raised her voice on this issue. I know she has raised her voice on other issues; and I am sure if she had noticed this she would have raised her voice on this issue.

(Interruptions)

I am asking her to give due consideration to this. Now that she is here, it is time for her to do so, through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think it is time to look at this piece of legislation. *Et ce n'est pas fini, M. le président!* Linked to this is another scandalous situation. And when I put the bits and pieces together, the big chunks, as hon. Jugnauth said, I understand more and more why *métayers* are being coerced to relinquish their rights on lands which they have occupied for 60 years, for 100 years. Hon. Sayed-Hossen has just mentioned the situation of *métayer,s* but what has he done for *métayers*? I am asking myself the question and I will explain why. So much has been said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the deal between the Government and the MSPA. And what does the deal state on the question of *métayers*? I'll quote what the deal says, I quote –

“Amongst the solutions to be considered so as to improve the situation of *métayers* are –

- (i) the possibility of sale of non-strategic land to *métayers* and,
- (ii) the positive review of the rental formula.”

In a PNQ, last year, the then Minister of Agriculture, hon. Dr. Boolell, stated that, and I quote –

“For the first time *métayers* are being catered for. For far too long their interest has been almost at the whims and caprices of those from whom they lease land. My Ministry has decided, together with MSPA, to set up a committee to establish a framework with regard to the situation of *métayers*.”

I should say the intentions were good, let us accept that the intentions were good. The Minister of Agriculture then had good intentions. But, what has happened? There was a Technical Committee which was chaired by hon. Sayed-Hossen and he came up with certain recommendations. Do you know what they were, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Let me mention some because I can't mention everything. They were totally different from what was in the agreement. Totally different! Amongst others, he made the following recommendation. First, where the *métayer* holds strategic land - I would ask hon. Members to listen - he has to swap this land for other non-strategic sugar land.

(Interruptions)



I have the report with me. This has been confirmed in a meeting; I will come to that. It says that where the *métayer* holds strategic land, he has to swap this land for other non-strategic sugar land.

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please, let the hon. Member make her speech!

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** And he says that if the *métayer* does not agree, he has to relinquish his *droit de métayage* against a compensation. C'est blanc sur noir! Je peux vous dire ce qui figure dans le rapport. I got it from the Mauritius Sugar Authority ...

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please, let the hon. lady speak

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** And let me say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the *métayers*, after this technical committee was set up, they were been left to themselves.

There has not been a single meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture. They have been left at the mercy of those sugar estates; and what happened, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the *métayers* - I take from my constituency - of Bel-Ombre and now the *métayers* of St. Félix have come to see me. They didn't know what to do and I took the initiative of asking the Mauritius Sugar Authority to fix a meeting.

(Interruptions)

In fact, a meeting was held - I am sorry the Minister of Agriculture is not there, he can check - at the seat of the Mauritius Sugar Authority in the absence of the Ministry of Agriculture, but where were present the sugar producers; the MSPA came, there were their representatives, the Sugar Authority was there, I was there, the *métayers* were there. And it was at this committee, once again, that the big sugar producers said that this is the agreement we had under the Technical Committee of hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen.

(Interruptions)

Let me say! They have coerced these poor *métayers* in accepting to relinquish their strategic land.

(Interruptions)

The big sugar producers! Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the *métayers* have been left to themselves. What should they do? You can check, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The notes of meeting are there at the Mauritius Sugar Authority.

(Interruptions)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Dr. Boolell, please!

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** It was held two weeks back. The Minister of Agriculture can check. I was present at this meeting; and the *métayers* have been coerced to relinquish their strategic land; and, in fact, they have had to relinquish against compensation. And what compensation! Because, in fact, they were taking the average of sugar production over nine years! What is still worse is that they were taking 1999 as one of the years to work out an average. Since I was there, I know what the situation was in 1999. I said that that was a drought year and we cannot accept 1999, and, in fact, they have had to give up on this issue. They are giving, based on this production, 25% bonus. They don't want to move on this issue. It is peanuts now which are being given. If the Minister of Agriculture can check, those *métayers* have already signed - it's too late - an agreement with Bel Ombre Sugar Estate and those of St. Félix Sugar Estate are now in the process of signing this agreement also.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why am I mentioning this? Precisely because it is those bits and pieces which are being put together to come with this piece of legislation today! The big sugar estates, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are getting a bonanza on the back of these *métayers*, because they are recouping their strategic land from the

*métayers*; they are giving peanuts as compensation. Now, it is crystal clear that the sugar estates want to get their land back so as to convert this land without paying the land conversion tax and keeping this land - *faire de la spéculation* - without developing it for as long as they want. This is what this piece of legislation says, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we are saying that the authority for land conversion will not lapse after five years. This is what they are doing.

*Et l'honorable Cader Sayed-Hossen disait tout à l'heure qu'il a défendu les métayers ! Mais il ne faut pas faire de la démagogie !* The Minister has to justify why he has come with this amendment. He has to justify. *Parce que si le ministre voulait faire des projets, il voulait voir des projets se concrétiser, il aurait dû faire le contraire. Tandis que là, on donne un stimulus, pour faire quoi ?* We give the stimulus today and the result will come in 40 years! I just can't understand! *Je vois cela scandaleux, M. le président. Le ministre, encore une fois, s'est rangé du côté du secteur privé.* I hope now, after what I have explained, that Members of the Government realise *quelle est cette largesse extrême qu'on est en train de faire au secteur privé. Je demanderai au ministre des finances de revoir sa copie là-dessus. On ne peut pas accepter. La situation est inacceptable !* Moi, je dis que quiconque n'a pas le droit de s'associer à cette décision. Je regrette que le Premier ministre n'est pas là, mais j'espère that from his office, he is listening to what I am saying. It is extremely important; we can't have this Bill going through the House today with this amendment.

M. le président, ce n'est pas possible parce qu'on est en train de faire des largesses au secteur privé, à ce prix, et, de l'autre côté, qu'est-ce qui se passe avec les petits planteurs ? On est en train de faire disparaître la classe des planteurs ! Ce n'est pas possible ! Même arracher les terres que les *métayers* occupaient, pour que tout de suite ils demandent la *land conversion tax*. Et pour garder ce terrain là, pour faire de la spéculation, pour retourner dans 40 ans, est-ce possible? Je fais un appel à tous les membres de cette auguste Assemblée et au Premier ministre de revoir cet amendement. Je serais très, très triste si cet amendement passe par l'Assemblée aujourd'hui, M. le président, car cet amendement est grotesque et inacceptable.

Merci, M. le président.

(5.38 p.m.)

**Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after having heard the hon. lady, there is only one principle that she has employed. She is for what the Government is against and she is against what the Government is for. That is what it is all about, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would not like to respond to her, except on one single point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I'll invite her to meet the *métayers* of the east. Not a single *métayer* has swapped his or her land to Constance La Gaieté, except for one, and that one person happens to be my cousin and he is doubly satisfied, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! I congratulate, the ex-Minister of Agriculture, hon. Dr. Boolell for the number of times he has visited the land of the *métayers*. I invite the hon. lady - unfortunately, she has left now - to come to the eastern part of the island. A warm welcome will be given to her by all the *métayers*. She can check in which spirit their lands have been fructified for a number of years now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I respond now to the question of "*fourre-tout*". What does *fourre-tout* mean? I'll try to make a guess, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think he is telling us that we are trying to do too many things at once. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are trying to do too many things at once because the situation is such. But what is very curious is that - and it is a coincidence, Sir, when I went through the Reuters news this morning - the same kind of question about *le fourre-tout* has been asked in the US. And the answer by President Obama, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was - "we need to act". That is what he had said. I continue on what he had said Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - "I am not going to kick those problems around the road for another four years, for another eight years to the next President and to the next generation." This is the answer of President Obama, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is the same thing, more or less for us; we are not going to kick around the problems that we have for a number of years.

Why are we saying this, Mr Speaker, Sir? If you can trace what has happened: a segment of housing crisis, banking crisis, one segment of financial crisis and then the whole financial crisis. And what we are scared of,

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that this financial crisis may give way to a trade crisis which nobody wants. Let me start responding, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. We heard this tune 'too little', 'too late' and I am not going to respond to that. But definitely I am going to respond when he said 'too slow'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government is on front gear and we don't want to go on back gear. But, for a couple of minutes I will go back gear to remind those people who have forgotten the colossal national debt of Rs120 billion they left, to remind them their servicing of this debt which swallowed 25% of the Government spending, to remind them that we were on the verge of bankruptcy and economic disaster, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am refraining from mentioning what people call "*mari deal illlovo*", but I'll call it the 'sweetheart deals'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, talking of downturn, slowdown, we ask this question: what is the global economic slowdown? According to the IMF, there are many factors; and one of them that we have taken on board, defining a global slowdown, any economic growth of 3% or less is a slowdown. If you go by this measure, we ask the question: what has been achieved from 2000 to 2005? Hon. Sayed-Hossen mentioned 2% when there is no crisis, the sky was clear, no turbulence. And this is what they gave us: 2% from 2000 to 2005! If we extrapolate this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, bearing in mind what is the definition of FMI, economic growth of less than 3%, we come to only one conclusion: that Mauritius has undergone a sustained economic slowdown between 2000/2005. I'll not say slowdown, I would rather say stagnation, a sustained economic stagnation between 2000/2005 Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Another hypothesis, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if by chance the Government of 2000/2005 would have been re-elected for 2005/2010, what would have happened? They would have again produced 2%. What would have been the situation now? What we have produced is 5-6% average, 5 minus 2 is still 3%, no problem, but 2 minus 2 is zero percent; and we can appreciate that this is a perfect recipe, a perfect equation for a social crisis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we had predicted an economic growth of 6%. In fact, the IMF's prediction was a bit higher than that because we have been realistic. In this period of economic crisis and trade crisis, who knows, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? We can still make 3%, 4% in this very volatile period. This is our prediction, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If I take the example of the IMF again, it predicted, at the end of 2008, that the world economy will grow by 2.2% for the year 2009. This is the prediction of IMF. Just after three months now the IMF thinks that the growth will be just 0.5 %, the lowest in 60 years. We cannot be *plus royaliste que le roi*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We cannot hear people saying that we are wrong in the predictions; we are never wrong in our predictions. We have made predictions based on information which have been analysed and interpreted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another word that is being used is 'private sector'. The word is being used, but I think it is also being abused. I remember, Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam said : '*l'industrie sucrière est l'épine dorsale de notre économie*'. We all know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how the sugar sector has contributed to the well-being of the Mauritian nation. I think we should stop using the word 'private sector'. Why not say productive sector? Because we know the private sector is the massive job creators, probably more than Government.

Another response, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are being accused of pouring public money. Just see what is going on. I will take the example of France, 6 billion euros given on preferential loan to Renault, Peugeot and Citroën with a pledge not to close any factory. The same in the United States of America, money has gone to Chrysler and to Ford. We are not inventing anything, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has been crystal clear and he has been very emphatic in saying: we want to save, we want to protect jobs, jobs and jobs. There is a very good rationale when he says that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am very proud, as a member of the Labour Party, we had introduced *4 jours à Paris* at a difficult period. There was a good rationale for the introduction of *4 jours à Paris*. Nothing evokes the misery of mass unemployment. We can see it in the face, in the eyes, the mind, the spirit and the shabby clothes a person who is unemployed is wearing, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, this is a vital policy legislation. We have made a choice and a choice is never painless. We are not pouring public money, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are preventing those who are unemployed to get employed and those who are unemployed to go into destitution. It is as simple as that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let us see what are the so-called private sectors, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can we call tourism a private sector? Can we say the textile sector is a private sector? A textile sector which is employing 140,000 people is giving us a receipt of Rs40 billion yearly. We know these two sectors will be affected. The Vice Prime Minister has said it so many times.

The sector which is integrated with the world economy is bound to suffer the strain and I quote here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the International Tourist Organisation, which has already predicted that the tourism will fall to 1% and we are already seeing it in a like-minded country like the Caribbean. Tourist arrival has fallen by more than 30% compared to us, which is about 18%. The island's hotels are half empty and the national budgets are being revisited. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, NRPT has been mentioned, I don't want to go back gear. The Vice-Prime Minister has explained, *ad nauseam*, that 1% of the population is going to pay NRPT and it has given more than Rs260 m., Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this money is being given back to the community. But who are the 1 % of the population paying NRPT? I call them the island of influence. A spectrum of those people who are enjoying the lifestyle in the consumption pattern of developed countries, they can afford to pay and they should pay, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the short summary of my response about *fourre-tout*, slowdown the economic growth of 3-4%, the private sector which I say is more like a productive sector. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll quote Victor Hugo; he said "you can resist an invading army but you cannot resist an idea whose time has come." And this idea that has come, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this piece of legislation is very vigilant, proactive and strategic. If the hon. Members on the other side of the House are against this stimulus, please come and tell us that this is not a vigilant Bill; please come and tell us that this is not a proactive Bill; please come and tell us that this is not a strategic Bill. We shall be convinced if they can do so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We, in the Government side, in fact, are very much convinced that this piece of legislation will take us from impending the gloom scenario to well-founded hope. We are very convinced, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this piece of legislation is going to avert or mitigate the crisis that is going to come. The magnitude of this current crisis, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll quote George Soros, the legendary investor –

"we are in the midst of the worst financial crisis since 1930s but with a profound difference."

The World Bank president, Robert Zoellick - he is most specific and, in fact, he is a bit prophetic - said –

"Africa will not escape the global crisis. The first effect will be concentrated in sectors that are integrated with the global economy."

The President of Brazil, which is an emerging economy, Lula Da Silva puts the blame squarely on the developed countries, this is what he said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir –

"It is unfair that the poorer nations have to pay for the irresponsibility of speculators who have transformed the world into a gigantic casino."

Kofi Annan, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, - who does not know Kofi Annan? - at the World Economic Forum said –

"Africa has nothing to do with the crisis, but we are going to be affected."

If anybody is not convinced, then we can check out what is happening now in Botswana, which is one of the strongest stable economies in the SADC region, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. They are coming up with a number of belt tightening measures in terms of economic and social measures and the communities have already started suffering. Botswana, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which has diamond and gas reserve, has a belt to tighten. We, in Mauritius, don't have a belt to tighten, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is the reflection that we need to have. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Additional Stimulus Package is not only an economic package or just a statistical statement, spending Rs10.4 billion over two years which is equivalent to 3.8% of our GDP, going to unlock one and a half percent of the growth or beyond that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There are four good reasons for unveiling this additional Stimulus Package –

- (i) We know the economic reform that we have undertaken since 2005 and we know we have made a lot of gains. This legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is going to prevent the erosion of our gain we have made so far.



- (ii) We have undergone a lot of economic diversions, for example, ICT, seafood hub.
- (iii) We are going to skill up our efforts to continue prioritising these sectors, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.
- (iv) we are going to provide immediate financial support to the vulnerable sectors, especially the textile and the tourism sectors, but more important than that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are going to rebuild and bolster confidence at a time where fear and furry is engulfing us.

I'll go on to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this Bill is a human and a humane policy response of this Government to a crisis whose death and breadth we don't know. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are a very small open economy and we have to re-educate ourselves to the theory of John Menard Keynes and I would like to mention what he said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir –

“When circumstance change, I will change my opinion. Smart people are not dogmatic, stuck in one narrow ideological groove, but rather open minded, flexible and intellectually alert and are able to change with times.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, circumstances havenot created this Government; this Government has created circumstances. We are not dogmatic. The private sector is not our enemy. We are open minded, flexible and intellectually alert and we are going to face this crisis with a lot of confidence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll end by just saying that a crisis can just be a crisis if we don't do anything about it. But sometimes a crisis can be an opportunity as said by the Prime Minister so many times. And I'll use the word of Machiavelli –

“Never waste the opportunities offered by a good crisis.”

And this Government is damn sure that this crisis would be turned into a good crisis, and from good crisis to opportunities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll end up here. With this Additional Stimulus Package Bill, there are good reasons for continued optimism. I would like to say just one word of caution before I end up.

All the time, we have been saying that we are not in recession, but we might go through a tough time. This is what we have been saying so far. The size of our Stimulus Package should match the scope of the problems we have identified. We should not overdo for obvious reasons to reshape our economy. We are in the survival mode, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Additional Stimulus Package has all the tools, all the ingredients to make this crisis. As I said, it is a good crisis - an opportunity.

May I congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the two Ministerial Committees under the enlightened and courageous leadership of the Prime Minister that this crisis will be turned into a good crisis and the good crisis will be turned into an opportunity.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(6.00 p.m.)

**Dr P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I were to say, in simple terms, about the object of this Bill, I would say that it is meant to protect jobs, homes and families.

Recently, on 02 April, G-20 met and we saw what the whole world, the big powers, the emerging economies, the US, the European Union, Australia, Indonesia, India, China, for the first time, Mexico, Netherlands and Spain and so many other countries did, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at this very time. We are wise like them after the event. We can't let things go on until we can't decide even what to do when it comes to us. This is exactly what this Bill is aiming at.

Like them, in our way, we have resorted to the Additional Stimulus Package to counter recession and economic crisis, to prevent the recession or the crisis becoming worse, creation of more jobs, to maintain the existing ones and to support those who suffer local dislocations due to recession. These are the very words of the President of the United States: to allow business to expand and to inject more money. In short-term, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to check recession and crisis and in the long-term to rehabilitate financial



empires and institutions. What do people want, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? They only want security, confidence in banks, good involvement of banks, secure business and job creation. We have already created the atmosphere.

Countries who never sat together round a table in the past before, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they did it now. Why? Just to find a solution to the crisis! International regulators, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, came together to terms to face the crisis. Who are we, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to be different from that?

World leaders who refused to tax transfers are now doing so. They are prepared to declare the tax information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which they never did in the past. I am just saying this because they are alert on what is to come ahead. In 2005, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government came to power. No doubt it had to take unpalatable measures and undertake the much criticised reforms; and thanks to these very reforms and the well regulated banking system that already exists in the country and good governance, our country has been spared of the financial shock or the crisis. So, we are not in recession as my colleague, hon. Dr. Mungur, just said, like many other countries.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people are surprised about the volume of the Stimulus Package injected by G-20, US\$5 trillion. In spite of the prevailing difficult conditions in financial state, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have found means to inject Rs10.4 billion as Additional Stimulus Package. We are a small economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the package is channeled towards big businesses, financial institutions and empires. One example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - my friend, hon. Dr. Mungur just said - is the car industry. I would just add the insurance companies and the banks. But we have to keep one thing in mind. These countries are very big exporters on the world market. We are not in that league, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Our problem is different, and really very different. We have to differentiate between - as James Baker, the Chief of the staff of the White House says - the healthy and those in need; and this applies to us as well, in my humble opinion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We should not make what I call a stress test more stressful. We want to reset, what I call, the push buttons when it comes to economic issues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know that we are an import-oriented country. We import our basic commodities; we depend on the textile industry now in a staggering state. Our tourist arrival is compromised already. If we cannot export, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to cut down our wastage as well. Therefore, our Stimulus Package has to be more targeted, in my opinion, towards the most structural reforms in the key sectors not affected by recession and crisis. I'll make myself clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In my opinion, we have to lay emphasis on local production and local consumption, for example, food items, fish, fruits and vegetables by giving incentives to the local farmers, vegetable planters and the fishermen. This is going to have the following effect. It will create jobs, increase employability and also the exodus of foreign currency. The era of cheap food is over, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Urgency to respond has particular resonance to Mauritius, a Small Island Developing State prone to too many characteristic particular limitations in view of its small size, isolation, small internal market, high vulnerability to disasters, high dependency on imports.

Let me quote just some figures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Our net food requirements is to the tune of 690,000 tons per year and 75% of it constitutes agricultural and food products; and this is an expenditure to the tune of Rs23.4 billion in 2007. The food import bills from 2001 to 2007 have doubled from Rs8.4 billion to Rs21 billion recently; meat and similar preparations Rs1.4 billion; milk and dairy products Rs2.5 billion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, keeping these things in mind in times of recession and economic crisis, there is one rule that dictates. People don't buy cars; they look for food and health care. And this is where I feel that the Additional Stimulus Package should be geared to.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll dwell on just one item, as an example, namely milk. We produce only 2% of the local consumption of the country and 98% are imported to the tune of Rs2.5 billion. Fortunately, somehow, we have two milk projects in the country: one at Rose Belle and one at Salazie. The one at Rose Belle presently has 250 cows and the one at Salazie, 500. They have targeted 1,500 and 3,500 respectively. They have projected to have their own processing plant for precisely the production of powdered milk and other dairy products. The problem, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that they are still waiting for incentives to start their processing plant.

If only incentives could be given to these types of emerging economies, certainly they could employ easily 1,000 unskilled labour. We know that, presently, there are 10,000 to 12,000 people who have not even passed the CPE in the country; I mean unskilled labour. So, this is where the pool of the unemployed lies and this is where I feel that the stimulus package should go, because we are talking of job creation and employability. They are the ones who deserve the stimulus package, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So is the situation in the meat industry, in the vegetable industry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have to see to it that these survive and continue to survive. The same philosophy should be adopted.

The other basic commodity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is water. I feel that, to have an incentive in this sector, we should not forget the land-based oceanic industry. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the present state of affairs, we have to concentrate on food security. I will dwell on this issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because I do not want to repeat the issues that my colleagues have raised in the House. By so doing, we are investing on what I call human resource. That is the only asset that this country has. That is why I impress that part or a good share of the Additional Stimulus Package should be geared towards this. I feel it will protect jobs, homes and families.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, leadership is all about listening, humility, vision and, above all, command. This certainly applies to our Prime Minister and, under his guidance, the Vice-Prime Minister & Minister of Finance has come up with the Additional Stimulus Package. Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could it be the beginning of the end of the crisis? I feel that the finance Pundits have already said it in the recent days. It's the beginning of the end of the crisis. The big economic powers and the financial analysts have said it very clearly. Through the Additional Stimulus Package, I feel we are on what I call on the road to safety, but we have to navigate and try to survive. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have one point of caution here. For the stimulus package to succeed, I feel we need to have a blend of experts in the field, not only from the private sector, but equally from the public sector to monitor the success of it, the shortcomings, the effects and the results of the stimulus package. Ultimately, we have in mind that this stimulus package is good for the future generations and also towards, as I have said at the beginning, the creation of jobs and protection of families and homes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Thank you very much.

(6.16 p.m)

**Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are in the presence of a Bill, which aims at bringing amendments for the implementation of the Additional Stimulus Package presented in December 2008 and which, I understand, is a follow-up of the 2008 Budget, which the Minister of Finance had described as being an expansionary project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, both these documents are meant to boost up our economy. If the content of the stimulus package has not impressed many, as rightly pointed out by hon. Pravind Jugnauth, the stimulus package is even less inspiring.

Ce projet de relance économique, M. le président, n'a convaincu personne, et j'y reviendrai plus tard pour en expliquer les raisons. Mais, peut-être, le plus fascinant de toute cette histoire, c'est que le ministre a, en moins de quatre ans, produit pas moins de six documents pour énoncer son agenda économique qui, paraît-il, n'arrive toujours pas à faire décoller notre économie.

Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no less than six documents in less than 41 months, starting from the famous 'Setting the Stage for Robust Growth' in August 2005, followed by the 2006/2007/2008 Budgets, the Additional Stimulus Package of December 2008, awaiting the 2009 Budget projected for May 2009, *et cela, M. le président, sans compter la possibilité que le ministre décide de suivre le conseil du Gouverneur de la banque de Maurice et présente un deuxième stimulus package.* Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister has, indeed, had several opportunities to enunciate his policy, and his economic agenda is now clearly spelt out both in words and in his actions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to say the least, the Minister has throughout been very consistent, very true to himself. In fact, he has always managed to maintain his philosophy of putting at the centre of his economic strategy the interests of the private sector. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this has just been revealed by my friend, hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, a few minutes earlier. *Le secteur privé a toujours été gagnant. Le ministre a toujours fait*

*la part belle au secteur privé.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not propose to go over all the gifts, already mentioned by others, that have been given to the private sector. Furthermore, I believe that these have been succinctly pointed out by hon. Pravind Jugnauth, who had demonstrated very clearly, indeed, the strong private sector bias of the economic agenda of the Minister. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will certainly dwell on the disequilibria, the imbalances which have marked his actions, the lack of consideration shown to what he, himself, had called earlier the neediest of the needy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we, on this side of the House, do agree that there is a definite need to reach out and to extend a helping hand to enterprises facing difficulties as a result of the international economic crisis. Yet, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our contention is that in such difficult times, consideration needs to be given to all stakeholders, all of them and, in particular, to the driving force of our economy, that is, our labour force, one of the most important and yet most vulnerable factors of production. It is the responsibility of Government to ensure their protection *et c'est là que, M. le président, le ministre a péché. Il a péché par son manque d'égard envers ceux qui sont les plus frappés par cette crise.*

L'Additional Stimulus Package a suivi la logique des précédents budgets. Tout a été fait pour sauvegarder l'intérêt des employeurs sans rien faire pour alléger le fardeau des petits et, M. le président, les moyens ne font pas défaut. On aurait pu certainement faire beaucoup de choses. Ailleurs dans le monde, les différents gouvernements se sont démenés pour prendre les positions en faveur des plus vulnérables. Rien de la sorte chez nous. On a entendu plusieurs orateurs le dire avant moi. Pendant que le Stimulus Package est offert au secteur privé, à Maurice, on n'a demandé aucune condition et cela a été souligné par l'honorable Jugnauth. Il n'y a aucune raison pourquoi on ne peut avoir une législation pour insister et assurer que ceux qui bénéficient de ce Stimulus Package ne prennent pas les mesures qu'il faut pour protéger l'emploi. M. le président, même en Amérique, le Président Obama, dans un Etat qui est connu pour son capitalisme, a exigé que ceux qui reçoivent le support de l'Etat aient certaines responsabilités et, M. le président, ces conditions chez nous, il n'y en a pas. Le gouvernement déclare haut et fort que sa priorité est le maintien de l'emploi et les entreprises recevant l'aide de l'Etat crient eux, pour leur part, haut et fort aussi, qu'ils n'ont aucune intention d'obtempérer, car selon leur porte-parole le maintien de l'emploi n'est pas leur priorité. M. le président, tout ceci nous démontre qu'il n'y a aussi aucune garantie réelle contre les licenciements massifs qui auront lieu.

M. le président, on ne peut se contenter de venir en aide aux entreprises sans qu'elles ne s'engagent à agir de façon responsable. Quand je parle de façon responsable, M. le président, même en France, on parle du capitalisme moral. Même en France, après avoir énoncé au départ que la politique de relance sera basée surtout sur le développement d'infrastructure publique, le Président Sarkozy a dû revoir sa copie et, finalement, il est revenu avec d'autres mesures pour augmenter *des family allowances*, les mesures pour assurer qu'il y a plus de facilités dirigées vers ceux qui sont au bas de l'échelle.

M. le président, parlons de l'Angleterre. M. le ministre des finances avait dit la dernière fois qu'on parle de plusieurs modèles de la crise, les tendances que la crise prendra, le V, le U, le L ou le W. Tout cela c'est très bien. Mais ici, ce que je n'arrive pas à comprendre c'est qu'on a tendance à se dire que les choses vont s'améliorer simplement en incitant le secteur privé à investir plus, en leur donnant des *incentives*. M. le président, cela ne m'impressionne guère, parce que les *incentives* ont été donnés depuis 2005 à ce jour sans qu'il y ait des résultats tangibles. C'est là qu'on se demande: qu'est-ce que l'Etat attend du secteur privé si l'Etat ne prend pas ses responsabilités en main ? Il faut leur demander, il faut insister, il faut légiférer s'il le faut, mais il faut qu'ils prennent leurs responsabilités envers les gens. En Angleterre, je vous le disais, il y a quelques secondes, que pour relancer l'économie, le gouvernement anglais a préféré *boost up the economy through increased consumption*. Ils n'ont pas hésité, M. le président, *to make tax cuts, VAT cuts*. Je viens d'entendre l'honorable Dr. Ramloll le dire, qu'en temps de crise économique, les gens ne vont pas chercher beaucoup de choses, ils ne vont pas chercher des terrains ou des maisons à acheter - je parle du commun des mortels - déjà ils ne peuvent même pas payer les loyers ou les *loans* qu'ils ont pris sur leurs maisons. Les gens ont besoin d'assurer leur *livelihood* et ceci est lié directement à l'emploi. Mais je pense encore que ceci n'a pas été adressé, M. le président et je pense qu'il y a beaucoup à expliquer. Nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, on n'arrive pas à comprendre comment les mesures énoncées par le ministre apporteront réellement les résultats qu'il attend à avoir.

The commitment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of the private sector is still not clear. We want to see it. Saying that they are in difficulty and that Government has engaged itself in this generous support attributed to them, is not sufficient! We need to see their commitment in real terms. We need to see how they are going to deal with the problem of job losses, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Legislation is required so as to avoid the rising tide of job losses.

M. le président, le nouveau *Employment Rights Act* et le nouveau *Employment Relations Act* n'arrangent pas les choses. Mais je dois dire que je dois apprécier l'approche du ministre du travail, l'honorable Chaumière, qui a démontré que lui, certainement, *he is in the listening mood*, parce qu'il a repris l'appel fait par l'honorable Jugnauth et il a accepté de relancer le débat sur l'*Employment Rights Act* et l'*Employment Relations Act* en acceptant de revoir le tout autour d'une table avec les différents *stakeholders*, les syndicats et le patronat. M. le président, j'apprécie ce *move*, surtout en temps de crise. C'est clair qu'en temps de crise, nous nous attendons à ce qu'il y ait une solidarité et là nous l'avons toujours dit, nous autres au MSM, nous parlons d'une opposition constructive. Ce que nous voulons faire c'est d'arranger les choses et non pas de venir aggraver la situation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, boosting the economy through public and private infrastructure development does not convince people any more than they did earlier. This is mainly due to the fact that many of the proposed projects in the Stimulus Package were enunciated in the previous budgets and are still today at proposal stage. *Les gens n'y croient pas, M. le président.*

Les *incentives* pour le secteur privé se sont multipliés encore une fois sans résultat. C'est pourquoi, M. le président, je suis très sceptique sur les résultats, les retombées de ce *Stimulus Package*. Je vous dirai pourquoi parce que nous avons vu, nous avons entendu le ministre des finances, durant sa présentation du *Stimulus Package*, venir énumérer les différentes mesures qu'il a prises, il a parlé des différents *Funds* qu'il a mis sur pied. Et là, j'aurais voulu reprendre certains points qu'il a soulevés. Je vais prendre, M. le président, les mesures dont il a parlé sur la reprise de l'économie à travers le *Public Infrastructure*. Voilà ce qu'il avait à nous dire concernant le *new investment in public infrastructure*. I quote –

“Government has also decided to make substantial new investments in public infrastructure to firm up the stimulus package and support the construction industry. Accordingly, an additional sum of Rs2.6 billion is being provided for public infrastructure, including Rs1.8 billion for road network.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now go back to what was said in his budget - the expansionary budget - of the Minister in June 2008. Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I find that the Minister had to say the following –

“For the coming financial year, some Rs2.7 billion will be earmarked for programmes to improve infrastructure. The project value of these programmes amounts to Rs42 billion of which Rs21 billion will be invested in the next three years.”

Regarding road network, I would like to mention paragraphs 102 and 103, which say –

“Thus, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the next years some Rs12.6 billion will be spent on this programme. We are doubling the road budget from Rs554 m. in 2007/08 to Rs1.1 billion in 2008/09.

A 12 kilometre Port Louis Ring Road will be constructed on a PPP basis from Sorèze to Quay D roundabout including a tunnel of 775 metres through Quoin Bluff.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, true that it is a bluff; this again has not seen the light of the day, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I can go on and on. The harbour bridge is again a bluff. Mention is also made of –

- ♦ a 25 km bus-way corridor between Curepipe and Port Louis;

which is a bluff again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

I continue –

- ♦ a 12 km bus-only lane along the existing motorway M1, and
- ♦ redesigning of the overall bus routes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, such projects and such good intentions remain in these documents - the series of



document presented by the Ministry of Finance. That is precisely why I do not think that people really believe in what this stimulus package is expected to bring as result. This is why it has not convinced anyone. *Le comble, M. le président, c'est que* not only it has not convinced anyone on this side of the House, or anyone outside the House, but looking at the face of my friends sitting on the other side of this very House, I have the impression that not many people on the other side are convinced by what is written in this document. It is not at all stimulating, and what is more is that while listening to the debates, while listening to on. Mrs Hanoomanjee, I realised that instead of looking for a stimulus package for this crisis, we are planning for a post crisis stimulus package it would seem. Because *les largesses, M. le président, n'ont pas de limite semble-t-il*. This is one sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I must not forget that the Minister of Finance also talked about what he called the local infrastructure fund to which more funds are being allocated. This local infrastructure fund was already present in the budget earlier and still nothing has been done.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not talking about the budget which was presented in 2006. I am talking about the budget which was presented last year and the year before last and the infrastructure projects have not taken off, I am afraid.

Now, let's look at the other sectors. There is what we call the Human Resource Development Knowledge and Arts Fund. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister talks about it again, and here, we find that this time the Minister says he is going to add an additional Rs500 m. to this fund. And what is he going to do with the sum of money, he is going to ensure that schools, colleges and the tertiary sector would be dotted with new infrastructure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come back to the budget. The budget, talking about this fund, had mentioned physical infrastructure for tertiary education such as building and equipment and various facilities would be provided for by this fund; projects to equip individuals with access to information knowledge technology training and skills, Students' Loan Schemes and Scholarship and schemes to encourage and support local artists. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again the list is long, but I would like to remind the House that six months after the budget, in December, the hon. Minister of Education answered in this very Assembly that this loan facility has not been made available to the students simply because procedures are lengthy and that it will only be functional and operational in the next year. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is really serious. And this shows that whatever has been said on the economic policy, on the economic management of this country for the past five years is totally true. And that, no matter what the Members from the other side of the House would comment on what we are saying today, deep inside their heart, they do agree with us that Government's goals have not been met. We have not achieved the goals that we had set for ourselves. But then, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to go on with this sector, we have talked a lot about this Human Resource Development knowledge and Arts Fund. I would like to ask which item of this fund has seen the light of the day. We feel that the Tertiary Education Institutions and the private sector will work together to offer sandwich courses. Not later than two weeks back, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was announced in the papers that the project of courses run by the University of Mauritius and the private sector would not be carried out. They have dropped the idea and this was provided for in the last budget. But the worst part of it, and I find it hard to understand how Members of the other side of the House object to us saying that the poor people have not been catered for. They object when we say that the stimulus package has not catered for the weak, the workers, the households because nothing, indeed, has been done when we say that the big problem of the stimulus package is that it has looked only on one side and has not lifted the smallest finger to come to the help of people who are in need of help.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this time of crisis, when hon. Ramloll has rightly put it that people are finding it hard to get the food they need, when we are saying that we want to boost up the economy by ensuring that our people, our children get the training required, then Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how do we explain the fact that when billions are being given to the private sector, when all types of facilities are being given to the private sector, we are denying the Mauritian child of the small drop of water in the ocean. What is Rs100 m., the worth of the subsidies given for the payment of the SC and HSC fees? It is nothing! And if we really believe that the country is facing dire times, then we need to take certain



steps to remove this perception that the Ministry of Finance has been catering for only one section of the population. It is very important for us and for the people of Mauritius to perceive this package not as being a private sector biased one. We have to make sure that small things are done to help people. Why do people object when we say that the poor people are getting crumbs? They must not forget the MID levy which was to be imposed on the private sector has been waived off. But you will see that it is a small amount, but for small people, small amounts do have an importance. *Les 15 sous sur chaque litre de pétrole consommé, les 15 sous sur chaque kilo de gaz utilisé, les 15 sous sur chaque kilo de charcoal used*, are still being levied on the poor people. What type of equilibrium is this? When we talk about disequilibrium, we know what we are talking about, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have not forgotten. We must not close our eyes to such injustice. There is no justification at all for what the Minister has been doing till now. We must not forget.

I find, in the famous knowledge fund that, at the end of form four, a pathway will be introduced to help students opt for tertiary vocational education and for tertiary academic studies. *Jusqu'aujourd'hui pas de Tertiary Vocational Education, pas de Tertiary Academic Studies pour les élèves qui quittent le collège en Forme IV. C'était supposé être là pour venir en aide aux drop-outs of the school and yet nothing has been done.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all these have remained at intention stage and when we talk about *effet d'annonce*, the whole exercise has been un *effet d'annonce*. What do you want to talk about? Traffic decongestion! Rien n'a été fait jusqu'à présent malgré le fait que le budget ait prévu R 1.1 milliard.

*On a déjà parlé sur le harbour bridge*, but I will have to talk about the National Residential Property Tax, because I have heard people on the other side on the House mention that this tax is being levied on people who are living on the opulence, people who are very well-off, but then this is totally wrong. And I would ask Members of the House to go back to a Parliamentary Question to which the Minister has answered a few days back.

The Minister answered that a sizeable share of the money that has been collected through the NRPT has been derived from the corporate sector. Bluff, Mr Speaker, Sir! Totally wrong! Over two years, on the first year, they collected Rs119 m. and, in the other year, something like Rs113 m., a total of Rs232 m., out of which, in the first year, Rs101m. were derived from the poor households, Mr Speaker, Sir, because I do believe that someone earning Rs16,000 or a family earning Rs20,000 today cannot be considered as a family living in opulence.

What is worst is that only Rs18 m. came from the private sector, the corporate sector what the Minister had described as a sizeable share. *Soit c'est de la mauvaise foi, soit c'est de l'ignorance que je n'attribue pas à notre illustre ministre des finances parce que croyez-moi, M. le président, c'est cacher la vérité exactement, et ce qui a été révélé au cours des débats dans cette Chambre, au cours des questions parlementaires, démontre que bon nombre de gens dans cette illustre auguste Assemblée ont été mené en bateau pendant des années, M. le président.* They have been taken for a ride and even though they pretend not to think so, we do know, on this side of the House, that they are totally aware of what has been going on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this NRPT business has to go. *Il n'y a pas de justification quand on est en train de faire des cadeaux, des largesses extraordinaires aux possédants et on est en train d'insister, d'éplucher*, to fleece people who have been working hard. In times of crisis, we have to consider the most vulnerable. *C'est trop joli pour venir dire dans l'Assemblée* que we are caring, we are catering for the neediest of the needy, very nice term! But then we want to see it in action. As I told you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no one will be fooled now. The economic agenda of the Minister has been revealed not only in his words, not only in his proliferative documents, but also in his actions and thus now everything is clear.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been asked not to be too long. So, I will try to resume my seat, but then before doing so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to take just a few points more. I would like to say that you must not think that the outcry you are observing, either in this Assembly or outside, is something wrong. In fact, the Minister said that we should be in the listening mood, it may help us to shape our economy and our strategies better and it may help us for the future.

The population has serious reasons, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to be worried. Their declining real income, their loss in purchasing power are real problems faced by these people. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to mention just a few points more. I won't be long as promised. Quand dans le Stimulus Package et dans le Budget on parle des mesures qu'on va prendre avec l'IVTB, avec le Empowerment Fund pour essayer de venir en aide

aux gens qui n'ont pas réussi dans le secteur éducatif, j'ai été cherché dans le plan d'action qui a été présenté par M. Jean Claude de l'Estrac, démontrant le grand travail abattu par le comité, mais j'ai cherché vainement, M. le président, pour voir si vraiment ces actions-là ont été prises. Mais l'action qu'on devait prendre dans le secteur de l'apprentissage pour les enfants qui ont échoué à l'école, a été bannie, il me semble, parce qu'on ne retrouve pas ces actions dans ce document.

M. le président, je vais terminer en disant quelque chose qui m'a frappée, dans toutes les mesures prises, dans toutes les actions du ministre des finances dans sa philosophie. J'ai pu retrouver les paroles d'un écrivain français, humoriste qui disait et je cite –

“Si vous voulez chercher de l'argent, pour trouver de l'argent, pour prendre de l'argent, il faut aller là où l'argent se trouve et bien sûr chez les pauvres. Ils n'ont pas beaucoup d'argent, mais il y en a beaucoup de pauvres”

Et c'est de cette façon, M. le président, que le ministre des finances a pu remplir les caisses de l'État. En mettant une voile cachant, bien les largesses qui ont été attribuées au secteur privé et en s'assurant que chaque petit sou qu'on pouvait récupérer, de ceux qui travaillent soit pris, il l'a fait, M. le président et pour cela je me rappelle des paroles de l'honorable Soodhun qui disait que 1% qu'on devait prendre du secteur privé pour le *Solidarity Fund* a été *waived off*. Mais pourtant le 1% prélevé des poches des travailleurs, cela on n'a pas pensé à revoir, M. le président. La solidarité, semble-t-il, est surtout avec le patron. M. le président, je pense que si vraiment on veut faire face à cette crise, lutter contre cette crise, il va falloir sincèrement *take everyone on board, all the stakeholders*, le patronat certainement, mais aussi tous les autres *stakeholders* et surtout, comme je l'ai dit, les petits employés, les plus vulnérables et c'est de cette façon là que nous arriverons à combattre la crise économique.

Merci, M. le président.

(6.48 p.m.)

**Mr V. Mardemootoo (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before analysing some of the points raised by Members of the Opposition, let me, first of all, situate why we are having a Stimulus Package. In fact, during the course of these debates, I have been hearing billions and billions. I get the impression that we can give a loan to the IMF.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Einstein once said: I don't know how the Third World War is going to be, but I know for sure that the Fourth World War is going to be with stick and stone. Après un cycle de cent ans qui a vu les Etats-Unis, la première puissance et puis l'hyperpuissance du monde, un 13 septembre 2008, tout a changé. La crise financière est devenue une crise économique, la crise américaine est devenue une crise mondiale. On parlait de 1927. Ce n'est plus la grippe de 1927, non plus la grippe de 1987. Le 13 septembre 2008, le cancer est arrivé. La crise s'est propagée, s'auto-nourrit et le monde est en feu.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody knows how to cure this cancer. Some countries are having recourse to 'panadol', others to antibiotics and others to chemotherapy. *Le principal moteur économique du monde, le consommateur américain, s'est évaporé ; les pistons et les radiateurs, les européens et les japonais y sont à sec.* Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody knows how and when we are going to finish with this mess. In fact, I heard the Minister of Finance mentioning that all the experts have given four formulas to solve the problem. *Personne ne sait. Mais, comme Einstein a dit, un nouveau monde se dessine, dont le centre de gravité sera très différent de celui du monde actuel. Un monde dans lequel le rythme et l'ampleur de l'émergence des futurs grands sont sous-estimés ; un monde dans lequel les Etats-Unis et les pays européens auront à apprendre à partager. M. le président, on ne sait pas comment cette crise va finir. Mais ce que on sait, le 21ème siècle ne sera plus américain. D'ailleurs, d'après le service des renseignements américains, le NIC, National Intelligence Unit, the transformed world prévoit le passage unipolaire d'un monde dominé par les Etats-Unis vers un monde multipolaire où les Etats-Unis seraient un acteur global parmi beaucoup d'acteurs globaux. Voilà la situation après la crise. Qu'en est-il de nous, M. le président ? Devrions-nous rester les bras croisés? Nous ne connaissons pas encore les victimes, mais nous savons que les premières victimes seront les pauvres des pays riches, tout comme les pauvres des pays pauvres. On a entendu qu'il y a dix millions de pertes d'emploi en Inde et vingt-six millions en Chine. M. le président, nous ne savons pas la*

*durée, mais nous savons qu'elle dépendra beaucoup de la qualité des politiques publiques qui seront menées à Maurice avec notre gouvernement, car il faut agir et agir vite.* That's what, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has done three years ago with that intelligent reform. This Government could be proud that the economy has so far resisted that financial mayhem. Whether we like it or not, without the economic reform that was boldly and resolutely introduced, our economy would have been in a dire situation by now. And, as in the case of many countries, with a significantly broader resource base than Mauritius, the resilience of this country, this export dependent open economy so to say is almost pathological when the world at large is experiencing sharp contraction. Practically, all leading economies like Japan, Korea and Singapore have seen their exports dropped to 40 per cent. Until now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we can say that Mauritius can be considered as a rare case where growth is still positive. Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *l'impensable est arrivé.* This Government can offer to share up economic performance of a stimulus package of Rs10.4 billion. This Government is ever ready to take action at all right time, not only because it can afford it through the result of the reform, but also because it does not sweep the problem under the carpet or shelve dossiers to gather dusk, nor does it become the Harbinger of Doom. This Government does not depare. And the beauty of it is that this Government still thinks positive even with this crisis, looks for action, acts promptly and come with a plan to shelter the economy from declining demands for our products. It is against this backdrop, and with clear objectives, that this Government has produced the stimulus package. This is not simply an emulation of stimulus package that are mushrooming around the planet. It is conceived in an original and innovative fashion with clearly defined target. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the appreciation of the EU is revealing, well timed, well thought, well-structured. For this laudable initiative, I believe that we should thank the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for that. The way the package appears to be looks more like an artistic marriage. It is not perfect synthesis of Keynesian economy to revive demand, keep afloat firms hit by economic accident and protect job losses on the one hand and the supply side of the economy on the other hand. Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, surprisingly, and contrary to what enlightened observers might believe, this package is not additional money injected in the economy. That would have been inflationary, and would have rekindled inflationary growth and, therefore, would have defeated the objective of a stable price system. The Government is, in its wisdom and reason, cautious. It does not wish to solve one problem, while simultaneously deepening another one. It weighs the trade off and adopts a balanced strategy. That's why the Minister of Finance worked with an ingenious plan to front-load funds already approved, but which have been spent over a span of five years. An autonomous expenditure planned to be spent in five years, brought forward to be injected in two years, becomes a formidable missile to that stimulus package, to stimulate the economy through three multiplier mechanisms in three different channels—

- (i) the direct effect;
- (ii) the indirect effect, and
- (iii) the induce effect.

The aim to stimulate demand, consumption and expenditure will result in successive round of expenditure. This ripple effect will cause the economy to expand, create and save jobs. This is the purpose.

M. le président, comme je le disais, le 13 septembre 2008, l'impensable est arrivé. Bush demande de l'aide. Jamais un Président américain ne s'est adressé aux pays émergents en leur disant qu'il avait besoin d'eux. Christina Kirschner venge l'Argentine en disant 'Vous êtes l'Argentine de demain', en s'adressant aux banquiers américains. Angela Merkel est mis K.O. Les oligarques russes sont nationalisés. Alan Grinspan reconnaît ses erreurs. La Chine doit relancer son économie, et a mis 7% de son PIB pour relancer l'économie. L'Islande, l'un des pays les plus riches, a fait faillite. L'impensable est arrivé un 13 septembre 2008. M. le président, et si c'était un 13 septembre 2004 ? Que serait devenue l'île Maurice, le pays où j'ai grandi ? Je tremble, M. le président, rien qu'en y pensant. Sans la crise en 2004, qu'auraient été les échos ? Nous sommes en urgence économique. Nous perdons des emplois à une vitesse vertigineuse, horifiante. Tous les indicateurs économiques sont au rouge. *L'économie ti dans ICU !* Les FDI avaient disparu ; perte de 25,000 emplois dans la zone franche, 10,000 emplois dans l'industrie sucrière, croissance de 2.2%, déficit de 5.3% du GDP, croissance de 2.4% dans le secteur touristique, décroissance dans la zone franche de -12.3%, augmentation de la TVA par 50%, et j'en passe, M. le président. J'oublie les placards et les gaspillages de fonds. Tout ceci, sans la crise, l'impensable n'étant pas arrivé le 13 septembre 2004 ! Dieu merci, M. le président ! Si l'impensable était arrivé quatre ans plus tôt, avec ce qu'on a vu avec le gouvernement d'alors, avec son premier ministre et

son ministre des finances - ce n'est pas par plaisir que je le dis - l'île Maurice, notre pays bien aimé, aurait fait faillite, tout comme les Seychelles et l'Islande. L'île Maurice aurait été dans la liste des pays en banqueroute. *Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are all in the same boat. The main objective of this package is to save jobs, jobs and jobs! I was expecting some constructive ideas and solutions from Members of the Opposition.* Comme réponse, qu'a t-on eu? D'un côté, des milliards au secteur privé *due to rate of exchange* et, de l'autre côté, le *economic guru* du MMM parle de rééquilibrer la roupie pour favoriser l'exportation. Des milliards au secteur privé, en baissant la taxe à 15%. Dans *le Stimulus Package*, encore des milliards pour le secteur privé. Comme ex-ministre des finances, ce n'est pas loyal de venir avec de tels arguments. M. le président, de quel secteur privé parle t-on ? Parle t-on du secteur privé de l'Ilovo - six milliards pour cinq familles? Parle t-on de la centrale thermique de Saint Aubin? Parle t-on de la route de St Félix, de vente de bijoux de France Telecom? Est-ce bien de ce même secteur privé que l'on parle? Parce que je sais que le secteur privé, que nous le voulions ou pas, est composé de toutes les composantes de la société à Maurice.

Let me go back - just for hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun - to the 80s. The Government, at that time - rightly so - gave all kinds of incentives to attract investment. For example, I remember, land, duty free, exemption of tax, repatriation of capital, Mauritian passport, 50-100 acres of land and sea to make hotels, billions were given to foreigners - rightly so - and no direct revenue was obtained. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, plenty of jobs were created and unemployment problem was solved at that time. The indirect induce effect, consumption, increase of growth was obtained. Even at that time, Professor Mead's prophecy was defeated. But, this time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is doing exactly the same, helping those who create jobs to keep going. The difference is that it's not a blank cheque but a loan. Even if it is a soft loan, it is not a blank cheque. This Government reduced tax by 50%, but they increased VAT by 50%.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when tax was reduced, this has made Mauritius more competitive, more invest-friendly, the tax base has been widened, fiscal incentives are vital for fuelling development. Research carried out by the World Bank in 37 countries unambiguously confirmed that those countries, which implemented tax incentives, saw accelerated economic growth, higher level of development, more jobs, and higher added value; not less. The experience of Mauritius in the past also paints it. A drop in tax rate did not produce revenue collected, but instead raised revenue. In the 1980s again, the trend was reversed when, by bringing the tax rate from 65% to 35%, the net result was higher job opportunities, high and sustainable economic growth, low fiscal deficit and low inflation and, above all, a higher level of development. It also curbed the desire for tax evasion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody owes us a living. Why should a foreign investor come to Mauritius, unless he feels he can beat other competitors by reducing his cost of production? In fact, with 30% tax, only Rs1 billion FDI was obtained, but with 15% tax, we get Rs10 billion FDI. For example, if a *gâteau piment* worth Rs3.00 is sold at Rs1.50 you will sell more, and more profits will be made. I was not happy with hon. Jugnauth when he talked about the sub committee for the private sector infrastructure. *Ce n'est pas loyal de venir dire qu'il y a un représentant du secteur privé. Ce n'est pas vrai...*

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please, let the hon. Member speak!

**Mr Mardemootoo:** Let me make some suggestions before I conclude. First, I urge the Minister of Finance to revisit the bureaucracy to obtain a Stimulus Package. At least, MHC should revisit its housing scheme, and support those losing their jobs and who are not able to pay during this period. Second, same appeal should be made to commercial banks. Third, at least, we could have a tax rebate of 10 % for SMEs, export oriented, for two years. IVTB should develop programmes and be more proactive to make our workforce resilient, and we need to have someone of high calibre at SEHDA.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should avoid using the term 'capitalist stimulus package', as without private sector, we shall go in a world crisis. To conclude, let us call a spade a spade. Let me quote Abraham Lincoln. I said it last time, and I say it again.

"If you want to help the poor, you must protect the rich. If you want to lift up the job earners, don't pull down the wage payers."



Our aim is to counter slowdown, to avoid economic social crisis. The country badly needs to retain political and social stability to attract FDI. If the Members of the MMM call it 'buying vote SP', I would advise the Minister of Finance to re-prepare another Stimulus Package, because I believe that the MMM actually needs a Stimulus Package.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(7.08 p.m)

**Mr M. Dulloo (First Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it seems that both sides of the House want us to go quickly because of the special day of Varusha Pirrapu. I seize this opportunity to wish everybody *bonne fête*. I will try to satisfy both sides of the House.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order please!

**Mr Dulloo:** First, the title of the Bill itself - I think somebody has pointed this out - is Additional Stimulus Package (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. There has never been a stimulus package, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, how can we talk of additional stimulus package? What the hon. Minister of Finance has done is to take his Budget of June 2008, his Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure of June 2008, and then proceed by a change of name, trying to call it a stimulus package and, then, of course, top up with some more money and call this 'Additional Stimulus Package'. This is far from the truth. If we look at both his 2008 Budget and the ESE of June 2008 - I have gone through his speeches on both occasions - at no time did he talk about stimulus or stimulus package. For example, I have his speeches for the ESE of 18 June 2008.

He was boasting, he was gloating and talking about his performance and this would be taken up again on 18 November 2008 and another ESC No. 2 of 2008 where he would say that the economic performance, the resilience of the Mauritian economy in 2008 has been created thanks to him because he acted pre-emptively, anticipating the crisis. Switching on to French he said: "*Comme les Français disent, on a anticipé. Futur anticipé était, d'après lui, plus que parfait!*" Supposedly, in June 2007-2008, Budget, ESE No. 1, ESE No. 2 had identified the threats bearing down on the country to deal with the short term effects of the international crisis. Far from the truth! You go through all the speeches, nowhere you see the word 'stimulus'! Nowhere, except once he used the word 'stimulating' while he was presenting his ESE, saying that he would be providing scholarships and projects for stimulating the growth of the creative art industry. This is the only occasion when the word 'stimulating' was used. Therefore, we cannot come to the people, the industry, the enterprises, the individual citizen and tell them: I have already given you a stimulus, anticipating the crisis, and now I am giving you an additional stimulus." This is where a government would fail, this is where people would not have trust and confidence. What a government should do, what the leader of a country should do is that he should instill trust and confidence by telling people the truth, even the hard truth should be told. And from there together let us make it and this is the way to lead a country, this is the way to inspire a country. Therefore when we look at what was being said by the hon. Minister of Finance in June and November 2008 we would see everything, routine projects, of course, to promote further the development of Mauritius, but nothing about the crisis. It is only on 20 December 2008 that the government would wake up from its slumber and come and announce to the nation the famous document "Additional Stimulus Package", showing up economic performance from 01 January 2009 to 31 December 2010, it is there and then. But what was happening prior to 20 December 2008? All the time when the Opposition was sending the warning telling them to look at what was happening worldwide and Mauritius is not immune, Mauritius will have to be ready for it, the cyclone is coming; there is the cyclone warning Class I and it can become dangerous. The Government side was branding the Opposition as *l'oiseau de mauvais augure, oiseau de malheur* etc.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, I did contribute to what the hon. Minister said, it was good performance, the FDI - was gloating about.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, economic diplomacy! For almost two or three years, I was there. There was also international



cooperation, international trade, of course. We were working for the country and the country benefited.

*(Interruptions)*

But the crisis came after I left the Government! I gave some signals. The hon. Minister of Finance would remember that all the time I was saying that our priority should be the purchasing power of the population and also employment, saving employment and, of course, creating more jobs. I even went on public platform, I saw the face of the hon. Minister of Finance when on 01 May 2006 and 01 May 2007, I made it the theme of my speech, that is, the purchasing power of the population and jobs. Of course, I have not got *futur anticipé or plus que parfait* as the Minister of Finance; I am no doctor, I am not economist, a specialist but, of course, I would not have foreseen, nobody could have foreseen in 2007, but when the sub-prime mortgage crisis started, leading to the current financial and economic crisis, this, of course, as you know, was triggered off by mortgage delinquencies and for closure in US and this impacted directly on banks and financial markets around the world. Then the signal was there and, as a specialist, the Minister of Finance should have signaled this, not only to Government, but should have also started giving the signal to the whole nation, especially the industrial world of Mauritius. This, of course, revealed the weaknesses in the financial industry regulations and the global financial system.

What were we doing all the time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? We were trying to liberalise our economy. We said less protection for more competitiveness, more liberalization, and we held international seminars together for that purpose. But when this international financial crisis came who were those who were most hit? Those who had liberalised the most. Singapore, for example, is worst hit than Mauritius. But this package, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, places emphasis unfortunately on property speculations and there is nothing by way of discipline and tighter regulations, especially wastage in enterprises, abuses, princely wages, bonus caps and all that. We have nothing of this sort here in this package. Instead some have interpreted it in this manner. I tend to agree with them that there could be some golden parachute for the incompetence to save them from inevitable crash, and this is what can be termed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we go quickly through this document which the hon. Minister claims to legislate in order to give force of law to some of the measures. Now we come to the term 'miscellaneous'. Again there are only a few measures that are being legislated directly concerning the package as such. This could be called an omnibus Bill with things concerning performance based budget, ICT and other matters etc. When we look at this document, even the 20 December document has been put into question because most of the statistics, most of the figures mentioned have completely been upset today. For example, the Minister was speaking on 20 December saying how his reforms has saved the economy. The other day, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while addressing the House, during the debate on the Insolvency Bill, I corrected the hon. Minister. I said: "You cannot arrogate to yourself and say that it is thanks to what you have done since you assumed office in July 2005 that you have been able to build in resilience in our economy."

No! I formed part of the Government for some time. I would not dare to say that it's thanks to the period that this Government has been in office. It has been done over the years; after independence, by successive Governments; the good governance that Mauritius can pride itself of, compared to other countries of the region; our democracy, our transparency, our participative democracy where people, small individuals, big enterprises together have been able to achieve this. We have perhaps an old fashioned, traditional financial system, the banks, etc. Over the years, we have tried to modernise with a lot of legislation but there is also the steadfastness of our people, their ability to sacrifice, their ability to work hard. Perhaps, there is also the element of our culture that we have inherited from the four corners of the world. There is also our faith. Our religions also had contributed a lot, so that we can face up this difficult moment now, we have the resilience - and to some extent, legitimately perhaps, the Government is claiming it - and we can pride ourselves of all this. Therefore, this has been the systematic, constant work of successive Governments, and the private sector also. The figures mentioned by the hon. Minister of Finance in the document dated 20 December to the effect that this year we are expecting a rate of growth of 5.2%, is also a revision on the previous forecast. But, now, we know that we are speaking in terms of less than 3%, 2.8%. We are told that the Stimulus Package would perhaps contribute 1%. Therefore, in real terms, if we look back, the current performance of the hon. Minister is only 1.8%. He claims that it is his performance. I don't know how other Members of the Government would react to this, and whether they are contributing to this downturn or not. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this document, we see that nurturing resilience would stay ahead of the curb. We all would like to do this. But, then, in a subparagraph, it is stated: 'coordinating with the Bank of Mauritius to ease monetary policy'. Coordinating with the Bank of

Mauritius! We know the conflicting positions as perceived in the public between the Bank of Mauritius and the Minister of Finance, if not the Ministry of Finance. On the question of the package itself, the Bank of Mauritius is insisting in saying there is need for an Additional Stimulus Package. Now, the Bank of Mauritius is speaking sense. On the question of monetary policy, on everything, we would see that there is disagreement between the Bank of Mauritius and the Minister of Finance. Then, is spelt out the status of the special allocation of Rs6 billion appropriated earlier this year - I would not go into the details, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - to show how, since June 2008, nothing much has been done. We are nearing the end of the financial year and, now, the only change has been for accelerated disbursement and also to reduce the period for disbursement. If we look at the various headings, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning infrastructure development, there is a crisis in Mauritius, independently of the global financial crisis. This crisis is as a result of the slow implementation of projects, because they have not been able to give the necessary dynamism to the economy. The construction industry has almost come to a grinding halt, because of the slackness of certain departments and also the mishandling of certain files. I was very happy to hear the hon. Prime Minister say the other day that the dream bridge is on now. But this dream bridge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, should already have been constructed by now in front of the harbour. This was negotiated first with the Chinese in 2005 with the...

(Interruptions)

I know what I am talking about. This was negotiated by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs and the then Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs in Addis Ababa in 2005. This was on the agenda of the Foreign Office Consultation of Mauritius and China in Beijing, a high level delegation led by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Cooperation, composed of representatives of the Ministry of Finance & Economic Planning, the Chairman of Enterprise Mauritius, the Chairman of the Board of Investment. Discussions were held with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Vice President of China, the Minister of Commerce of China, and with the Exim Bank. Everybody was enthusiastic about this bridge in Beijing, so much so that the delegation was made to visit the two kilometre bridge in Shanghai and also all the logistic and infrastructure in the harbour.

I was very happy this morning to hear the hon. Prime Minister announcing that, following the Europe-Africa Summit of Lisbon, Mauritius, at the regional level, has been chosen for the harbour hub for the region. Since 2006, it was agreed that Qingdao in the North of China, Shanghai in the East, Wanzhou in the South, Singapore and Mauritius should have the same infrastructure, the same logistics, so that all the commerce, the trade should go to this way towards Durban, towards Africa. Mauritius was poised to discuss about which port - we know what has happened in Madagascar; it has also been identified - along the East and South coast of Africa would be convenient for such development and infrastructure. Now, with the pirates and corsairs operating in the region, in the North West of the Indian Ocean, you realise how Mauritius would still be in a better privileged position, perhaps as in the former days when the Indian Route via Mauritius was discovered. So, all the infrastructure were there. This is where I feel sad, because this *dossier* was mishandled. Instead of discussing with the Chinese side bilaterally on a project financing basis, when we went for the Africa Summit in Beijing, the Minister of Finance decided that we should discuss for a line of credit of 100 m. dollars. We came, but nothing has been disbursed as yet. Now that we are discussing on a project basis, we are developing the airport with the help of the Chinese and, of course, *Aéroports de Paris* to the tune of 8 billion or something. Do you know how we could have benefited if we had negotiated on a project to project basis? Fortunately, there was also, at one time, people in Government who resisted that the assets of the airport be sold to foreigners. I would stop there; I won't make any further comment. I see that the hon. Minister of Tourism knows fully well what I mean. There is a lot of infrastructure. This is where Mauritius has lost time, and we should have been up the curve already. Secondly, even talking about infrastructure, I see the hon. Attorney-General whispering in the ear of the hon. Minister of Finance. But the hon. Attorney-General would have already had his Supreme Court building *flambant neuf*, had we negotiated with India on a project basis like the previous Government did for the Swami Vivekananda Convention Centre, for the Cyber City, where you have got 50% grant. We got a line of credit of \$100 m. with India also, but how much has been spent already on infrastructure? Nothing! Niet! Not one single cent! This is a pity! This is where Mauritius has lost, instead of boasting as being an expert in economy. So, I can go on and on and seek the various.

Could we talk about climate change? You know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius was being identified as the centre for climate change, centre for renewable energy. There was a Danish week here, the Germans were ready to come and the hon. Minister of Finance knows fully well, now that we are talking about development on a regional basis, how the CMMS was formed, that is, the configuration of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. And one of the major projects, along with Paul Vergès of Reunion, was self-sufficiency in energy, meaning renewable energy. And that also, we started the whole thing. Previous Governments started the bagasse energy development project. There also even with the EU we have marked time, we have not spent enough money and the former Minister of Agro Industry knows fully well what I am talking about. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning infrastructure, energy development, Members on the Government side know what I am talking about. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you were the former Minister of ICT and you know how many missed opportunities we have had in terms of infrastructure, energy development. We should have presided upon summits on ICT. We should have participated in India. We should have held a Commonwealth Summit here in Mauritius, but penny-wise pound-foolish it was not held. Even on the financial side, the Minister of Finance also has missed golden opportunities. All this is to indicate the destiny of Mauritius. Mauritius has played and has continued to play and can still play its role, but we should not afford to have such missed opportunities to which I have referred.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we go through this document of the 20 December 2008, we can see how this is the normal traditional development that Mauritius should ensure and it has nothing much to do with the present financial economic crisis where special measures should have been put in place. Government has announced more than once - even for political campaigning - that the priority is the economy, that Government will spend all time, energy and expertise on the economy. Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not the way to govern a country. It seems that the Labour Party now has decided to turn its back altogether on the social dimension of development because of what is happening right now; the situations were already aggravating in certain sectors of the economy, in certain regions of the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it pains us to hear this morning what was announced on the radio, the number of juvenile thefts and robberies - hundreds in the north - between 13 and 16 years old. Today, itself, there are quite a few around 16 years old being held in Police custody. They have been to schools. They are intelligent. They can follow all the new gadgets on television. They are exposed to all the prosperity and they want to have quick access to the mobile phones, so on and so forth. But, they don't have the money. Their parents don't have the money to feed them, to give them their basic necessities. So, they have to *faire main basse*, as soon as it appears, it comes to them. There is drug addiction, drug proliferation in all the villages now in this country. This is very serious. Poverty, in absolute term, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is increasing. The purchasing power has eroded considerably and people are desperate not only can they maintain their standard of living, but some of them cannot provide for their basic necessities. There are more inequalities in this country leading to a society that is frustrated, under stress. The Equal Opportunities Act is a good thing; it has created new hopes, but false hopes also because the gap between the big and the small is widening. Greater opportunities are being afforded to some whereas less opportunities to the greater majority. This is the tragedy; and for the Government it seems that some people are more equal than others. If you analyse, you look at the stimulus package, so-called Additional Stimulus Package, you would see that the disparity would increase further. There is better treatment being afforded to the haves, those who have more than enough and less opportunities to the havenots. What I am saying is that the Central Statistic Office, itself, confirms all those figures these days. Today, itself, we got some of the statistics, you would see what is happening, how the SMEs are going down, how more jobs are being lost; and all this has been facilitated by whom? By Government with the Employment Rights Act facilitating redundancies, closing down of factories, dismissal of people. And the jewel in the crown is that most of our parastatal bodies and State companies are in deep trouble, not because of the current financial global crisis, but because of mismanagement, because of corruption and opacity. Take the example of Air Mauritius, STC, CEB, CWA, NTC, of the air and land transport. They are all in trouble. What are we being told now? Perhaps, we will have to sell some of the assets, the jewels in the crown. The people of Mauritius, the individual citizens of Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are made to pay for this mismanagement. We know the whole saga on milk, flour, building materials, but now recently fuel, oil, Air Mauritius and State Trading Corporation. It is the people of Mauritius, the ordinary citizens who are made to pay for this mismanagement whereas, as I have said, the blue-eyed boys are being provided with golden parachutes to jump out before the crash. I know some of those happenings are not the making of the Minister of Finance. He has to endure some of these - and sometimes even to endorse some of what others are doing - because some of the

political appointees, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are above everything. As I have said, some are more equal than others. They are more superior. Those political appointees are more powerful than some of the Ministers on the other side and they are not answerable to some of the Ministers in whose Departments and Ministries they are working. They are directly answerable to the big boss. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think the House should know this. In many of the roadshows which the Ministry of Finance participates, sometimes the Prime Minister is present and, when he is addressing all the potential investors, all the friends of Mauritius around, he says: 'I am speaking here in presence of my boss'. One potential investor came to see me and said: 'well, Mauritius is a parliamentary democracy isn't it?' I said: 'yes'. 'But are you no different from Africa?' I said: 'of course, Mauritius is special and all that'. He said: 'but he is referring to his boss'. In a parliamentary democracy, you say that you are a Westminster model, all Ministers are equal and he is first among the equals. How could he be his boss? This is the image that we are projecting; the Minister of Finance always refers to the Prime Minister as his boss in international fora, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister of Finance knows why he says that. Because when he gives his letter of resignation, the boss is bound to say: 'no, I am your boss. You should keep your letter of resignation, don't give your letter of resignation'. But Mr Speaker, Sir, let me say what he calls the boss the truth in his face, the truth in his mouth and he knows it; and this is why I don't call him my boss. Therefore, I can't stay there.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I won't say as others. Others are rather wicked. They refer to the Minister of Finance as the discounted Minister of Finance, as the virtual Minister of Finance, because it is others that read the show for him. But what we need at this juncture of the world financial and economic crisis - the Minister of Finance has said it we are not immune, and we don't know how deep, how long, etc., how protracted this would be - Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is inspired leadership that can provide the necessary stimulus and dynamism, especially to our young productive forces. Never before do we have so many of our qualified and trained young people leaving or wanting to quit the country because people are losing confidence in the country, they are losing confidence in its leadership, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We ask ourselves the question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir: how can a leader stimulate? How can a leader inspire a nation? How can a Head of Government instil confidence in his people when he, himself, does not trust anybody around him, when he himself has not got confidence and trust in his Ministers and perhaps he, himself, has not got confidence in himself? How can we, therefore, inspire confidence and leadership? Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, it is in this moment of financial and economic crisis, that we realise that not much has been done to democratise our economy. Democratisation has been a mere slogan and a political campaign gimmick. Unfortunately, I must say this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is even painful is that what Government is providing for in the so-called Additional Stimulus Package is for the big ones, mostly for the big ones. How could the small men, the small people, the small entrepreneurs identify themselves with this package? I think other Members, on this side of the House, have pointed this out clearly. I think hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee talked about the small planters, the *métayers* and so on, what is happening to them. This is cruel and this is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in his very first Budget in 2006, the hon. Minister of Finance, after sitting with his big boss, came to the House with the Budget without passing through Cabinet. Here, in this House, I learned that the packages, the incentives, the schemes that existed for small entrepreneurs, for small planters, for small *métayers* were being removed. I am glad that part of it has been reinstated in the last budget. But what is cruel, you don't deprive people of what they have, they have ten facilities also at their disposal. You remove all ten, you allow them to cry, to go through pains and all that; they protested, they claimed, and then you give them two or three of those you reinstated. They feel so grateful to you: "Oh, my God, God has come down to us". So, they are thankful to you. This is very cruel, indeed. This is the saga of the workers of the Mauritius Telecom. This is why one of the workers, at one moment, out of despair was called in to accept, to go back to work to feed his family, to feed his children. And the example of the workers of Mauritius Telecom is obtainable in many other areas, in many other departments and even in the private sector. I think hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing called this the Tina Wallace. There is no alternative for the Minister of Finance, for this Government, but to go by what has been prescribed before. Be very careful!

The remedies, the prescriptions of the World Bank and the IMF have been time tested and they are being revisited. The Bretton Woods Institutions, most of the financial institutions, not only G-20, all of us, in a chorus, are saying that we should review all these organisations and democratise them more. We should



also try to consider such schemes, prescriptions that would aim at alleviating poverty that should go especially now more than ever in this moment of financial crisis. I think everybody agrees, even the G-20 has agreed to this. But unfortunately, whether you take the textile sector, the BPO, the tourism, all that is being advocated in this financial package, the small ones would not be able to come forward to benefit. I heard the Minister of Finance say, when he was presenting this Bill, that unfortunately now that credit is climbing up right now in some of our banks. But when this happens, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a lot of huge unsecured debts in our banks, a lot of big enterprises have not provided enough security for their loans. But what happens is that most of the small ones have even given more security than they should: their own personal assets, family assets, family belongings, they have even pledged their house in order to get credit to do business. Most of the small enterprises are now in danger because they are hard hit and they run the risk of bankruptcy with the Insolvency Bill that we have adopted - Rs50,000. So, they can just go for adjudication and for bankruptcy. Right now when I am speaking to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people whose houses are being seized, or had been seized are going on hunger strike because they have lost their house and everything. This is the situation that we are facing right now; and this is where I don't see much being catered for those people. The other day, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the hon. Minister of Finance was answering questions to a Parliamentary Question on the Stimulus Package, I made two suggestions to him. I suggested that he should look at finance credit and then, of course, of export guarantees. He came and *d'un revers de la main*, he said that these are for the big countries of the G-20, not for us. I am very happy, this afternoon I heard his bosom friend - the one presiding on the committee for the democratisation of economy - saying: "This is what they have said, finance credit." He was lecturing to us on trade finance, very good! And also, as soon as the G-20 has come out with their host of measures, their trillion dollars package and so on, 250 million dollars for credit, etc. for poor countries for trade finance, the Minister of Finance said: yes, we should queue up immediately in order to benefit from this. Very good! After the event, that also is good, but I was advocating that on the other day and, at the same time, I was advocating direct support to producers. Why direct support to producers, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I would not take the time of the House. I would suggest the hon. Minister to look up all the package of incentives that were introduced in the nineties. He was then also Minister of Finance, I was Minister of Agriculture and he proudly stated: It is all performance-based.

The Minister of Finance approved the package of the Minister of Agriculture, index on performance and especially production-based. But the other day, I suggested to him, under a Parliamentary Question, that it should be direct support to production and you should see the answer given. He said: I don't understand what is meant by that. But I am going to suggest in a moment what is meant by that.

In other words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Bill demystifies this Government, it bursts its myth of democratisation and it destroys the whole myth of Putting People First. This Bill does not put people first. This is what I campaigned for: Putting People First. But, unfortunately, this Bill does not do it. Because what we are going in for now, we are going for more budget deficit. We would be wasting more funds and there is not much transparency. I won't go on the details of the provision of this package and also of the Bill to indicate how there is not much transparency and how we are socialising losses, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is another important aspect of this Bill, we are socialising losses. It is a sort of casino economy that we are advocating by this Bill. We are just speculating.

*(Interruptions)*

I have said property speculation and the prime mortgage problem.

*(Interruptions)*

It was property. And now what are we doing? There is more property speculation being advocated by this Bill, those who can afford Rs50 m. and what not. And we are banking development on the property game. Therefore, we should be careful lest we are, this time, caught up in the trap of this property bubble. And what are we doing? We are socialising or nationalising losses, but we are privatising profits. You take profits, but losses we take. It's the people who take it; the Government would take it. This is not what we are advocating. And, at the same time, we are going back to the seventies, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where we are borrowing to spend and we are spending to borrow more. That's typical. I think the hon. Minister of Finance who used to be very modern in his approach has been converted by his boss and his boss has got the upper hand on him. So,



what are we proposing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I am proposing quite a few measures that Government should urgently put into place and I agree with the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius. Government should urgently come with another global package of direct support, especially to the industry, to support production so that trade should be accessible to large enterprises as well as SMEs. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there should be a global solution. It should not be the one-to-one solution, an individual solution, that is, you take one enterprise you analyse and all that. We have done that in the past when an enterprise is in trouble, especially when it is the case of a high employer in trouble and Government has to come to its rescue, more than once, in order to bail that company, especially to save employment. But this time, what we need is a global package with direct support and there must be transparency. It must be accessible to everybody and not to only those who have got credit worthiness with the bank. This is very important because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a lot of small businesses in trouble and the bank would do nothing for them. Even the Empowerment Fund would not be accessible to them. The few suggestions would be support for inputs. This has been mentioned by others and I make it mine now. Special rate for electricity, based on the real price of petroleum products on the world market and not the price being paid through those hedging contracts because we are making our industry, small and big ones, paying the cost of their mistakes, of their mismanagement. They have not managed the risks well and now our enterprises and our jobs are paying for that.

Secondly, there should be a guaranteed rate of exchange. That also is very important. And this has been done in the past, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Our sugar industry knew how to go about it. They were doing it so well with the Bank of Mauritius, a guaranteed rate of exchange to nullify the losses as a result of the fluctuation in the rates. Because some enterprises, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can be making only 10% profit overall in the production, but now with the fluctuation in the rates of exchange, some are incurring 15% losses. Already now they are in the red as a result of the foreign exchange fluctuation.

I have talked about trade and finance before and there should be a special export credit guarantee; for the SMEs especially there should be direct support, subsidies for their inputs as well as marketing schemes to give incentives for each unit of production. And for this, you go to the former schemes for various other inputs of the small planters and breeders. This morning, we had a Parliamentary Question concerning a small breeder of Vallée des Prêtres and how he was seriously hit. It was being taken as a joke because the hon. Member gave the number of chickens and goats that were destroyed as a result of the inundation.

As I said, we refer to the previous schemes that existed for the small producers and that had been removed in the first budget of this Minister of Finance. There should be compassion on the human approach, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is not just you take an economic theory; you apply it as if you are taking the same medicine and applying it as a panacea for everybody. And believe me, the stimulus package as such is not a panacea to all the ills that we are doing and I could refer to various countries because what is important is the real economy. Fortunately there we are strong. And this is where we are withstanding the onslaught or the financial crisis. And I would suggest things that can give people hopes again, new vigour, new dynamism and new trust in the Government because we want - till the last day of the mandate of this Government - people to believe in this Government because this is for the country....

*(Interruptions)*

...so that when we take over from them, we have a country that is secure, that is prosperous. And we will build up on this prosperity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Ms Deerpalsing is commenting on what I have said. What I am saying here, I said that also when I was in the Opposition before 2005, and I believe in it. And when we take over, we should not take over a country in shambles, but we should take a country in order to build on what is strong already. And this is where I would like them to succeed till their last day...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Dulloo:** There are certain measures that Government should take. The budget is coming and I suggest that they abolish the NRPT. This would instill new hopes, new enthusiasm, new trust in the people in the rural areas who would like to participate in nation building and in production. They should abolish the 15% tax on the interest of savings, because in the ESE of June 2008 and the document of 20 December, the hon. Minister says that savings are going up. No! Savings are going down now. And people who have trusted the Stock Exchange have purchased shares in many of those solid enterprises in Mauritius, but most of those shares have crashed. People have trusted the Government and have invested on the Stock Exchange and they have lost a lot of money already. People have also lost money on their savings in the banks because of the reduced rate of interests by the Central Bank. So, people are already losing on the interests earned on their savings in banks. Now, they have to pay this 15% tax on the interest that they are earning, and this is what the Government cannot grasp.

This small thing, like anything, kindles new hopes, new energy and new enthusiasm in the people. I would plead to the hon. Minister of Finance to extend further the DBM Amnesty Scheme that has been introduced. It is a good scheme; it has worked well. Many people's businesses have failed. Many people have purchased lorries through the Scheme, but they don't have transactions, they don't have business anymore.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Dulloo:** They want to pay their debts, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but they don't have enough money to pay by June of this year. I think, we should consider giving them another extension, *un autre sursis, M. le président*.

Payment of examination fees also is very important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. People knocked at the doors of Members of Parliament. The limit to pay the fees was there. Within two or three days, they got their disallowance notice. They did not know where to turn and the Minister of Finance, in this Package, is saying that he is going for the development of knowledge and industry, inciting people in order to have access to ICT and what not. It is very beautiful on paper, but if people cannot have access to their fees to sit for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate, I am pleading on my knees to Government to come to the aid of those people. Many of them have not been able to pay their fees; they will have to make special arrangements in order to be able to pay their fees. Some with promise to pay back, but I don't know whether they will be able to do so to those who have lent them money. I can go on with those many small measures that I can suggest to Government. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me tell Government one thing before I end. The country has been doing well; the country has gone through hard times because of certain mismanagement, not only Central Government.

One thing on which I would like to comment is the Programme-Based Budgeting. We are now intending to extend this immediately to the Local Authorities, regional bodies and also to other departments of Government, parastatal bodies and all that. I would ask the hon. Minister of Finance to be very careful.

During the last Budget, when this came, I warned, I referred to certain countries; it has taken a lot of time. I think I quoted New Zealand taking more than ten years for this to be put into place, to see the efficiency, the outcome, the results and I would ask Government to allow Central Government to work on this. In the first place, it is there, we have to manage it, we have to run it, but we must not extend it like this. When the first Budget is still in operation, still being tested, you are extending it now to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, the Local Authorities and even the Parastatal Bodies. I think Government should rather soft-pedal on this for a while and see its efficiency.

What I am saying is that Mauritius, especially the citizens and their children are going through hard times. Last year was catastrophic. The management of the economy for the last year was very bad indeed, but nothing is lost. This has been, of course, compounded and has been made worst by the present world financial crisis. Government did not listen to the words of caution and warning, but now it has done so. What is being proposed by this so-called Additional Stimulus Package is not enough in order to give the stimulus, the confidence and the trust necessary not only to the industry, but also to the individual citizens. Somebody has made various suggestions, I think, on this side of the House. I fully endorse what all Members of this side of the House have

said and I ask Government to look again at what is being proposed. I hope at Budget time Government would take corrective measures.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(8.05 p.m.)

**Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened to all the hon. Members who have participated in this debate. Before listening to hon. Dulloo, I thought there were two different schools of thought: one school of thought from the Opposition side and one school of thought from the Government side. But listening to the hon. Member just now, he seems to be from a very different school. 90% of his speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has nothing to do with the Stimulus Package. He was trying...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order please!

**Mr Rucktooa:** ...well, like a good orator just emphasising on topics that have nothing to do with the package. Let's forget him! But in between, hopefully, I can scratch a bit his back. Actually, I was expecting everybody in this House to be on the same *longueur d'ondes*, that is, on this Additional Stimulus Package. As true patriots, we all should have tried to find solutions together, especially when the Minister of Finance is in listening mood. We have to shelter our people. We can see the crisis coming.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, the international crisis! If the hon. Member is not aware that it is coming, then he should be sleeping somewhere.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order now! Thank you!

**Mr Rucktooa:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are living through the most severe financial crisis witnessed in recent history after sixty years. This is happening again in this world. I hope you read a bit about the great depression of the 1930s.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think the problem is arising because some people are not understanding, that there is the pre-world financial crisis and there is one which is the post-world financial crisis. Members on the other side do not understand this; they are mixing up issues. I think if I take one or two examples, it will be able to clarify the whole thing.

Let us take the Leader of the Opposition! He said that he was ringing the alarm bell in 2006. Do you know what was happening? He was stating that the storm was coming, but he, not in his party...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry, hon. Rucktooa! Address the Chair, please!

**Mr Rucktooa:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he said that he was ringing the alarm bell and that the storm was coming. What was he trying to say? He was trying to say that in 2006, the prices of real estates in the US started to go down. So, he went to the Internet and read this, but he did not realise that the alarm bell that he was ringing or the storm that was coming was their storm created that we inherited it. They had led the country in a mess in 2005. Should I again go back to start explaining all the debts?

*(Interruptions)*

I think he has used the word '*fourre-tout*'; now I understand that he was mixing all these things. This can be called '*fourre-tout ensemble*'.

*(Interruptions)*

The storm was created by him and he was pretending that he was telling us that the storm

is coming. The Lehman Brothers collapse last year. Is he a soothsayer now predicting what is going to happen? What about our friend, hon. Pravind Jugnauth? He has stated that we had something like the robust economy. That happened in what year? It was again in year 2006. We had to come up with a robust package because we had to correct all the mistakes that were done by them. Whether it was a storm or the alarm bell was ringing, but we were coming with reforms; it was because we had to protect our houses when these storms were coming, Mr Speaker, Sir. Did we close our windows and we sat down in our house? When I am saying our house, we understand I mean our Government.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wanted to explain to the hon. Members on that side that we won't have time as hon. Pravind Jugnauth was again talking about the subsidies in flour and rice. I can talk a lot on that. If I were the Minister of Finance, I would again consider about the subsidy in flour. If we are already having nearly one million tourists coming ...

*(Interruptions)*

*Tous pé mange di riz ration!* Which implies what? We have to think over it, whether we can give more subsidy in some other commodities to the common people and try not to give this or give quite a minimum amount, if I were the Minister of Finance. I won't talk again about the fees. We talked about it a lot. The idea behind it was that if we want to help the poor, we should do so. We said that if you get enough amount of money, we had to put a certain amount. If we get more then that is alright. If it is less then we do not pay 50 per cent; we pay 100 per cent for all the people who deserve it. I don't deserve it, so I have to go and pay the 100 per cent. There was this philosophy behind the school fees. But remember when we took from them in 2005 on *a pu mettre le pays sur les rails*. We were able to fight all the adverse effects from them and we were good on most of the economic fronts.

Let us come to the stimulus package.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, let's stimulate them! The stimulus package has an objective. What is the stimulus package? I am going to try to explain. One point that nobody talks about is where the stimulus package is going to help the common people. The main objective of the stimulus package - I hope all of us know - is to save jobs. We want to protect workers by supporting the vulnerable businesses to continue operation. Let's be honest. Businesses are engines of wealth creation. This is very important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. They create wealth. I don't want to define wealth. This stimulus package when helping businesses, we are helping directly, indirectly the common people too. And in times of trouble like this we have to come with, what is called, a very convincing cure. And we thought that the stimulus package will help. Everybody knows about the beginning of the crisis, it was due to the collapse of the sub-primes. We are not going to talk again about the sub-prime property in the States. The collapse, the failure has entailed major economies in recession, with rising unemployment and deficit. What should we do to stimulate growth?

The stimulus package, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has first the monetary policy, the fiscal policy and then this expenditure of capital. Nobody has talked about this monetary policy. The first thing that has been done together with the Ministry of Finance and the Central bank is that they have tried to reduce the repo rate. The reduction of the repo rate immediately reduces the rate of interest in all the commercial banks. What happens when the rate of interest goes down? There was enough liquidity, there were enough funds. Simultaneously, the Minister of Finance has decreased the deposit ratio that commercial banks have to keep at the Central bank. There is a technical word for it - cash reserve ratio. All commercial banks have to deposit an amount of money at the Central bank. I am not going to go into the details as to why it should be here. There are answers for that. We reduced that ratio from six per cent to five per cent. What have we done? We have taken liquid money, because this is what individuals deposit in banks. This money became available at the commercial banks and this one per cent decrease represents 2.5 billion rupees. There were 2.5 billion rupees available in all commercial banks at the same time the repo rate was reduced by hundred basis points, it came accumulative 250 basis points. Nobody sees the effect of this. What happened is that we had liquid money. My friend, hon. Madan Dooloo, is not here. The money is there at the banks. You can go and take your loan and this stimulus



package - I think the Minister of Finance should have some time to change the words 'stimulus package' and call it 'Government investment to stimulate growth'. It is the same thing. We are creating a stimulating package.

Government investment to stimulate growth, it is the same thing. We are creating a stimulus package to stimulate growth. We could have said it is a Government investment. Everybody hearing the stimulus package think we are taking the money and we are giving it to the rich, to the private sector. In this stimulus package, we are giving money to the private sector, we are not just bailing them out as there are conditions to that. Are we not sitting together with the banks, with the stakeholders, with the Ministry of Finance? Government is not taking the money and giving it just like that, some countries are doing it and they are doing wrong. We are saying: "O.k, I am giving you the money in terms of shares, preferences and debentures. The day you start working well and making profit, you will have to buy back those debentures. If you buy back those debentures, I am getting back the money that I have given to those companies." I just do not know how they are not understanding this point. They are thinking that the company is in trouble and I take out the money and just give them. *Bonhomme Noël moi, ki sa!*

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Rucktooa:** They do not understand this point. We are giving them the money and there is a condition which is: "you are not going to pay bonuses to your top level management as you are indebted to this Government. Give back my money and then when you have all the shares, whatever you do I don't care." We are not giving money like that as all of the people are thinking. Go and read the press! We are giving money, listen to what is being said in the House! This is why I said there are two schools of thought.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure it is the President of America who said that this Stimulus Package is going to bring a turning point because the economy in US has already started going down. It was going down and down so he had to turn this graph up and this is what is called the turning point. To make the growth start again, we had to inject money. What this Stimulus Package - which I call Government expenditure, I can also call it Government investment - is going to do is, we have not yet gone down the curve, our rate of growth is still positive. Probably we were expecting a higher rate of growth this year; we were expecting 6% rate of growth. But according to calculations, it has come up to about 5% . There are some people who are predicting 2%. So what? We have not yet gone that down. This Stimulus Package is not going to let it go that down. I am telling this House that most probably we are not coming to 2%, we will be higher than that. I also do some calculations and I know that it is not going to reach there.

*(Interruptions)*

In America they have already started breathing and my friend was talking about the stock exchange. Has the stock exchange in the world not started to go up? Are they not showing positive signs? Why is this happening? It is because of this Stimulus Package. There are some people who are still not understanding because he was talking of the Additional Stimulus Package. Even the G-20, when they first met and voted an amount of 1 or something in trillion, they still knew they would have to inject more as they were afraid it might not have this turning point. According to figures and daily news you would read on the Internet that there are some positive signs. But they have suffered. China is losing so many millions of people unemployed. What we are trying to do is to save our employment. Saving an employment means saving our family and the only way we could do that is to inject money. As I just said, this injection is an investment in the economy. This investment, as we all know, is going to preserve our jobs and I welcome the Stimulus Package.

The last point that I would like to raise on this Bill is one sector which could be looked into concerning the hon. Minister of Finance about the small planters. Even if we have come up with a lot of schemes like grouping them, like the derocking system, it worked fine in certain regions of Mauritius, except in the northern region. As it was raised by the hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, the prices of insecticides, pesticides, herbicides have trebled in the past three years and many of them are abandoning their lands. I think that part of this Stimulus Package should be directed towards them too.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you very much.



(8.25 p.m.)

**The Minister of Business, Enterprise & Cooperatives (Mr M. Gowressoo):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me first of all congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for coming in this Assembly with the Stimulus Package Bill.

Sir, the Additional Stimulus Package has two objectives - to mitigate the adverse consequences of the global economic recession in our country and to position Mauritius to ride the crest of the world economic recovery.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in year 2008 the economic growth was 5.3%, the FDI was at 11.4 billion, job creation amounted to 19,400, unemployment rate was 7.2% whereas during the period of 2000/2005, the economic growth was 2.2%, FDI for the whole five years was 2.3 billion, job creation was a dream at that time. I remember at that time, during 2000 to 2005, a former Minister inaugurated a factory this week and the following week he was called for its closure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. During that time, more than 45,000 people lost their jobs according to the Private Notice Question answered by my friend, hon. Chaumière. Unemployment rate was more than 10%, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

This Stimulus Package Bill has become necessary in Mauritius, because the world economy was in a catastrophic situation. America, which is the biggest economy, introduced a stimulus package of more than US \$700 billion, and it was followed by Japan, China and India. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we, in Government, cannot sit and wait for the recession to come deeper in this small island. This stimulus package is to protect jobs and enterprises. It is not a *fourre-tout*, as has been said by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, maybe, he himself is a *fourre-tout*.

*(Interruptions)*

A radio invited the Director of the Economic Commission of the MMM party. Every time the reporter asked what can be done, they said: "*bisin acheter l'or*". A member of the public phoned and asked the Director of the Economic Commission what he proposes as solutions. The same answer was given: "*bisin acheter l'or*".

Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the market of *l'or* is down. The price of diamond has also gone down today.

I listened to the speech of the hon. Leader of the Opposition last week. He said that every time I mentioned in the press that the SME Bill is still under preparation. We have to give a legal framework for the *petits et moyens entrepreneurs*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Very soon, this Bill will be presented to Parliament. The SMEs, with the stimulus package, are requested to come with projects, because they have ideas to create enterprises and to do business, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But, sometimes, they are on their own and they don't have any *accompagnement*; they don't know where to turn to. But today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have all the Empowerment Programmes, NICE, SEHDA, HRDC, UoM, AREU, Enterprise Mauritius. Just recently, we held the AGOA week where many entrepreneurs were interested to know how the AGOA works so that they can export to the US market. And under the AGOA, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we do not have only one item to sell to the US market; we have some 6,400 articles. We are inviting all entrepreneurs to come. The President of the United States of America, Mr Obama, made an appeal to the small and medium enterprises so that they can create wealth for the country. He requested them to come and explain the difficulties, which they are encountering so that America can combat the economic crisis, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And, here, I would like to congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister again because, in his last budget, he introduced the *Maurice Ile Durable Fund* where, again, the entrepreneurs were requested to come with new ideas. In this line, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for renewable energy, he has earmarked a sum of Rs1.3 billion to this effect.

For *la crise alimentaire*, a fund of Rs1 billion was introduced. A sum Rs500 m. was also introduced for the Manufacturing Adjustment and SME Development Fund. And, again, with the Stimulus Package, it was increased to Rs1.5 billion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the world is recognising that we are in a deep recession. One proof that we have here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is Russia. One of the richest men in Russia, Mr Oleg Deri Paska, lost \$25 billion and now he is surviving with Government subsidy. Two years ago, he employed 130,000 people and now he has no money to survive and he needs subsidy from the Government. In fact, his company was ranked

second in the world in the production of aluminum, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Businesses which are more affected today concern the metal industry, housing and car industry. As a result, it becomes necessary for the Government of Mauritius to be careful and to come with this stimulus package.

With regard to the STC, so much has been said Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but with the stimulus package, the price of gas has decreased from Rs315 to Rs300. The price of flour and bread has also come down. The price of petroleum product started to decrease due to the decreased price on the world market, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Insofar as the price of cement is concerned, this too has come down. With the help of the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, we set up a *comité de surveillance*. This results, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the decrease in the price of many products, such as milk, oil, canned food, pulses, basmati rice, etc.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this stimulus package is very important for the economy to survive; and today we must altogether try to find solutions to this problem, because if the country faces this problem deeply, all mauritian population will be affected. So, let us join hands and work together so that the country becomes a fruitful, progressive and a good country to live in and that the economy will grow and become a very important one.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Gowressoo. Hon. Dowarkasing.

(8.40 p.m)

**Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is happening now is a deep wrenching financial crisis that has originated in the United States. But the pain is spreading across the oceans, reaching the European countries, the emerging economies, the African continent and including our small country here. The consequences are bitter, the credit crisis, financial meltdowns, panic, fear and recession.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are living the golden era of free markets, easy credit, high risk bills that has led to the actual crisis. This crisis has been clearly defined and I don't think I have seen a better definition than that given by the French President Sarkozy in his speech delivered on 25 September 2008. You would allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to quote one paragraph from his speech; *le Président Sarkozy disait ceci –*

*“Cette crise; est une crise de confiance sans précédent; ébranle l'économie mondiale; de grandes institutions financières sont menacées. Des millions de petits épargnants dans le monde qui ont placé leurs économies à la bourse voient jour après jour fondre leur patrimoine. Des millions de retraités qui ont cotisé à des fonds de pension craignent pour leur retraite. Des millions de foyers modestes sont mis en difficulté par la hausse des prix.”*

M. le président, le président Sarkozy nous parle des grandes institutions certes, il nous parle aussi des millions de petits épargnants, il nous parle aussi des millions de retraités, il nous parle aussi des millions de foyers modestes et parmi ces millions d'épargnants, je suis sûr qu'il a pensé aussi aux mauriciens et mauriciennes parce qu'il parle globalement. Nous, à l'île Maurice, quand nous avons préparé le *Stimulus Package*, nous avons pris en ligne de compte les grandes institutions mais nous avons complètement oublié les petits épargnants. Nous avons complètement oublié les foyers modestes M. le président. C'est la différence entre ce qui est fait ailleurs et ce qu'on a entamé à l'île Maurice. C'est avec une visière sur les yeux que le ministre des finances a préparé ce *Stimulus Package*. J'y reviendrai, M. le président.

What has led to the crunch that we are experiencing today? What has led to that crunch? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I could, in my humble submission, just say, that it is that group, that very select group of ultraliberal economist with a *laissez-faire* capitalism mentality which has endorsed the principles of the IMF and the World Bank. To better understand this *laissez-faire* capitalism mentality, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us go to a quick question and answer exercise. The question is simple: how many economists do we need to change an electric bulb? It is a very simple question and the reply is none, because they will only sit down and wait for the invisible hand to do it. These gurus Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with their ultraliberal policies, free trade ideologies and their mantras created a form of head I win, tail you lose capitalism in the world. Allowing market forces to dictate the rule of the game while they kept on watching the invisible hand working, Mr Deputy

Speaker, Sir. They failed to put the proper safeguards, they failed to tighten control, they have mitigated the role of Government putting forward that the argument that inefficiencies of Government are relatively large compared to that on the market. These gurus have said privatised, privatised, privatised, Mr Speaker, Sir. They have also endorsed globalisation to the extreme. We, in Mauritius, have mirrored those principles, and this is where we are landing up today. While in the MSM, we have ever since raised our voice to condemn these economic policies, month after month, year after year, Sir. What were we not promised? We were being promised better days. We were being promised prosperity, we were being promised poverty reduction under a globalised world. We were given hope. Today these hopes have been shattered. Fear has taken over, fear to lose our jobs, fear to cater for children's need and education, fear to meet the monthly household budget, fear to spend Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This fear again that we are all talking of today, *le président Sarkozy l'a aussi très bien écrit*

*M. le président. Permettez moi de lire encore un extrait de son discours, et il l'a bien dit –*

*“Il faut vaincre cette peur. C'est la tâche la plus urgente, on ne la vaincra pas, on ne rétablira pas la confiance en mentant mais en disant la vérité. “*

This truth that we all want to hear has been kept away from us. Many people have said it. A few months ago, we heard about an early harvest, we heard about the bumper crop, we heard about the resilient economy and today we are in deep trouble. We have been since 2005 at the beck and call of the IMF and the World Bank, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. These international institutions, together with the WTO, have set the rules of our game here in our country. They have done so in many ways that all too often have served particular interests within the country.

*M. le président, il y a eu un bureau indépendant qui a fait une évaluation sur la FMI.* Let me just give you one of their findings. They said that the IMF gives short shrift to the concerns of the poor. While they have billions available to bail the banks, but not the paltry sums to provide for food subsidies. This is one of the findings that this bank makes. When you draw a parallel to what is being said in that report, when you just bring it down here to Mauritius, this is exactly what we see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - billions to bail out the private sector, but then when we come to the poor nothing is being done! When it comes to subsidies, I am not going to dwell in those details, but you know what I am speaking of. This is the parallel, these bodies, the IMF and the World Bank have been controlling us from there with the invisible hand which has been working and working. Today everybody is in a mess all over the world. I have said it before, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have ended up in a system of imbalances, which I expected the Additional Stimulus Package to address and correct. We are heading towards economic imbalances, we are heading towards environment imbalances and we are heading towards political imbalances. Economic imbalances between the rich and the poor and today the gap between the rich and the poor has exacerbated and since 2005, the gap is broadening and broadening. The rich over the years have been generously served by the policies put in place and the modest average citizens have seen the purchasing power being eroded month after month, year after year.

The statistics for those requesting social aid speak for themselves, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If you see the package and the amount of money that have been given - and which have been highlighted by hon. Pravind Jugnauth, our leader - and you just add it up, it will give you the sum of more than Rs30 billion that has been given to the private sector since 2005. And if you work out a quick calculation on the number of taxpayers in this country, you will see that we have given Rs1.2 m. on the head of every taxpayer to the private sector - if we add up the Rs10 m. due to depreciation, the Rs2 m. savings on account of compensation payable, so on and so forth. All those six measures were highlighted by hon. Pravind Jugnauth. But then, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it will be wise to know that, after having given that sum of money, how many of these companies, which have benefited from the generosity of this Government, have endorsed the corporate social responsibility scheme. How many of them? Very few! But when we bailed them out, when they are making good profits, how many of them have gone through that scheme? What is the status of the bonus syndrome in most, if not all the companies? Have we tried to enquire whether the CEOs are pocketing enormous bonuses, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? This is why I say that there is an urgent need to rebalance, to provide the necessary equilibrium, otherwise we are heading towards a situation where the rich will be richer, the poor will be poorer certainly, but then, the average income people will fall down to a lower grade, because they are the ones who have been mostly hit by all the measures taken by the Minister of Finance since 2005. This is why if

we don't take care, we don't re-equilibrate, we may be heading towards a situation where we will have the two extremes, those who are very rich and those who are very poor. We don't want to have that kind of Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have said how much concern has been expressed about the poor people in this stimulus package. Government should not only play an essential role in mitigating the market failures, but should also ensure that social justice is prevailed. Government should have a balanced view whatever stage of political and economic development a country is, because social cohesion is important if an economy is to function. This is where I believe that the hon. Minister of Finance has failed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Economic imbalances, when it comes again to the SMEs and to the large corporates, there also there is double standard.

The hon. Minister of Finance, replying to a PQ, a fortnight ago, stated clearly that there cannot be one size that fits all. I agree. But then, what is the main aim of this additional stimulus package? It seems that we are forgetting the aim. The aim, as he has stated in the document, is to preserve jobs. But jobs should be preserved in the big corporates as well as in the SMEs. In fact, they are the most vulnerable ones. Small hotels, small companies are the most vulnerable ones. The big corporate are direct beneficiaries. The small and medium enterprise - Enterprise Mauritius will have to enquire, how much time will that take? And then we will have to go to the Consortium of Bank. How much time that will take again? We are in a state of urgency; and this is how we are addressing the problems at two different levels. Don't you think that jobs are not threatened there? Then, why this double standard in addressing this problem? If we really want to save jobs, why is it that it is only in big corporates that we have separate direct beneficiaries? And why are we addressing it with a double standard when it comes to the SMEs? Since 2005, what are we not saying? SMEs are the engines of growth; they are going to be the engines of the economy. And this is how we are dealing with SMEs in this ASP, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

In the case of World Knits, they have already benefited from the stimulus package before even we came to this House and started discussing on this issue. But then we want to know whether there has been an audit trail carried out there. We have never been informed about it.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, we need to be informed about it; and we want a report to be tabled in the House so that we can also know how this audit trail has been carried out.

*(Interruptions)*

We are not aware about it. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there should be full transparency as to where these public funds are going. This is the aim when I say the report should be tabled, because we want transparency.

Let me now come to some other points. When the hon. Minister of Finance presented his ASP, he said that the bulk of the money will be spent on infrastructure. In fact, about 30 per cent - or a bit more maybe - of the sum earmarked is going to public infrastructure. About Rs1 billion is going to the road network; and this work is going to be carried out by the Road Development Authority. There are so many projects in the pipeline.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are you aware that the RDA operates in complete opacity? There is not a single road project that has not been contested either in court or that a case has been filed at the ICAC. Just mention it! You would see all the projects, be it the Verdun/Terre Rouge road; be it the extension of the Wooton/Quartier Militaire road, be it any road project has been either contested in court or a case has been filed at ICAC. What does that mean?

*(Interruptions)*

Not a sign of transparency! It is a sign that there is something fishy going on there. That is why people are contesting. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we don't have much time left, so I won't indulge in details on the Quartier Militaire/Wooton road. Everybody knows what happened there. Can an explanation be given to this House? Why is it that the lowest bidder was not given this contract?

*(Interruptions)*



Why is it that the lowest bidder was not awarded this contract? The lowest bidder was privy to certain information, like the bill of quantities which was discussed only in the premises of the Road Development Authority; later on, they changed that bill of quantities and the contractor never knew about that; he came with a tender with the original bill of quantities which was never disclosed; and we are talking of transparency! We all know what is happening at the Central Procurement Board.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes! And I will ask the hon. Prime Minister to conduct an enquiry there so that you may know what is happening there.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let us get back to the Bill.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are so many other projects like that. Let me come to the second imbalance - the environmental imbalances. It seems that whenever there will be a financial crisis, or any sort of crisis, it is the environment that is going to suffer the most. And this is what is happening here also. This is what is happening around the world, and we are also going on the same trend. We are not making the difference. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whenever we talk of resources, we must also bear in mind the capacity of the planet and that of our country to replenish it. Maybe, it is time to show how concern should we be about our environment; how much environmental degradation we should tolerate if it allows us to have a higher GDP. All these factors have been completely ignored by the ASP. Not a single rupee has been identified or earmarked. I stress on this point: not a single rupee has been earmarked for the preservation of our ecological system, be it our beaches, be it our lagoons, be it the coral reefs, be it the forest.

We are concerned when there is a drop in the tourist arrival. Suddenly, it is alarming. But these factors: the degradation of our lagoon, the dilapidation of our lagoon, the coral reefs, the erosion of our beaches may also lead in a very concrete way to the decrease in the arrival of our tourists. Our tourist industry can suffer from these things. If we want Mauritius to have a touristic vocation, we need to build up a package for our ecosystem. Nothing has been said. It is on environment, not on ecology. Very often, we have a tendency to mix up these two - environment and ecology - but they are not the same, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Ecology is ecology, and environment is environment.

M. le président, nous consacrons beaucoup de notre temps à nous soucier de nos déficits économiques. Pendant deux semaines, nous sommes en train de débattre le *Stimulus Package Bill* au Parlement, alors que ce sont les déficits écologiques qui menacent notre avenir économique à long terme. On se met immédiatement ensemble pour trouver des solutions à des problèmes financiers mais, depuis des années, la sonnette d'alarme a été tirée sur le réchauffement de la terre, sur les effets de serre, mais rien n'a été fait. Jamais ce Parlement n'a eu l'occasion de discuter sur des problèmes d'environnement, mais on se met tout de suite ensemble quand il y a un problème financier. Or donc, M. le président, les déficits économiques représentent ce que nous, nous empruntons les uns et les autres, et les déficits écologiques c'est ce que nous enlevons aux générations futures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at this juncture, maybe it is high time for the setting up of the permanent committee of this House on environment and ecological issues. We need to look at those issues. When you see this Additional Stimulus Package, what are those things that are being removed? Environment protection fee! Why should the environment protection fee be sacrificed when there is financial crisis? There are so many other issues directly linked with environment. All those issues related to taxes and environment are being removed in this Stimulus Package. Why is it that only those taxes related to environment should be removed? There is the environment protection fee; *Maurice Ile Durable* levy has been suspended because of economic crisis. *Pourquoi est-ce que l'environnement doit payer les pots cassés d'une crise financière?*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the next point I want to make is about the political imbalance. The question today is how we should link to have a global reach of the market. This is the big issue. We are in a financial crisis, and we should know what to do in order to have a global reach of the market. What should we be doing to diversify from a European dominated export-based market and stewardship of economic wealth? This is the issue that we need to tackle. Mauritius has hosted a conference to enhance the South-South cooperation. Have we done any significant progress on that issue after that conference? Is it not high time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to develop a roadmap for stronger multilateralism with emerging economies and within the South-South



cooperation?

The second point I want to make, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is about scrutiny, the legitimacy of the public powers to scrutinise and intervene in the functioning of the financial system. This Parliament, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, must be able to scrutinise all the institutions where public funds are involved. Many may not agree to what I say, but what has taken place at Air Mauritius, at the State Trading Corporation has convinced me today that many of these institutions could have been run more transparently if this Parliament could have exercised its role of overlooking those institutions, *surtout où l'argent du contribuable est en jeu. Ce qui se passe aujourd'hui, c'est que nous avons tendance à créer des compagnies privées. La STC est un exemple.* They create a private company just to do away with its scrutiny, and then the hon. Minister will come to Parliament and say that, as this is a private company and guided by the Companies Law, he can't give any reply to queries or questions. It is so simple. That has been done with the STC. This is the case with Air Mauritius, and so many companies. Now, it is high time to tighten control, and we urge the hon. Minister to look into those issues.

Finally, I would say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we were waiting a lot for the G-20 deliberation. Of course, it has shed some hope for us, but then certain countries in the G-20 have pointed out the issue of fiscal paradise, and some of the countries have mentioned Mauritius as being one of those fiscal paradise. So, we have to be cautious.

*(Interruptions)*

I am just stating that it is a big issue. Even China has to stand on the way against this issue, because of Hong Kong and Macau. A finger has been pointed to us. We need to be cautious. *Je ne suis pas un oiseau de mauvais augure.* I am just telling this...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order! Hon. Members! Hon. Boolell, please!

**Mr Dowarkasing:** We have been mentioned, and we need to be cautious, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are also having hope in the deliberations of the G-20. The G-20 is very much divided on numerous issues. Should we still keep on depending on what will happen there globally for us to adjust also? We have not paved the way for more South-South cooperation. We haven't so far. There has been a big conference here, but then nothing in practice. Nothing has come out; no initiative has been taken to enhance that. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of course, we have a lot of challenges. They are basically of economic nature, but we cannot lose sight of the environment, I said it, and, above all, the sufferings of the people. This Additional Stimulus Package has been more one-sided and needs to be rebalanced to provide the equilibrium required for us to forge our way ahead.

I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. A. Boolell:** Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

**Dr. Bunwaree** rose and seconded.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Debate adjourned accordingly.*

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday 15 April 2009 at 10.30 a.m.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval)** rose and seconded.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House stands adjourned.

## MATTERS RAISED ON ADJOURNMENT

### HOLYROOD SSS - SCHOOLYARD

**Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal):** I know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that everyone is in a hurry and is hungry at the same time. I am going to be very brief.

I would like to bring to the attention of the House, particularly, the hon. Minister of Education & Human Resources, the deplorable state in which the Holyrood SSS is. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the yard of this school has grasses and shrubs higher than the average man. I am going to table a photo of this. The schoolyard is nearly *une forêt en friche*. At the beginning of the year, nothing has been done for the students, for this school. After a whole semester, the situation is the same.

I would appeal to the hon. Minister to see to it that, at the resumption of studies, these students have a better environment. The point is that we ask our students, our kids to respect environment, but we put them in such a deplorable state. Moreover, we talk about equal opportunities and, at the same time, we give different treatments to different schools. We have schools where the yard *est impeccable* and other places où *c'est une forêt en friche*. *Donc, il y a des messages qu'on passe à travers ces actions. Je demanderai donc au ministre de jeter un coup d'œil sur ces photos - c'est vraiment effrayant - et de faire le nécessaire pour que ces enfants puissent avoir un environnement sain.*

*Merci, M. le président.*

**The Minister of Education, Culture & Human Resources (Dr. V. Bunwaree):** I have just listened to what the hon. Member said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Of course, early, tomorrow morning, I will send a team there to see what is happening. But I must say that there is no *deux poids deux mesures, deux types de traitements*. *Ce n'est pas injuste, mais il y a certaines écoles qui font mieux que d'autres*. We are looking at this in a global view also in all schools. We have had some complaints in some places, and I am going to see to it that the environment at school reflects what we want it to be.

Thank you.

### MAURITIUS TELECOM - TRADE UNIONISTS

**Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to raise a matter, which is unfortunately arousing a lot of concern, especially to the workers and trade unions of this country. I am referring to the case of the two trade unionists of Mauritius Telecom.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the saga of Mauritius Telecom trade unionists unfolds, we cannot but be shocked by the obstinacy and the contempt that the MT Board is still holding against these two workers. This issue has been raised several times in this House, and has been widely and extensively covered by the press. I don't want to get back into the history, the chronology of the events that has led us in this situation, but suffice it to say that this ping pong game, unfortunately, seems to be lasting too much. Who is responsible for this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? This is the question. These two trade unionists have been subject to this trauma for more than eight months now. They are without any wages, without any unemployment benefit or benefit of any kind, and we have learnt that Cabinet has expressed the wish that these two trade unionists should be reinstated without any condition. Yet, the Board of MT met on Thursday last, *adopta la ligne dure*, as we say in French, and issued a letter to them, whose contents totally contradict the statement and the undertaking given by the hon. Minister in this House, and presumably against the decision of Cabinet which has been so widely publicised. The question that everybody is asking is: which is which, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Minister maintains that the Board was well aware of the wish and decision of Cabinet, whereas the Chief Executive Officer of the MT, as we all heard, insolently announced on the radio that no decision was transmitted to the Board and that the Board has not taken any undertaking and was not aware of any Cabinet decision to that effect.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hence the letter imposing reinstatement on the basis of a new contract, and an *ex gratia* payment for the past years of service was sent to these two trade unionists. And, in a most dignified manner, they returned their letter to MT on Friday last, and we understand that the inter-ministerial committee set up by Cabinet met on that Sunday under the chairmanship of the hon. Minister. It would seem, unfortunately, that the Government is helpless and has lost its muscles in the face of the arrogance and the insubordination of

the MT Board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is being *tourné en ridicule*, and we are witnessing a fictitious tug of war and avoidable standstill. Why cannot Government stand by its decision? Why should it waive off? The trade unions are suspecting that Government might back-pedal on its pledge given to the trade unionists. My appeal to Government is that it must immediately see to it that MT implements its decision. It is an issue of human rights, sovereignty, and a matter which concerns the dignity of Cabinet and the dignity of our country.

Lastly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on this issue of the number of Directors sitting on the Board, why are there only four Mauritian Directors and four French Directors when there should have been five? I have with me a document dated 16 May 2008; that was the voting card of the Annual General Meeting at the Octave Wiehe auditorium, Reduit. That was the last Annual General Meeting held by Mauritius Telecom. There is a resolution, which I am going to table, to approve the reelection or election, as applicable, of the following Directors under separate resolutions. There were eight resolutions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and four of them were to reelect Mr Appalsamy Das Thomas as Director, Mr Suresh Seeballuck, Mr Ali Mansoor and Mr Georges Henry Jeanne. These are the only four Directors that were elected on the Mauritian side, and four of the Directors on the French side are Mr Marc Rennard, Michel Monzani, Mr Michel Barré, Mr Christophe Eouzan, when we know that five Mauritian Directors should have been elected on the MT Board. Can we know who is responsible for this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Is it the CEO, the Chairman or the Company's Secretary? My appeal to the hon. Minister of Labour, Mr Chaumière, is that he should enlighten the House and inform the workers of this country and the trade unions when this unconditional reinstatement will take place. I am sure the hon. Minister, who has a duty towards the trade unions and the workers of this country, would see to it that immediately the reinstatement takes place on an unconditional basis.

**The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Mr J. F. Chaumière):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for coming up with this statement, but I must say as well that, when there was a deal between Mauritius Telecom and France Telecom, I think he was a Minister at that time, and he knows quite well that there are certain things that I don't want to reveal at this point in time. But what I need to say is that we have taken the measures that should have been taken in order to be able to solve this problem. I must add, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that, legally, I cannot interfere onto the Board of Mauritius Telecom. I cannot substitute myself to the Board of Mauritius Telecom, but what I must say also is that, excluding these facts where there are certain things which fall under the purview of the Board of Mauritius Telecom, my colleagues and myself gave the commitment that we are doing the needful to come with the solution that can be acceptable to one and all. This is what we are going to do. What I must add, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that we will leave no stone unturned to be able to find the right solution for one and all. This is what I have to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** May I just remind hon. Members that we have a list of six other hon. Members who have expressed the wish to intervene. I would request each and everyone to bear that in mind as we have only 30 minutes in all.

Thank you.

#### CHEMIN GRENIER - MAISON DE JEUX

**Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River):** M. le président, je souhaite, à mon tour, soulever un problème épineux dans ma circonscription. Il s'agit de l'ouverture d'une maison de jeux à Chemin Grenier. Elle se trouve à deux pas d'un kovil et à quelques pas de deux écoles secondaires. En réponse à une question posée par mon collègue, l'honorable Alan Ganoo, en décembre dernier, le ministre de tutelle avait répondu qu'effectivement, le *District Council* de Grand Port/Savanne avait bien reçu une application mais qu'il avait été informé qu'il n'y avait eu aucune objection.

Or, M. le président les membres du Chemier Grenier Mariamen Kovil ont fait une objection, ils ont été reçus par le district Council de façon très cavalière disent-ils, mais malgré leur objection, deux jours après le permis

a été délivré. M. le président, ce problème interpelle tous les habitants de Chemin Grenier, toutes communautés confondues. Jeudi, tous les représentants de la circonscription, du côté du gouvernement comme de l'opposition, ont été invités à une réunion pour en parler et la population de Chemin Grenier est inquiète car elle craint que les jeunes qui vont sortir de l'école et qui vont passer devant cette maison de jeux vont être attirés par cet appât. Ces habitants craignent pour les foyers qui sont déjà en difficulté financière et qui verront probablement leur maigre revenu aller dans cette maison de jeux. Et ils craignent aussi que tous les efforts qui sont faits par tous les groupes de toutes communautés confondues pour essayer d'inculquer à nos jeunes des valeurs morales, soient totalement caducs avec l'ouverture de cette maison de jeux. Donc je fais un vibrant appel au gouvernement parce qu'il s'agit non seulement de l'administration régionale mais aussi du ministère du logement et des terres puisqu'il y a eu un appel qui a été fait auprès du Town and Country Planning Board, pour user de leur autorité, d'une façon judicieuse, pour revoir cette décision qui a été prise dans l'intérêt de la population.

### FLACQ/BON ACCUEIL - POSTERS

Le deuxième problème que j'aimerais soulever concerne le ministre du tourisme qui n'est malheureusement pas là, mais son collègue se fera certainement un plaisir de lui transmettre ce que je vais dire. Il s'agit tout simplement, M. le président, d'un collage d'affiches sauvage dans le sud de l'île et dans la circonscription numéro 9 Flacq/Bon accueil, des affiches annonçant le meeting du 1er mai de l'Alliance sociale. En arrivant ce matin je voulais interroger le ministre de tutelle en essayant de lui demander si par hasard la réglementation des collages d'affiches avait été revue par ce gouvernement pour autoriser maintenant le collage sauvage. Mais j'ai appris cet après-midi que la police avait usé de son autorité et avait mis de la peinture noire sur les affiches, ce qui rend encore plus horrible l'environnement de cette région. Donc, je fais un appel au gouvernement pour demander à leurs agents de respecter des lois que eux-mêmes ils ont introduites dans l'intérêt de notre environnement et de ce fameux secteur touristique que nous essayons de promouvoir.

Merci.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. I will invite Ministers to take note of the problems, because under Standing Orders, we can only go until 21.38 hours. We have only fifteen minutes left and we have five other Members to intervene.

**Dr. Sithanen :** I have taken note of the matters raised.

### CHEMIN GRENIER - LA FOIRE - TRANSFER

**Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am raising an issue which concerns the Minister of Local Government regarding the proposed transfer of *La foire* de Chemin Grenier to Surinam. I am given to understand by the district council that the decision has already been taken and that funds have already been earmarked for the construction of the market. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this decision will cause a lot of hardship not only to the inhabitants of Chemin Grenier but also to the inhabitants of Choisy, Baie du Cap, St. Martin and Chamouny. There is no other market fair in this area. Do you realise that the market of Chemin Grenier services about 40,000 inhabitants? What will happen if *la foire* moves to Surinam is that the inhabitants of Choisy will have to take two buses, one bus to come to Chemin Grenier and another one to go to Surinam. They will have to spend about Rs60 in bus fares. The inhabitants of the surrounding areas, including those of Chemin Grenier will have to take a bus to go to Surinam and the distance from Chemin Grenier to Surinam is about 6 km away. People are already facing hardship for the purchase of vegetables due to the high price of this commodity and now they will have to bear extra expenses, not to mention the inconvenience, of travelling about 6 km. I know - and I am aware - that there is a problem of traffic jam in the centre of Chemin Grenier, but I think we should take other measures, try to explore other avenues or maybe compulsorily acquiring ring land in the surroundings around Chamouny road where land is available. My request, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is for the Minister of Local Government to look at this matter once again and to take into consideration the distance between Chemin Grenier and Surinam. And the fact is that vegetable sellers will have to incur additional costs on transport which will be passed on to the consumers.

Before infrastructural work can start, can the hon. Minister look into this matter?

Thank you.

**The Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues & Outer Islands ( Dr. J. B. David):** Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I'll look into it and I'll certainly meet the councillor probably by Friday.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Dowarkasing.

**Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands):** Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the issue I want to raise is addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a lot of CHA estate houses, mostly in Cité Malherbes, Cité Rivet, Curepipe - maybe in some other CHA estates - are in a deplorable state. The ceilings of these houses are falling apart; most of these houses were constructed in the immediate post-Gervaise period and have been constructed on the cross block corners technique without pillars. Many of these people have applied for the slab money, but cannot reroof their houses because they need additional money to cast the pillars and the whole concrete framework. The people I am referring to here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are very poor household and cannot afford to cast pillars and the structure. I would, therefore pledge to the hon. Minister of Finance whether he could consider giving an additional one-off grant to enable them to cast the pillars and the framework. Maybe, he may consider this as a special item in the forthcoming budget.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen):** I am not aware of that problem, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We will look into it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Vice-Prime Minister will look into it and come back to us. Hon. Varma.

**(i) UNION VALE SUGAR ESTATE - INHABITANTS - RELOCATION**

**(ii) RICHE-EN-EAU SUGAR ESTATE - EMPLOYEES - PLOT OF LAND**

**Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me the opportunity to raise two issues pertaining to my constituency, and both issues concern the Ministry of Agro Industry . The first one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerns the Union Vale sugar estate. As the House may be well aware, there are only three housing estates which are left. On a recent visit to the housing estate of Union Vale, I was really taken aback by the deplorable state of the housing estate. I raised the issue,

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a number of occasions in this august Assembly, from 2005 to 2007; and it is unfortunate that the inhabitants of Union Vale sugar estate have not yet been relocated. I will request the hon. Minister for Agro Industry, Food Production and Food Security to do the needful, because the roofs are really falling apart; the houses do not have electricity and the refuse collection is a problem as the local authority is not doing the needful.

The second issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerns the employees of the Riche-en-Eau Sugar Estate. Mr Deputy Speaker, in December 2007, they had a meeting with the Sugar Authority and the Sugar Authority promised that the employees of the sugar estate will receive their plot of land in Ville Noire in 15 months time; 15 months have elapsed, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, and they have not yet received their plot of land and they would wish that this be done within the shortest possible delay. I would request the hon. Minister to do the needful.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**The Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security (Mr S. Faugoo):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have taken good note of both points raised by my friend and I will look into the matter.

**Mr Sayed-Hossen (Fourth Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE):** Mr Deputy



Speaker, Sir, being given that I have two lengthy interventions, may I seek your permission to intervene at a future session.

**The Deputy Speaker:** With pleasure.

**Mr Sayed-Hossen:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

#### **PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLE LICENCE - APPLICATION**

**Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have two points addressed to the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport.

My first point concerns application for public service vehicle licence to operate from Anahita Hotel which has been advertised on 01 April 2009. Some 12 villages are eligible for application and the closing date and time is 10 April 2009 at 15 00 hours. But the people in the surrounding villages cannot understand how villages like Bel Air Rivière Sèche, St Michel, La Lucie Roy, Olivia which are one or two kilometres from Anahita have been omitted from the list when villages like Marie-Jeanne and Deux Frères which are around 5 km radius are included. How are these villages omitted? In the past, when such omissions were made, re-advertisement was carried out as the closing date had already lapsed. It was 10 April. Therefore, I request the hon. Minister that necessary amendments be made and consider the re-advertisement of the public service vehicle licence to operate from Anahita. This is my first point.

#### **MORCELLEMENT SANS-SOUCI, MONTAGNE BLANCHE - HUMPS**

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my second point to the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure himself concerns the village of Montagne Blanche. Fortunately I was there yesterday just near the morcellement Sans-Souci. There was a serious accident near Morcellement Sans-Souci on Sunday. Yesterday, there was another accident because it is a straight road and the cars go at a very high speed. Many serious accidents have occurred on that particular place. I understand also that the residents have approached Ministers on the Government side since 2006, petitions have been sent ...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Gunness:** ...to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. Can I, therefore, request the Minister to look into the matter because it is very serious? If I were not there yesterday, probably these people could have taken the law in their hands. I promised them that I'll raise the matter in the National Assembly today and ask the Minister to provide one or two humps in order to prevent such recurrence of accidents.

#### **FUEL SUGAR ESTATE - VRS 2**

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, lastly I would like to raise a point addressed to the Minister of Agriculture. It concerns VRS 2 in Fuel. It is nearly 18 months now and nothing has been done. I would like to request the hon. Minister to look into the matter.

**The Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo):** I would like to thank the hon. Member. Both issues were raised by hon. Lormus Bundhoo and the other two colleagues.

As far as the first issue is concerned, I do agree that there might have been a technical mistake which crept in. I have already given instructions to NTA to have it rectified.

On the second issue, the hon. Member was himself a Minister earlier in Public Infrastructure and he knows very well that on classified roads normally we don't put humps. So, I will have the regulations amended to see to it that even on classified roads we can also put a few humps. I can assure the hon. Member that the work will be done in the weeks to come.

**The Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production & Security (Mr S. Faugoo):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,

I have taken note of the point raised by the hon. Member. I'll look into the matter.

*At 9.34 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 15 April 2009 at 10.30 a.m.*

## WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### TEENAGE VIOLENCE - CASES

**(No. B/178) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to teenage violence, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof committed between 2002 and 2008 (a) individually (b) in gang, indicating the number thereof in each case in which –

- (i) death of the victim/s resulted, and
- (ii) teenage depression was identified to be associated therewith.

**Reply:** I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that during period 2002 to 2008, a total of 1,618 cases of teenage violence have been reported, among which 1,399 have been committed individually and 219 were committed in gangs.

I am further informed that in nine cases the aggression has resulted in the death of the victims.

It is to be noted that only a healthcare professional can determine if a teenager is depressed by using psychological tests and detailed clinical interviews with the teenager and his/her family members, teachers and peers. The Police is not trained to identify teenage depression although they may recognize some of the more common symptoms. In such cases, the suspects are referred either to the Police Medical Officer or the hospital.

### VIDEO RECORDING - CHILDREN'S STATEMENT

**(No. B/179) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the use of video recording of children's statements, especially of victims of abuse, as evidence in courts, he will, for the benefit of House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if a Committee has been set up to make proposals in relation thereto and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the composition thereof ;
- (b) the number of meetings held as at to date, and
- (c) where matters stand.

**Reply:** As I stated in my reply to PQ No. B/1193 on 11 November 2008, consideration is being given by the Police to adopt what is called the "Méthode Mélanie" which consists of video recording of children's statements to be used as evidence in court.

In this regard, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the project is currently being monitored at the level of the Police Headquarters. In the exercise, three Interview Rooms of the Police Family Protection Unit have been identified: one at Piton, one at Rose Hill and one at Port Louis and the procedure to equip them with video recording system is underway. I am also informed that the Commissioner of Police will shortly convene further working sessions with the relevant stakeholders namely, the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare; the Solicitor General's Office; the Master and Registrar, Supreme Court; the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Ombudsperson for Children's Office with a view to examining the issues pertinent to such video recording of children's statements.

### PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM - SENATE

**(No. B/180) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will state if Government proposes to introduce a Senate in our parliamentary system with a view to enhancing democracy.

**Reply:** Our existing unicameral legislature has served the country well since independence, so much so that Mauritius is today recognised internationally as a model of a living and vibrant parliamentary democracy. The SACHS Commission also observed that “by international standards Mauritius rates highly as a democratic country”.

Nevertheless, as the House is aware, the Labour Party had proposed the creation of a second Chamber in our Parliament and it was included in the Labour/MMM manifesto of 1995. However, with the break-up of the Labour Party/MMM alliance, the Opposition then clearly stated that they would not vote for the establishment of a Senate which necessitated a constitutional amendment for which there was no required majority - i.e. votes of  $\frac{3}{4}$  members of the National Assembly. Since then we have not seen much enthusiasm for the idea. It was not included in the terms of reference of the SACHS Commission nor was any mention of it made in the Presidential Addresses of 2000 or 2005.

#### **FLIC-EN-FLAC, GRAND' BAIE AND TROU D'EAU DOUCE - TOURISTS - BURGLARY AND LARCENY**

**(No. B/181) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the offence of larceny and burglary in the regions of Flic-en-Flac, Grand' Baie and Trou d'Eau Douce, 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 last two years, in which tourists have been victims.

**Reply:** I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

The House will note that there has been a decrease in the number of cases of larceny and burglary which have been reported to the Police last year as a result of several measures taken for ensuring the safety and security of tourists.

In my reply to PQ No. B/1137 on 19 August 2008, I indicated a series of measures taken by the Police and the Ministry of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications to reinforce security of tourists.

In addition, as indicated earlier in my reply to PQ No. B/175, the Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Surveillance system has now been installed at Flic-en-Flac. It will be operational as from 24 April 2009. The CCTV project is also being implemented in the region of Grand Baie. Tenders are being launched for the project.

It is felt that with the installation of the CCTV surveillance system in the two regions, the crime rates will be even more significantly reduced.

#### **BANGLADESHI WORKERS - WORK PERMITS**

**(No. B/182) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Bangladeshi nationals, he will state Government policy in relation to those having a contract of employment in Mauritius, indicating if any changes have recently been brought thereto.

**Reply:** I am informed that several problems have been encountered with Bangladeshi workers such as –  
**Discrepancies in their passport.**

Difficulties to keep track as some of them have changed several employers. There are cases where officers of the Passport and Immigration Office have arrested Bangladeshis working in sugar cane fields, poultries and selling fruits in street corners.

There were no bank guarantees for their repatriation. Some have come here with fake work permits and fake identities.

Bangladeshi workers are very often involved in Police cases. Very often they fight among themselves and are involved in cases of rape, wounds and blows and larcenies.

There are also cases where Bangladeshi nationals placed on the control list of the Passport and Immigration Office, have re-entered the country under a different name in order to escape immigration vigilance.

As a result, it was decided in December last that no new application for work permit for male Bangladeshi workers should be entertained until we can be sure that such behavior can be stopped at source.

However, in order not to disrupt the operation of company they are serving, it has been decided that the work permits of those who are already in employment in Mauritius be extended up to end of December 2009 and then we will re-assess the situation.

There is no change in the policy as regards female Bangladeshi workers.

#### **FOREIGNERS - INTEGRATED RESORT SCHEME - RESIDENCE PERMIT**

**(No. B/183) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the foreigners who have been granted a permanent residence permit after the acquisition of property under the Integrated Resort Scheme, he will state the number thereof.

**Reply:** Foreigners who have acquired a property under the Integrated Resort Scheme are not granted a permanent residence permit. They are issued with a residence permit which remains valid for the whole of the period during which the non-citizen holds the residential property under the IRS and for so long as the holder is not certified by the Board of Investment to have ceased to satisfy the requirements of the IRS.

I am informed that 208 residence permits have been issued to foreigners who have acquired immovable property under the IRS. Furthermore, 311 residence permits have also been issued to their spouse and dependents.

#### **STOLEN PROPERTY - OFFENCES - CASES**

**(No. B/184) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the offence of possession of stolen property, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases thereof, for each of the years 2005 to 2008, indicating in each case, if the accused had, in the past, been found guilty of the same offence.

**Reply:** I am tabling the information requested by the hon. Member.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Police has taken a series of measures to curb down larceny ranging from preventive patrols to awareness campaigns.

The Police Crime Prevention Unit has launched a vast sensitization campaign to inform the community at large on a regular basis of the consequences of being found in possession of stolen property as well as of the different ways to protect their property.

#### **DIEGO GARCIA & CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO - MAURITIUS SOVEREIGNTY**

**(No. B/185) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the issue of the sovereignty of Diégo Garcia and the return on the islands of the Archipelago, he will state if Government proposes to involve the new United States administration in the current efforts to find a suitable solution thereto, following the election of Mr Barack Obama as President of the United States.

**Reply:** Only two weeks after the new American President, Mr Barack Obama, took office, I proceeded to Washington from 03 to 06 February 2009 to attend the 57<sup>th</sup> National Breakfast Prayer Meeting and other related events. I had the opportunity to meet members of the new administration and to renew contacts with some influential members of the US Congress. I was among the select group of foreign personalities who

were invited to the meeting with high officials of the new US Administration together with senior members of the House of Representatives and the Senate. I exchanged views with Ms Valerie Jarett, an influential member of the US President's team, Senior Adviser of the President for inter-governmental relations and public liaison.

In the course of my meeting with the State Department, I raised the important issue of Mauritian Sovereignty on the Chagos Archipelago. I explained our position concerning the very long standing claim of Mauritius. I pointed out that should we not get satisfaction at the earliest on this issue, we would have no alternative but to explore other avenues. Since the Agreement to lease Diego Garcia to the US will expire in early 2016, I invited the US to use its goodwill as a common friend and 'interested' party to help resolve this issue. I mentioned that Mauritius has, in principle, no objection to the US having a military base in Diego Garcia. The US officials took note of our stand and expressed their appreciation of our decision to bring this matter up.

I also had a meeting with prominent members of the US Congress. In the course of this meeting I informed the US authorities of our stand on the Chagos Archipelago and in particular the island of Diego Garcia, to try to come to a settlement in an amicable way of the long-standing and legitimate claim of Mauritius on the sovereignty over the Archipelago.

#### **GOVERNMENT PUBLICITY - DAILIES AND WEEKLIES - AMOUNT PAID**

**(No. B/186) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to Government publicity for period July 2008 to April 2009, he will state the amount of money paid out to each of the dailies and weeklies which have benefited therefrom, including "L'Express", "Le Mauricien", "Le Matinal", "Week-End" and "Le Defi" Group, indicating the criteria laid down and followed for the allocation thereof.

**Reply:** I shall reply to PQ No. B/186 and B/190 at the same time as they relate to the same subject matter. I am tabling a statement in respect of the amount of money paid for Government publicity for the period July 2000 up to March 2009, so that hon. Members may be in a position to be totally enlightened.

As the House is aware, Government has been served with a "*mise en demeure*" by La Sentinelle Ltd. and the Director of La Sentinelle Ltd, as reported in the press, has clearly stated that the Court will soon be called upon to decide on the legality of Government's allocation of paid publicity to newspapers. Accordingly, it would not be appropriate to communicate details of the criteria for the allocation of Government publicity or to state whether an independent body will be set up to lay down such criteria, except in the course of the court proceedings.

Although, I did say in reply to previous Parliamentary Questions we would be re-looking at the criteria following the report by G. Robertson Q.C. on Media Law.

#### **MBC - TRADE UNIONS - ACTIVITIES - COVERAGE**

**(No. B/187) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the activities organised by the Trade Unions, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation and the Independent Broadcasting Authority, information as to if official complaints have been registered therewith to the effect that the unions are not receiving fair coverage by the Corporation and, if so, the actions that will be taken to ensure that the provisions of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation Act in relation to fair coverage be complied with.

**Reply:** I am informed by the Director of the Independent Broadcasting Authority that the Authority has received a letter of complaint dated 06 March 2009, from the "*Confédération des Travailleurs du Secteur Privé*" to the effect that the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation did not cover the "*Pacific Demonstration*" organised by the "*Confédération*" in the streets of Rose Hill on Saturday 28 February 2009.

The complaint will be heard by the Complaints Committee of the Independent Broadcasting Authority on 21 May 2009. I am advised by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that it is practically impossible for the Corporation to accede to all requests for coverage. The MBC covers a wide range



of activities subject to availability of resources and the newsworthiness of the items of the day. This is not an easy task given the increasing demands for coverage from various quarters, and the plurality and complexity of the Mauritian Society. Nevertheless, the MBC is doing its level best to provide adequate coverage of newsworthy activities, including those of trade unions in a balanced manner.

#### **MBC - CAMERAMAN - ARREST**

**(No. B/188) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, information as to if any cameraman of the Corporation was recently arrested for damaging property by band or any other charge and, if so, if he has been interdicted.

**Reply:** I am informed by the Director-General of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation that he is not aware of any cameraman of the Corporation having been arrested recently.

The question of interdiction does not, therefore, arise.

#### **PUBLIC CONCERTS - SECURITY MEASURES**

**(No. B/189) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to public concerts, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the measures that are taken to ensure security at the place where they are held.

**Reply:** I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that when applications to hold public concerts are received, the Divisional Commander in charge of the region where the event will take place, is requested to assess the suitability of the venue.

The local Police examines the following local security aspects –

- (i) accommodation capacity;
- (ii) whether the site is equipped with appropriate gates for the easy evacuation of the public, in case of any eventuality;
- (iii) adequate parking spaces, and
- (iv) lighting, if held at night.

These applications also require, amongst others, authorisation from the following authorities, as applicable: Fire Services, CEB and the Local Authority.

On his part, the Commissioner of Police imposes security measures to the organizers such as ambulance and first-aiders facilities, stand-by generator teams, insurance policy cover and special transport facilities.

Furthermore, the extent of Police deployment will depend on the information obtained through Police enquiry.

#### **GOVERNMENT PUBLICITY - AMOUNT PAID**

**(No. B/190) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to Government publicity, he will state the amount of money paid out to “Le Matinal”, “Le Socialiste”, “L’Express”, “Le Militant”, “Le Mauricien” and “Week-end” –

- (a) for the year 2008, and
- (b) since January to March 2009, indicating if Government proposes to task an impartial and independent body with authority to decide on the quantum thereof to be allocated to each of the newspapers published in Mauritius.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/186)*

### MAURITIAN PASSPORT - APPLICATION & RENEWAL

**(No. B/191) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the application/renewal of the Mauritian passport, he will state where matters stand as to the review of the procedures to simplify same.

**Reply:** I am advised that currently the time lag between the application and the issue of a passport is around seven days and this is well within international norms.

However, the Passport and Immigration Office is working on a procedure to further simplify the existing one for the renewal of a passport while maintaining all the security aspects. For example, any person who applies for a new passport which has expired, damaged, or lost will not be required to submit relevant Civil Status Certificates if there is no change in his name or marital status. Besides the list of persons eligible to countersign passport applications is being enlarged.

Appropriate Regulations to give effect to these proposals are being finalised.

### ELECTRICAL BICYCLES - LEGISLATION

**(No. B/192) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to electrical bicycles, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases of accidents involving same, since January 2006 to date, and
- (b) state where matters stand as to the proposed legislation for the regulation of their use.

**Reply:** I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2006 to date, 27 cases of road accidents involving electrical bicycles have been reported to the Police.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, in consultation with the Police and the Attorney-General's Office, is currently finalising a draft Road Traffic (Electric Cycle and Power Assisted Cycle) Regulations as electrical cycles do not fall within any class of motor vehicles listed in section 4 of the Road Traffic Act. These Regulations will provide for the registration of the electric cycle, safety devices that should be fitted, the wearing of helmets, use on roads, passengers and goods and parking. Once the Regulations will be enacted, all electric cycles will have to be registered and will be governed by its provisions.

### GAMING HOUSE - INCIDENTS

**(No. B/193) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the gaming houses, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of incidents reported thereat, since January 2006 to date, indicating in each case, if any arrest has been effected in relation thereto.

**Reply:** I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2006 to date, eighty eight incidents at gaming houses throughout the island have been reported to the Police.

In twenty one cases, twenty seven persons have been arrested.

### POLICE OFFICERS - BSC POLICE STUDIES

**(No. B/194) Mrs L. D Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof who are holders of a BSc Police Studies, indicating in each case their respective grades.

**Reply:** I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that todate, 314 Police Officers hold a BSc (Hons) in Police Studies as follows –

<b>Grade</b>	<b>No. of Officers</b>
Assistant Superintendent of Police	: 5
Chief Inspector of Police	: 22
Inspector of Police	: 48
Woman Police Inspector	: 3
Police Sergeant	: 130
Woman Police Sergeant	: 13
Woman Police Corporal	: 4
Police Constable	: 67
Woman Police Constable	: 22

#### **FOREIGNERS - PERMANENT RESIDENCE PERMIT**

**(No. B/195) Dr A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to the foreigners who have been given permanent residence in Mauritius over the last five years, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Passport and Immigration Office, a list thereof, indicating in each case –

- (a) their respective nationality, and
- (b) the ground on which they were given permanent residence.

**Reply:** The Permanent Residence Scheme was introduced under the Immigration (Permanent Resident Status) Regulations 2000 to make provision for the grant of a Permanent Residence Permit to a foreigner investing a sum of 500,000US\$ in a qualifying business activity or in the Permanent Residence Investment Fund.

Permanent Residence Permits were also issued under the Scheme to Attract Professionals for Emerging Sectors (SAPES), which was introduced in February 2002 to attract foreign talents in emerging sectors such as ICT and financial services. The foreigner was eligible for permanent residence at the end of a 3-year work permit.

Both Schemes were repealed with the coming into operation of the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 with effect from 01 October 2006.

I am tabling the information asked for by the hon. Member.

#### **RODRIGUES FISHERMEN - ACTIVITIES**

**(No. B/206) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the fishermen of Rodrigues, he will state if he has received requests from those wishing to stop carrying out fishing activities to be paid compensations and if so, will same be favourably considered and, if not, why not.

**Reply:** I am aware that in September 2008, the Island Chief Executive, Rodrigues Regional Assembly had received requests from some fishermen in Rodrigues in respect of a scheme whereby they will stop carrying out fishing activities.

On this issue, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has entered a case in the Supreme Court and I cannot comment further since the matter is *sub judice*.

#### **SHIPS - DEPARTURE - PORT CLEARANCE**

**(No. B/210) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the boats leaving Mauritius from

places other than the port, he will state if any system has been put in place for the monitoring thereof.

**Reply:** The Shipping Division of my Ministry has no jurisdiction whatsoever over boats coming and leaving Mauritius outside Port Louis Harbour. Section 198 (1) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1986 (MSA) provides for a port clearance to be issued by the Director of Shipping within one hour of the expected time of departure for ships leaving a port in Mauritius for a foreign country. Vessels which are registered under the MSA and foreign vessels are issued with port clearance.

Section 198 (2) provides that where the master of any ship obtains a port clearance and does not sail within 48 hrs thereafter, he shall report to the Director of Shipping his reasons for not sailing and obtain a fresh port clearance.

Vessels which are not registered under the MSA must instead obtain the authorisation of the following Ministries/Departments, as applicable namely –

- (a) the Harbour Radio of the Mauritius Ports Authority;
- (b) the Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security (Fisheries Division);
- (c) the National Coast Guard;
- (d) the Ministry of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications;
- (e) the Customs Section of the Mauritius Revenue Authority, and
- (f) the Passport and Immigration Office.

I am informed as follows –

- (a) . in case of pleasure crafts, they should obtain the authorisation of the Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (Customs Section) and that of the Passport & Immigration Office to leave or enter Port Louis harbour;
- (b) by the Mauritius Ports Authority that it is not involved in any monitoring of boats outside the Port waters;
- (c) by the National Coast Guard Office under section 44 of the Customs Act 1988 the master of a ship from parts beyond the seas shall not permit his ship to enter any place in Mauritius other than a port unless from stress of weather or reasonable cause, and
- (d) by the Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority that under Sections 94 and 95 of the Customs Act, 1988 any boat leaving Mauritius has to obtain prior clearance from Customs and the Director of Shipping as this clearance certificate will be required at the next port of call; and no certificate of clearance shall be issued under Section 94 unless the master of the aircraft or ship has made due report outwards in this prescribed manner and has –
  - ♦ delivered to the Director-General any outward manifest and such copies as may be required in the prescribed form;
  - ♦ furnished such information and documents relating to the aircraft or ship, the voyage and the cargo as may be required by the Director-General, and
  - ♦ complied with all legal requirements in regard to such aircraft or ship and the inward and outward cargo.

I am also informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that under section 16 (2) of the Immigration Act the Master of any vessel arriving or leaving Mauritius shall report to the Immigration Officer at a port of entry immediately on arrival or departure as the case may be to enable the Immigration Officer to examine the passengers and members of the crew. Failing to report is an offence.

As regards fishing boats, I am informed that they are authorised to leave for fishing campaigns only after clearances are issued by the Fisheries Division.

**HAJJ MISSION 2008 & PRE-HAJJ  
MISSION 2009**

**(No. B/239) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)**

asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Hajj pilgrimage, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to –

(a) the composition of the –

- (i) Hajj mission 2008;
- (ii) Pre-Hajj Mission 2009, and

(b) the remedial measures he proposes to take to avoid any shortcomings for the forth-coming Hajj.

**Reply (The Minister of Housing and Lands):** The Hajj Mission of 2008 was composed as follows –

Mr Nazeer Abdus Samad

Mr Abdullatif Yusuf

Mr Atchia Aboo Bakar

Dr. Farhad Kauroo

Mr Badullah Twaher

Mr Aboo Bakar Manjoo

Mr Swadeck Somally

Mr Mamood Hosenbaccus

Mr Dawood Beg

Mr Salim Pirbacosse

Mr Neenoth Imran

Mr Saumtally Shawkat

Regarding pre Hajj Mission 2009, I wish to inform the House that I shall myself lead the delegation which will also comprise of Mr Habibullah Sayed Hossen, Special Adviser to me on Hajj Matters and Mr Hassen Beebeejaun, representative of Air Mauritius.

With over three million pilgrims converging to the Holy Mosques of Makkah and Madinah over a short period of time and accommodated in limited space at the Holy sites at Mina and Arafat, problems are bound to arise.

Over the past years and specially for Hadj 2008, there has not been any significant shortcomings. In fact, there was no fatal casualty at the Jamarat. This has been the result of the continuous upgrading of the conditions in the Hajj cities and Holy sites by the Saudi Authorities and strict monitoring by our Hajj Mission.

In fact, strict control is being exercised this year on operators to ensure that the Hajj Pilgrimage proceeds smoothly.

#### STEEL/SCRAP METAL - PERMITS

**(No. B/240) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to steel scrap metal, he will state the number of permits issued to the operators thereof, for the year 2007, 2008 and 2009 as at to date, indicating –

- (a) the names of the operators;
- (b) the duration of each permit, and
- (c) the number of permits which have not been renewed and the reasons therefor.

**Reply:** Permits/licences issued in regard to steel/scrap metal operators are valid for a period of 12 months as from the date of issue in accordance with the provisions of the Consumer Protection (Scrap Metal) Regulations 2007. Renewal of permits/ licences are made on request from applicants.



The information to parts (a), (b) and (c) of the question are being compiled and will be tabled in due course.

#### **JEAN LE BRUN GOVT SCHOOL - CONSTRUCTION WORKS PHASES I & II**

**(No. B/241) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Jean Le Brun Government School, he will state when the construction works for the Phase II and Phase III thereof are expected to start.

**Reply:** I am advised that all the remaining works after Phase I, will be undertaken under the second Phase and will consist of the construction of another classroom block, two toilet blocks, one canteen block as well as the external site works.

The designs, presently being worked upon, are expected to be completed by end June 2009 and tender documents will be floated by end of September 2009.

Within this time frame, construction works are expected to start around October 2009 and will be completed around April 2011.

#### **POSTER PANELS - LOCATION**

**(No. B/242) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the poster panels, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof, constituency-wise, indicating their respective location, and
- (b) if he proposes to increase the number thereof temporarily, in view of the forthcoming Labour Day and, if so, indicate their proposed location constituency-wise.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **DR. A. G. JEETOO & QUEEN VICTORIA HOSPITALS - SERVICES**

**(No. B/243) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if he has effected site visits at the Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, Port Louis and the Queen Victoria Hospital, Quatre Bornes to assess the services provided to the patients thereat and, if so, the improvements he proposes to bring thereto.

*(Withdrawn)*

#### **PUBLIC OFFICERS - CUSTOMER CARE SERVICE - TRAINING**

**(No. B/244) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms whether, in regard to customer care service, he will state if public officers who are in regular contact with the public have undergone training therein, since 2006 to date and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the number of officers -
  - (i) trained;
  - (ii) remaining to be trained
- (b) the monitoring put up to ensure that the acquired skills are put into effect, and
- (c) if new measures for the improvement thereof are being contemplated.

*(Withdrawn)*

### CUREPIPE & MIDLANDS - FLOOD PRONE AREAS - MEASURES

(No. B/245) **Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to regular flood prone areas in the Constituency No. 17, Curepipe and Midlands, he will state the –

- (a) number thereof falling under the purview of his Ministry, and
- (b) remedial measures Government proposes to take, giving details of each project, especially in terms of cost and time frame.

*(Withdrawn)*

### NHDC UNITS - SEIZURE

(No. B/246) **Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the NHDC units, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Housing Development Company Ltd., information as to the number thereof which has been seized by the Company, since July 2007 to date.

**Reply:** I am informed by the NHDC that 27 housing units have been seized island wide by the NHDC from July 2007 to date.

### RIAMBEL COASTAL ROAD - SPEED BREAKERS

(No. B/247) **Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne & Black River)** asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the Riambel Coastal Road, he will consider the advisability of putting up speed breakers thereat for the security of the inhabitants.

**Reply:** I would like to inform the House that the Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit of my Ministry carried out a road safety assessment along the Black River/Savanne road, which runs through Riambel.

From a road traffic management and road safety viewpoint, the following measures have been recommended to improve road safety along that road –

- ◆ Provision of reflectorised band signs and multiple chevron signs on the approaches to the bends and at the bend to heightened driver's awareness of the curves. These works have been undertaken by Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit and they have been completed.
- ◆ Removal of roadside plantations, namely sugar cane, trees and foliage alongside the road so that a minimum clear zone width of 2.0m is respected from the cane plantation with the edge of the carriageway all along Black River-Savanne Coast road.
- ◆ All roadside hazards like trees and rigid poles found alongside the road be properly shielded with guardrails.
- ◆ Provision of new road markings.

These recommendations made are based on technical feasibility, economic efficiency, affordability, public acceptability, legality and compatibility.

Although construction of road humps along this classified road is not recommended, I would like to assure the House that the measures which I have enumerated earlier go towards enhancing road safety and the Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit is ensuring with all the authorities concerned that the measures are duly implemented. The situation will be closely monitored and adjustments, as may be required, will be made.

### FISH AUCTION MARKET - PROJECT

(No. B/248) **Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the project for the setting up of a fish auction market, he will state where matters stand.

**Reply:** The Fish Auction Market Project at Les Salines (precisely at Fort Williams), Port Louis is presently in its pre-tendering stage. The preliminary drawings have already been approved and clearances from concerned authorities sought. I am informed that action has also been initiated for a percolation test to be carried out shortly, as per the requirement of the Wastewater Management Authority.

The project will embark on the tendering stage. It is expected that construction works will start by July 2009.

#### **LES SALINES - BOAT MOORING**

**(No. B/249) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security whether, in regard to the proposed boat mooring project at Les Salines, Port Louis, he will state where matters stand.

**Reply:** My Ministry has no boat-mooring project at Les Salines as presently fishermen are already mooring their boats there. However, I am informed by the Mauritius Ports Authority that a cruise jetty is presently under construction at Les Salines. The construction of the cruise jetty will not affect the mooring of boats by fishermen at Les Salines.

#### **HOSPITALS - MEDICAL SERVICES**

**(No. B/250) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the medical services provided in the hospitals, he will state if Government proposes to claim payments in respect thereof.

**Reply:** The answer is in the negative.

#### **STC - PETROLEUM PRODUCTS - PURCHASE**

**(No. B/251) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the purchase of petroleum products from Mangalore Refineries by the State Trading Corporation, for the period June 2008 to March 2009, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the purchase dates and the purchase prices thereof.

**Reply:** The information is being compiled and will be tabled.

#### **SHIBANI INWEAR - EMPLOYEES - LAYOFF**

**(No. B/252) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the layoff of the employees of the Shibani Inwear, he will state –

- (a) the date on which the Company informed his Ministry thereof;
- (b) the number thereof;
- (c) the nature of the grief expressed by the workers;
- (d) the employer's responsibility, and
- (e) if the employer has complied with all the provisions of the labour laws with regard to layoff.

**Reply:** I wish to inform the House that Shibani Inwear Co.Ltd was placed in receivership on 11 February 2009 and Mr I. Mushtaq Oosman was appointed Receiver and Manager.

At a meeting held in my Ministry on 19 February 2009, the Receiver and Manager stated that the employment of the workers would be terminated in due course as the Mauritius Leasing Company Ltd had taken control of the machines of the factory and, consequently, no operations could be carried out. I am advised

that on 20 February 2009, the workers were notified in writing that they were being given 30 days notice as from 01 March 2009.

428 workers have been laid off, including 66 expatriate workers.

As regards part (c) of the question, the workers are claiming wages for the period of the notice of termination of employment.

As for parts (d) and (e) of the question, the issue of the employer's responsibility does not arise with the appointment of a Receiver Manager in whom all legal and administrative powers are vested.

### **TIANLI PROJECT - TERRE ROUGE**

**(No. B/253) Mr P. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Tianli Project in Riche Terre, he will state where matters stand.

*(Withdrawn)*

### **PLAINE VERTE GARDEN - UPGRADING WORKS**

**(No. B/254) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Plaine Verte Garden, from the Paul & Virginie Street to the Diégo Garcia Street, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Municipal Council of Port Louis, information as to if consideration will be given for –

- (a) an increase in the number of –
  - (i) lighting points;
  - (ii) benches;
  - (iii) dustbins;
  - (iv) entrances, and
- (b) the upgrading of the pond found in the centre of the garden, in view of the increasing number of visitors thereat at night.

**Reply:** I am informed by the Municipality of Port Louis that the following upgrading works have already been undertaken to the Plaine Verte garden –

- (i) construction of a jogging track;
- (ii) renewal of fencing;
- (iii) fixing of 16 benches;
- (iv) provision of 20 new lighting points;
- (v) upgrading of alleys;
- (vi) construction of a new kiosk, and
- (vii) levelling and planting works.

I am further informed that the Municipal Council envisages to carry out the following works –

- ♦ Fixing of twelve additional benches and three metals bins.
- ♦ Provision of four additional entrances.
- ♦ Fixing of additional points.
- ♦ Upgrading of the pond whose specifications are being finalised.

### **ROSAN AND CORINGA STREETS, CITÉ MARTIAL - DRAINS**

**(No. B/255) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)**