The Minister of Education and Scientific Research (Mr S. Obeegadoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, if I may be allowed to say a few words in response.

We are going through interesting times where, on the one hand, there are a number of primary schools with a very low population. Because of movement of population or whatever reason, it is uneconomical to run them. I will give three examples. There is the Jomadar Primary School in Rose Belle which has recently closed down. There is a primary school in Côte d’Or and another one in Chateau Benares with less than 100 students. It is uneconomical. It is wastage of public funds and we have to work with the people of the locality, convince them that we need to close down those schools and offer the buildings for the State to use in other respects.

On the other hand, there are a number of localities where there is a pressing demand for new schools to be built. We have carried out an analysis looking at the potential school population size, the distance presently travelled by school children and future plans. The hon. Member mentioned NHDC houses, morcellements and so on. We have a list of about 10. I could quote Grand Sable and Bambous which are immediate priorities. The work should get on the way during this financial year. There is also
Argy. We all know that the primary schools in the Centre de Flacq region are overpopulated. Centre of Port Louis, Plaine Verte, Pointe aux Cannoniers, with developments in the Grand' Baie area, Albion, a new upcoming locality with no primary schools and there are quite a few other examples of which 16th Mille is one.

The problem is, in the last few years before this Government came to power, there was no systematic programme of construction of new primary schools. So, we have a long list of maybe 10 primary schools to be built.
DOS/Pl7/mtl/1

(3.40 p.m.)

(Matters raised on Adjournment)

(Mr Obeegadoo): Everybody knows that this Government has made an unprecedented effort in terms of capital investment in infrastructural developments in education. Our topmost priority is the secondary sector....

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, will you kindly resume your seat, Adjournment Time is opened and this is not the proper time for you to set out the policy of your Ministry as regards closing or opening of schools. The hon. Member has addressed you on one particular problem. I think it is proper for you to give him a reply to that problem, because we have other Members who are waiting to address the House.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, the point is taken. So, I'll rapidly wind up to say that the priority right now is the secondary sector, but we are conscious of the problem. We are going to make an effort to build, let us say, two primary schools each financial year and 16ème mille is on the list. Depending on different criteria we'll determine the order of priority, but we shall certainly look into different ways and means of alleviating the hardship face by the children of the locality until we can build the school there.

Thank you.