

# A legal information retrieval system for Mauritius

## User Manual

### Home Page



Welcome to our Legal Information Retrieval System.

Kindly do not act upon the information available in this website. The materials on this website are meant for informational purposes only. The information available on this website should not be used for legal advice. Lawanswers.me cannot be held liable for any liabilities resulting from the use of this website.

To use this service, you should type in your queries or questions in the search box above and either press the Enter key or click on the Search button.

The system also accepts short phrases in double quotes, e.g., "Constitution of Mauritius", which may be followed by other keywords. Using double quotes may help you find the relevant information faster.

By default, ten (10) results are displayed for queries. However, you may choose the number of results (10, 25, 50 or 100) from the list provided.

If you wish to display cases (only) which contain your keywords, you should tick the **Cases** checkbox and then press the Enter key or click on the Search button.

If you wish to display only the title of acts which contain your keywords, you should tick the **Acts** checkbox and then press the Enter key or click on the Search button.

The system contains judgments of the Supreme Court of Mauritius for the years 1968–2017 (50 years).

Kindly send us your feedback via email so that so this service can be improved for the benefit of legal practitioners, academics, students and even for the general public.

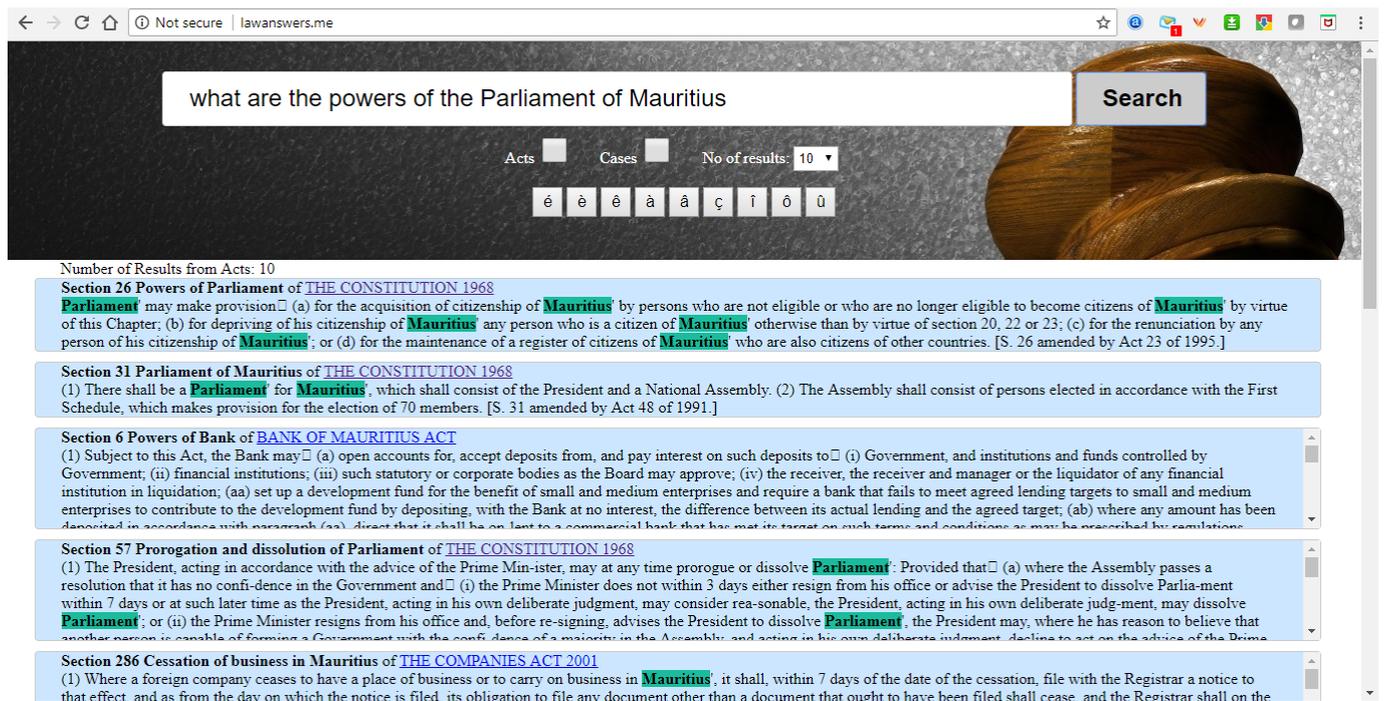
Figure 1. Home Screen for the Information Retrieval System

Figure 1 above shows the main screen for the information retrieval system.

Our system allows a user to input a query using natural language, i.e., there are no specific rules to follow.

The user can type anything he/she wants in a free style.

## Case 1: A simple and direct query in natural language



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL 'lawanswers.me'. The search bar contains the query 'what are the powers of the Parliament of Mauritius'. Below the search bar, there are filters for 'Acts' and 'Cases', and a 'No of results' dropdown set to '10'. A keyboard layout is visible below the filters. The search results are displayed in a list format, with the first result highlighted in blue. The highlighted result is 'Section 26 Powers of Parliament of THE CONSTITUTION 1968'. The text of this result is: 'Parliament may make provision (a) for the acquisition of citizenship of Mauritius by persons who are not eligible or who are no longer eligible to become citizens of Mauritius by virtue of this Chapter; (b) for depriving of his citizenship of Mauritius any person who is a citizen of Mauritius otherwise than by virtue of section 20, 22 or 23; (c) for the renunciation by any person of his citizenship of Mauritius; or (d) for the maintenance of a register of citizens of Mauritius who are also citizens of other countries. [S. 26 amended by Act 23 of 1995.]' Other results include 'Section 31 Parliament of Mauritius of THE CONSTITUTION 1968', 'Section 6 Powers of Bank of BANK OF MAURITIUS ACT', 'Section 57 Prorogation and dissolution of Parliament of THE CONSTITUTION 1968', and 'Section 286 Cessation of business in Mauritius of THE COMPANIES ACT 2001'.

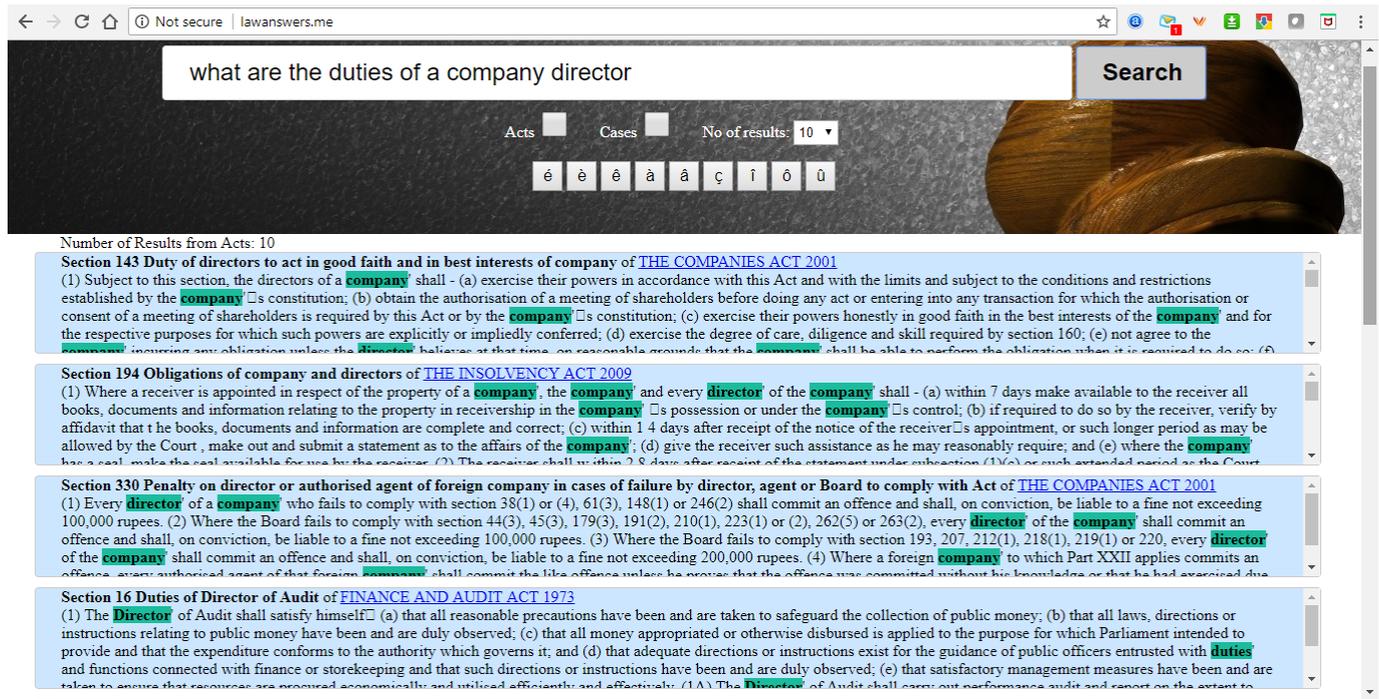
Figure 2. Sample Query 1 and Respective Answer

Figure 2 shows the answer returned by the system in response to the question <what are the powers of the Parliament of Mauritius?>.

The system has been able to return what can be considered as the best answer for this question. This answer comes from Section 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius. The name of the act has been returned as well.

The system is case insensitive in that it makes no difference between lowercase and uppercase characters. Currently, the system can return 10, 25, 50 or 100 answers.

## Case 2: Another simple and directly query in natural language

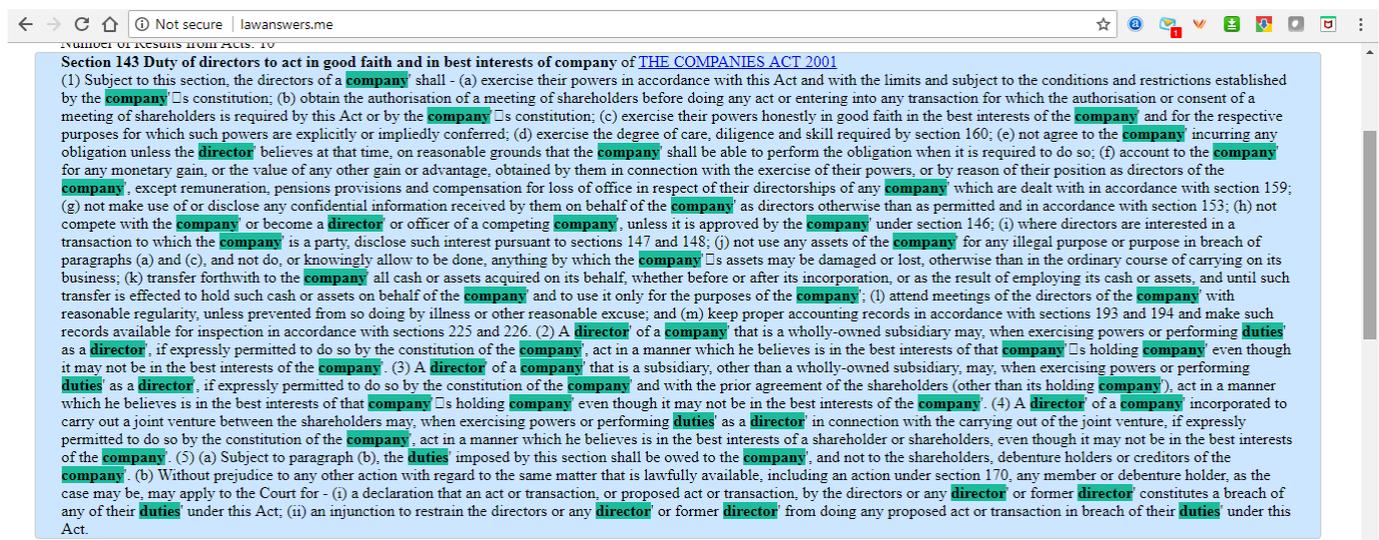


The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL 'lawanswers.me'. The search bar contains the query 'what are the duties of a company director' and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar, there are filters for 'Acts' and 'Cases', and a dropdown menu showing 'No of results: 10'. A keyboard layout is visible below the filters. The search results are displayed as a list of four items, each with a title and a brief description. The first item is 'Section 143 Duty of directors to act in good faith and in best interests of company of THE COMPANIES ACT 2001'. The second item is 'Section 194 Obligations of company and directors of THE INSOLVENCY ACT 2009'. The third item is 'Section 330 Penalty on director or authorised agent of foreign company in cases of failure by director, agent or Board to comply with Act of THE COMPANIES ACT 2001'. The fourth item is 'Section 16 Duties of Director of Audit of FINANCE AND AUDIT ACT 1973'.

Figure 3. Sample Query 2 and Respective Answer

Figure 3 shows the answer returned by the system in response to the question <what are the duties of a company director?>.

The best answer to this question is Section 143 of the Companies Act 2001 and this is returned at the top of the list.



The screenshot shows a zoomed-in view of the search results from Figure 3. The first result is 'Section 143 Duty of directors to act in good faith and in best interests of company of THE COMPANIES ACT 2001'. The text of the section is displayed in full, starting with '(1) Subject to this section, the directors of a company shall - (a) exercise their powers in accordance with this Act and with the limits and subject to the conditions and restrictions established by the company's constitution; (b) obtain the authorisation of a meeting of shareholders before doing any act or entering into any transaction for which the authorisation or consent of a meeting of shareholders is required by this Act or by the company's constitution; (c) exercise their powers honestly in good faith in the best interests of the company and for the respective purposes for which such powers are explicitly or impliedly conferred; (d) exercise the degree of care, diligence and skill required by section 160; (e) not agree to the company incurring any obligation unless the director believes at that time, on reasonable grounds that the company shall be able to perform the obligation when it is required to do so; (f) account to the company for any monetary gain, or the value of any other gain or advantage, obtained by them in connection with the exercise of their powers, or by reason of their position as directors of the company, except remuneration, pensions provisions and compensation for loss of office in respect of their directorships of any company which are dealt with in accordance with section 159; (g) not make use of or disclose any confidential information received by them on behalf of the company as directors otherwise than as permitted and in accordance with section 153; (h) not compete with the company or become a director or officer of a competing company, unless it is approved by the company under section 146; (i) where directors are interested in a transaction to which the company is a party, disclose such interest pursuant to sections 147 and 148; (j) not use any assets of the company for any illegal purpose or purpose in breach of paragraphs (a) and (c), and not do, or knowingly allow to be done, anything by which the company's assets may be damaged or lost, otherwise than in the ordinary course of carrying on its business; (k) transfer forthwith to the company all cash or assets acquired on its behalf, whether before or after its incorporation, or as the result of employing its cash or assets, and until such transfer is effected to hold such cash or assets on behalf of the company and to use it only for the purposes of the company; (l) attend meetings of the directors of the company with reasonable regularity, unless prevented from so doing by illness or other reasonable excuse; and (m) keep proper accounting records in accordance with sections 193 and 194 and make such records available for inspection in accordance with sections 225 and 226. (2) A director of a company that is a wholly-owned subsidiary may, when exercising powers or performing duties as a director, if expressly permitted to do so by the constitution of the company, act in a manner which he believes is in the best interests of that company's holding company even though it may not be in the best interests of the company. (3) A director of a company that is a subsidiary, other than a wholly-owned subsidiary, may, when exercising powers or performing duties as a director, if expressly permitted to do so by the constitution of the company and with the prior agreement of the shareholders (other than its holding company), act in a manner which he believes is in the best interests of that company's holding company even though it may not be in the best interests of the company. (4) A director of a company incorporated to carry out a joint venture between the shareholders may, when exercising powers or performing duties as a director in connection with the carrying out of the joint venture, if expressly permitted to do so by the constitution of the company, act in a manner which he believes is in the best interests of a shareholder or shareholders, even though it may not be in the best interests of the company. (5) (a) Subject to paragraph (b), the duties imposed by this section shall be owed to the company, and not to the shareholders, debenture holders or creditors of the company. (b) Without prejudice to any other action with regard to the same matter that is lawfully available, including an action under section 170, any member or debenture holder, as the case may be, may apply to the Court for - (i) a declaration that an act or transaction, or proposed act or transaction, by the directors or any director or former director constitutes a breach of any of their duties under this Act; (ii) an injunction to restrain the directors or any director or former director from doing any proposed act or transaction in breach of their duties under this Act.

Figure 4. Zoom In on an answer

Section 143 is quite a long section and in Figure 3, the whole section was not displayed. If the user wishes to display the section in full, he/she must click on the content and the full section will be displayed, as shown in Figure 4.

### Case 3: Query consisting of several keywords in free style

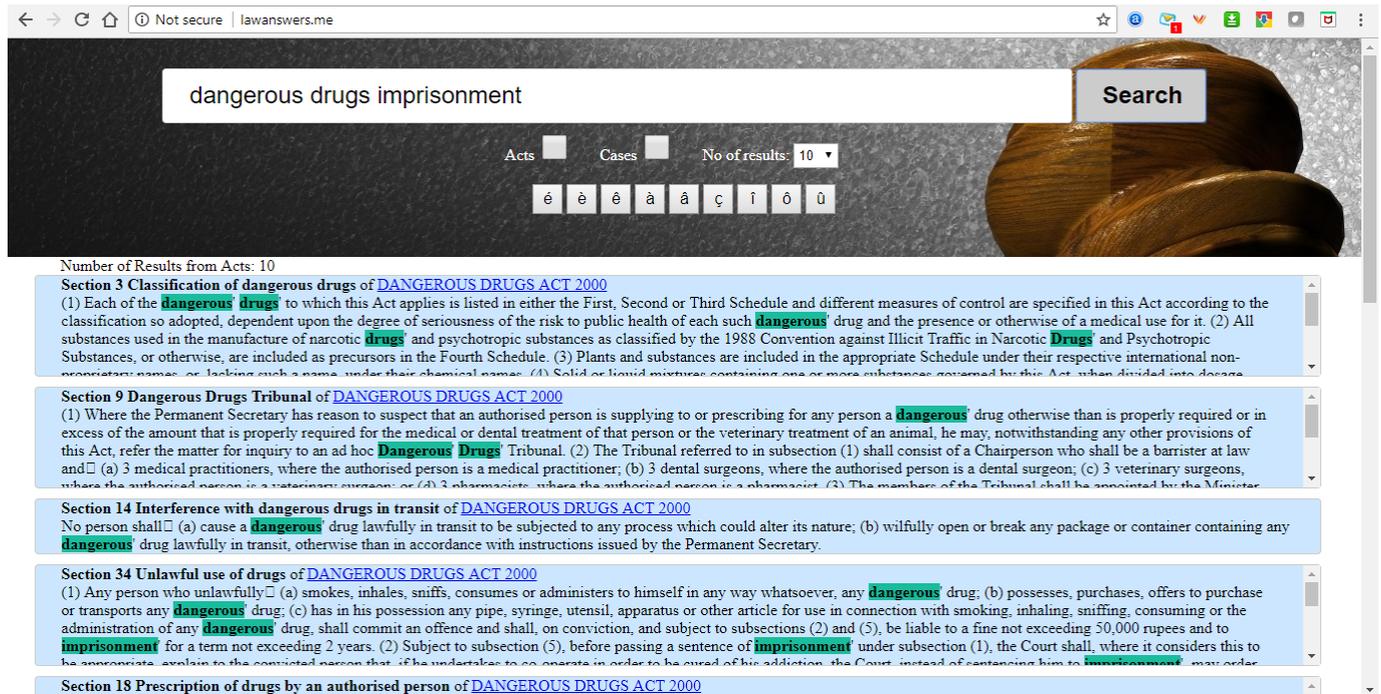


Figure 5. Sample Query 3 and Respective Answer

It is not important that questions are always posed in a question like manner.

As mentioned earlier, the system is very flexible and the user can input his/her search query in free style.

For example, in Figure 5, we have entered three keywords namely *dangerous*, *drug* and *imprisonment*.

The idea was to see whether the system can tell us what the penalty for dealing in dangerous drugs is.

The system has returned Section 3, 9, 14 and 34 of the Dangerous Drugs Act 2000 (as the first four answers).

In this scenario, it is not possible to say what the best answer should have been. A large number of the fifty-nine sections of the Dangerous Drugs Act 2000 contains the words dangerous, drugs and imprisonment.

Nevertheless, the system has returned some of the relevant sections and the relevant act, which the user can consult.

## Case 4: Keywords inside double quotes

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [lawanswers.me](http://lawanswers.me). The search bar contains the text "for a term not exceeding 60 years". Below the search bar, there are filters for "Acts" and "Cases", and a "No of results: 10" dropdown. A keyboard layout is visible below the filters. The search results are displayed as a list of 10 items, each starting with a section number and title, followed by a brief description. The results are:

- Section 222 Penalty for murder and infanticide of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 223 Penalty for manslaughter of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 234 Castration of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 57 Plotting with foreign power of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 41 Aggravating circumstances of [DANGEROUS DRUGS ACT 2000](#)
- Section 62 Stirring up civil war of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 64 Taking command of armed force of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 61 Inciting officer to mutiny of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 51 Stirring up war against the State of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 50 Inducing or compelling President in the exercise of any lawful power of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)

Figure 6. Sample Query 4 and Respective Answer

An interesting feature of our system is its ability to extract exact phrases from the knowledge base.

For example, suppose a user wanted to know the most severe sentences in the Republic of Mauritius. He/She can input the text “*for a term not exceeding 60 years*”.

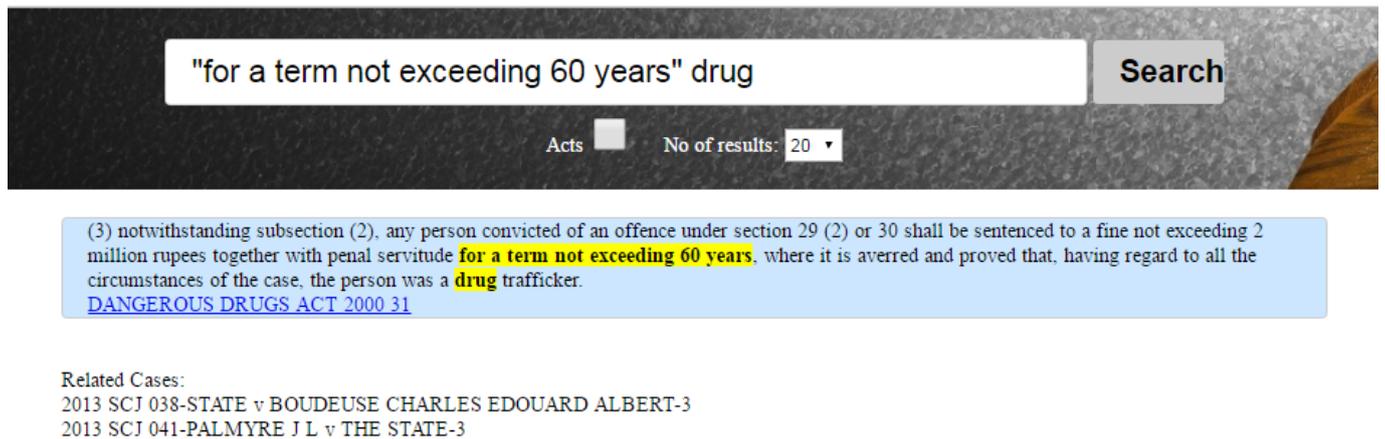
However, this requires that the user has some knowledge of the content and how it is structured. This feature will be very useful to those who will know how to use it well.

Thus, at the click of a button, we are able to know which legislations contain the most severe sentences. In this case, the 10 results are:

- Section 222 Penalty for murder and infanticide of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 223 Penalty for manslaughter of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 234 Castration of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 57 Plotting with foreign power of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 41 Aggravating circumstances of [DANGEROUS DRUGS ACT 2000](#)
- Section 62 Stirring up civil war of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 64 Taking command of armed force of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 61 Inciting officer to mutiny of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 51 Stirring up war against the State of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)
- Section 50 Inducing or compelling President in the exercise of any lawful power of [CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838](#)

In the same way, we can find all offences where the imprisonment is for a term not exceeding 60 years or any other key-phrases can be entered, as shown below.

## Case 5: Keyphrase in double quotes with filter



The screenshot shows a search interface with a dark background. At the top, a search bar contains the text "for a term not exceeding 60 years" drug. To the right of the search bar is a "Search" button. Below the search bar, there is a filter section with "Acts" and a dropdown menu showing "No of results: 20". Below this, a light blue box contains the following text: "(3) notwithstanding subsection (2), any person convicted of an offence under section 29 (2) or 30 shall be sentenced to a fine not exceeding 2 million rupees together with penal servitude for a term not exceeding 60 years, where it is averred and proved that, having regard to all the circumstances of the case, the person was a drug trafficker. DANGEROUS DRUGS ACT 2000 31". Below the light blue box, there is a section titled "Related Cases:" with two entries: "2013 SCJ 038-STATE v BOUDEUSE CHARLES EDOUARD ALBERT-3" and "2013 SCJ 041-PALMYRE J L v THE STATE-3".

Figure 7. Sample Query 5 and Respective Answer

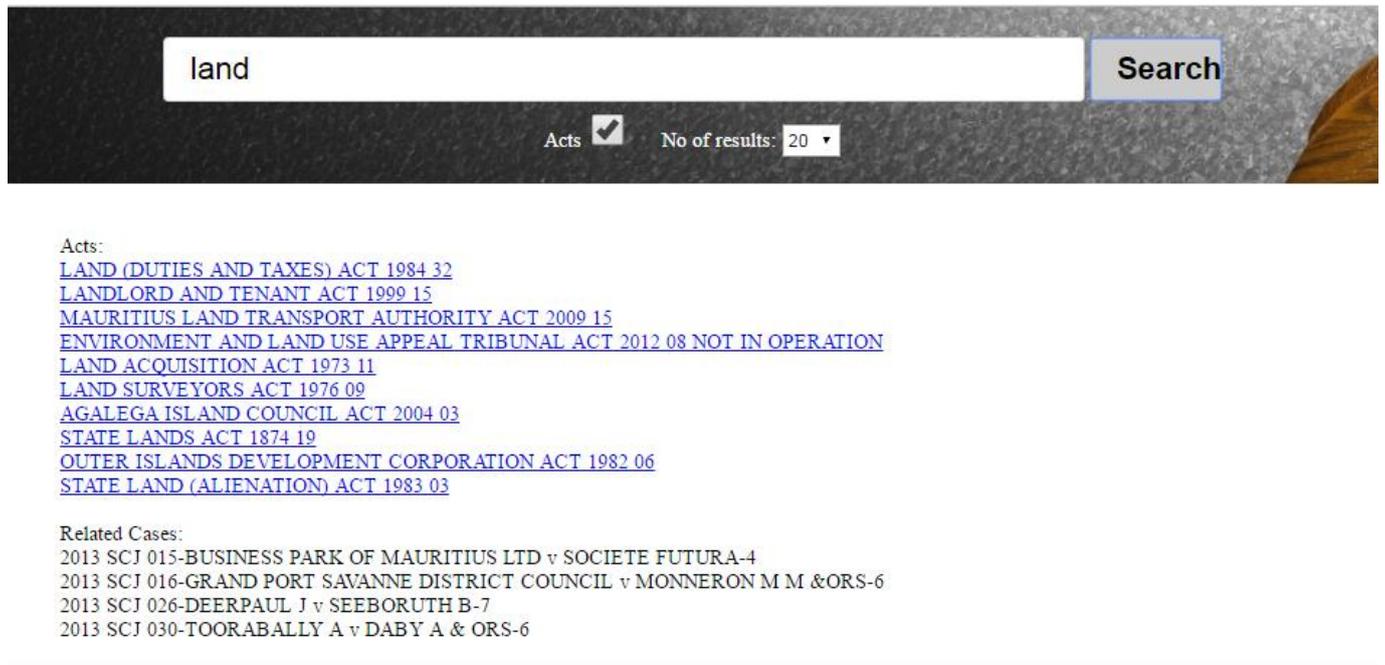
The system also offers the opportunity to refine a result if too many answers are returned.

For example, thirteen (13) results were initially returned for this query.

Now, if the user wants to get only those sections which deal with drug offences, he/she can enter the word *<drug>* as shown above after the double quoted keyphrase.

Upon hitting search, only one answer is returned in this case. The relevant cases from the knowledge base are also returned.

## Case 6: List of Acts



The screenshot shows a search bar with the text 'land' and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar, there is a checkbox labeled 'Acts' which is checked, and a dropdown menu showing 'No of results: 20'. The search results are listed as follows:

Acts:

- [LAND \(DUTIES AND TAXES\) ACT 1984 32](#)
- [LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT 1999 15](#)
- [MAURITIUS LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY ACT 2009 15](#)
- [ENVIRONMENT AND LAND USE APPEAL TRIBUNAL ACT 2012 08 NOT IN OPERATION](#)
- [LAND ACQUISITION ACT 1973 11](#)
- [LAND SURVEYORS ACT 1976 09](#)
- [AGALEGA ISLAND COUNCIL ACT 2004 03](#)
- [STATE LANDS ACT 1874 19](#)
- [OUTER ISLANDS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION ACT 1982 06](#)
- [STATE LAND \(ALIENATION\) ACT 1983 03](#)

Related Cases:

- 2013 SCJ 015-BUSINESS PARK OF MAURITIUS LTD v SOCIETE FUTURA-4
- 2013 SCJ 016-GRAND PORT SAVANNE DISTRICT COUNCIL v MONNERON M M &ORS-6
- 2013 SCJ 026-DEERPAUL J v SEEBORUTH B-7
- 2013 SCJ 030-TOORABALLY A v DABY A & ORS-6

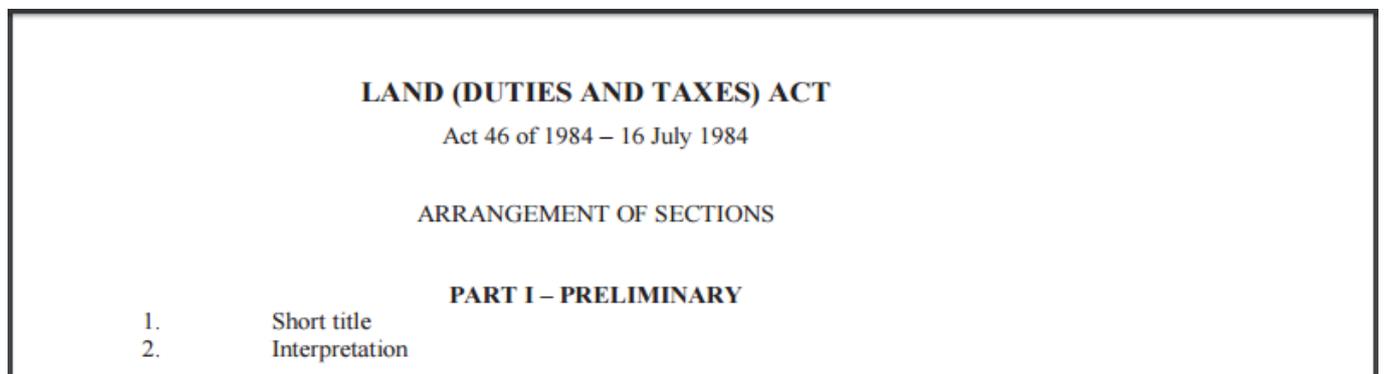
Figure 8. Sample Query 6 and Respective Answer

In the example shown in Figure 8, we show that it is possible to list all the acts which contain one or more of the search keywords in their title by checking the **Acts** checkbox.

For example, the keyword *<land>* returns 12 acts, ranging from Land (Duties and Taxes) Act 1984 to the State Land (Alienation) Act 1983. Four cases have also been returned.

It is possible for the user to input more than one keyword or a keyphrase in double quotes.

## Case 7: Display of Acts



The screenshot shows the title page of the 'LAND (DUTIES AND TAXES) ACT'. The text is centered and reads:

**LAND (DUTIES AND TAXES) ACT**  
Act 46 of 1984 – 16 July 1984

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

**PART I – PRELIMINARY**

1. Short title  
2. Interpretation

Figure 9. Sample Query 7 and Respective Answer

A user can open the acts listed in any results in another window of the browser, as shown above in Figure 9, where the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act which was listed in Figure 8 (above) has been opened for further reading. Once the act has been opened in a browser, the user can download the act, print it, perform additional search or share its link.

## Case 8: Translation of French words into English

The screenshot shows a search interface with a search bar containing the word "paternité" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar are filters for "Acts in French", "Title of Acts", and "Cases", along with a "No. of results" dropdown set to "10". A keyboard layout is visible below the filters. The search results are displayed in a list format, with the following entries:

- Number of Results from Acts: 3
  - [Section 31 Paternity leave of EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT 2008](#)  
(1) Notwithstanding any remuneration regulations or any other enactment, a male worker, other than a male part-time worker, shall, subject to subsection (1B), be entitled to 5 continuous working days leave, to be known as **paternity** leave. (1A) A male part-time worker shall, subject to subsection (1B), be entitled to the number of days of **paternity** leave calculated in accordance with the formula specified as follows  $N \times 5$  normal working days  $W$  Where  $N$  = Number of days of work the worker is required to perform in a week  $W$  = Number of working days in a week of a comparable full-time worker (1B) The entitlement of **paternity** leave under subsection (1) or (1A) shall be subject to the production by the worker of (a) a medical certificate certifying that his spouse has given birth to his child; and (b) a written
  - [Section 340 0 of Code Civil Mauricien](#)  
La **paternité** hors mariage peut être judiciairement déclarée 1° Dans le cas d'enlèvement ou de viol, lorsque l'époque de l'enlèvement ou du viol se rapportera à celle de la conception; 2° Dans le cas de séduction accomplie à l'aide de manoeuvres dolosives, abus d'autorité, promesse de mariage ou fiançailles; 3° Dans le cas où il existe des lettres ou quelque autre écrit privé émanant du père prétendu et desquels il résulte un aveu non équivoque de **paternité**; 4° Dans le cas où le père prétendu et la mère ont vécu en état de concubinage notoire pendant la période légale de la conception; 5° Dans le cas où le père prétendu a pourvu ou participé à l'entretien et à l'éducation de l'enfant en qualité de père. L'action en reconnaissance de **paternité** ne sera pas recevable 1° S'il est établi que, pendant la période légale de la
  - [Section 342 0 of Code Civil Mauricien](#)  
Un enfant ne sera jamais admis à la recherche soit de la **paternité** soit de la maternité, dans le cas où, suivant l'article 335, la reconnaissance n'est pas admise. Les enfants nés d'un commerce incestueux peuvent néanmoins réclamer des aliments sans que l'action ait pour effet de proclamer l'existence d'un lien de filiation dont l'établissement demeure prohibé. L'action pourra être intentée pendant toute la minorité de l'enfant et, si elle n'a pas été intentée pendant la minorité de l'enfant, celui-ci pourra l'intenter pendant les deux années qui suivront sa majorité. L'action est intentée devant la Cour Suprême qui instruit la cause et statue en la forme ordinaire, le Ministère Public entendu.
- Number of Results from Cases: 10
  - [1981 SCJ 327, 1981 MR 335-LUTCHMUN vs LEELODHARRY-5](#)
  - [1982 MR 285-JACQUES vs GODIN-4](#)
  - [2014 SCJ 427-ABDOOL N](#)
  - [2015 SCJ 342-LAFLEUR M A v BHIM N](#)

Figure 10. Sample Query 8 and Respective Answer

The keyword used in Figure 10 above was *paternité* (a French word).

Looking at the search results, we can see that the results contain some sections containing the word paternity (*paternité* in French) and some other sections containing the word *paternité* as well.

This is a powerful feature, especially in the context of Mauritian Laws, as some of our main laws are in the French language.

## Case 9: Translation of English words into French

The screenshot shows a search interface with a search bar containing the word "murder" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, there are filters for "Acts in French", "Title of Acts", "Cases", and "No. of results: 10". A keyboard layout is visible below the filters. The search results are displayed in a list format, with each result showing the section number, title, and a brief description. The results are as follows:

- Section 220 Murder of newly born child and infanticide of CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838**  
(1) Any person who by a wilful act of commission or omission, done with intent to cause the death of a newly born child, causes the death of such newly born child, shall be guilty of the crime of **murder** of a newly born child. (2) Where such crime is committed by a woman in respect of her newly born child but at the time of the act of commission or omission she had not fully recovered from the effect of giving birth to such child and by reason thereof the
- Section 222 Penalty for murder and infanticide of CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838**  
(1) Any person who is convicted of - (a) **murder** or **murder** of a newly born child, shall be sentenced to penal servitude for life or, where the Court is satisfied that substantial and compelling circumstances exist which justify the imposition of a lesser sentence and has entered those circumstances on the record of the proceedings, for a term not exceeding 60 years: (b) attempt at **murder** or attempt at **murder** of a newly born child, shall be liable to penal
- Section 216 Interpretation of murder of CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838**  
Manslaughter committed with premeditation or by lying in wait is **murder**.
- Section 22 Information for homicide of CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ACT**  
(1) In an information for **murder** or manslaughter, it shall not be necessary to specify the manner in which or the means by which the death of the deceased was caused. (2) It shall be sufficient, in an information (a) for **murder**, to charge that the accused did criminality, wilfully and of his malice aforethought, kill the deceased; and (b) for manslaughter, to charge that the accused did criminality and wilfully kill the deceased.
- Section 109 Conspiracy of CRIMINAL CODE (SUPPLEMENTARY) ACT**  
(1) Any person who agrees with one or more other persons to do an act which is unlawful, wrongful or harmful to another person, or to use unlawful means in the carrying out of an object not otherwise unlawful, shall commit an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to penal servitude for a term not exceeding 10 years and to a fine not exceeding 100,000 rupees. (2) Where the agreement is to commit **murder**, manslaughter, an international crime as defined in the
- Section 224 Demanding by written threat of violence of CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838**  
Any person, who by any writing, whether anonymous or signed, threatens any individual with **murder**, poisoning or any other attempt against the person of such individual punishable by penal servitude, shall be punished by penal servitude, where the threat is accompanied by an order to deposit a sum of money in a certain place, or to fulfil any other condition. Amended by [Act No. 31 of 1995]
- Section 348 Threatening arson of CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1838**  
Any threat to set fire to a dwelling-place, or to any other property, shall be punished by the same punishment as a threat to **murder**, and according to the distinctions specified in sections 224, 225 and 226.
- Section 727 0 of Code Civil Mauricien**  
Sont indignes de succéder, et comme tels exclus des successions 1° Celui qui serait condamné pour avoir donné ou tenté de donner la mort au défunt; 2° Celui qui a porté contre le défunt une accusation capitale jugée calomnieuse; 3° L'héritier majeur qui, instruit du **meurtre** du défunt, ne l'aura pas dénoncé à la justice.

Number of Results from Cases: 10  
[2010 SCJ 439-RATSEEZAMUT B J Y v THE STATE-13](#)

Figure 11. Sample Query 9 and Respective Answer

In this case, we have entered the word murder as keyword. A total of 8 sections have been returned as well as a number of relevant cases.

The first seven sections contain the word murder (original keyword in English). However, the last section contains the word *meurtre* (murder in French).