

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### CAMP DIABLE - AMMA TOOKAY KOVIL - INCIDENTS

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*by Private Notice*) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the recent incidents which occurred at the Tookay Temple and elsewhere, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to -
- (i) the number of arrest effected in connection therewith, as at to date, indicating if the arrested suspects have criminal/legal antecedents;
  - (ii) the localities where the incidents occurred, including the ones which occurred during the weeks preceding the Tookay incidents, and
  - (iii) if cases of *incitation à la violence* through the internet have been established, and
- (b) state if he has discussed same with the Commissioner of Police and if he is satisfied with the work of the Police in relation thereto, as at to date.

**The Prime Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 05 September 2015, at 06.45 hours, one Mr P. C., President of Amma Tookay Kovil situated at Camp Diabale reported that during the previous night, unknown persons had damaged several idols at Amma Tookay Temple.

Police initiated an enquiry immediately.

I am informed that Mr P. C. showed to the Police the footages of the Kovil CCTV cameras, from which it was confirmed that the incident had taken place at 23.35 hours on the previous night. Two suspects were identified in the footage. The two suspects had been loitering on the main road near the temple, seen by Police Officers on patrol on the night of the incident.

In regard to part (a) (i), (ii) and (iii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on the same day, two suspects, one Police Officer residing at Vallée Pitot and one hawker residing at Rivière des Anguilles were arrested in relation to the incident at Amma Tookay Temple. They were provisionally charged for “stirring up civil war” in breach of section 62 of the Criminal Code Act. They appeared before the Bail and Remand Court on 06 September 2015 and they have been remanded to Police cell. They again appeared before the Savanne Court on 07 September 2015 and were remanded to Police cell up to 11 September 2015.

One of them, namely, Mr A. B. has record of two previous convictions, namely “stolen property” and “possession of counterfeited bank note”.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that prior to that incident, no other incident of the same nature either in Camp Diable region or elsewhere, has been reported.

From 05 to 07 September 2015, nine incidents causing damage to mosques, houses and vehicles have been reported in the regions of Camp Diable, Rivière des Anguilles, Batimaraïs, Rose Belle, Nouvelle France and Chemin Grenier. According to the Police, seven persons have been arrested so far, in relation to those incidents. They appeared before Court, and have been remanded to Police cell and they are still in Police custody.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed that on 07 September 2015, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation reported to the Police that racial comments had been posted on Facebook, which could lead to interracial problems. An enquiry was instituted immediately by the CCID to trace out the identity of the Facebook account holders and those who had commented on the post. Nine such posts have been identified and one person has been arrested so far. He has been provisionally charged for the offence of “stirring up civil war” and remanded to Police cell. He will appear before the District Court today.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (b) of the question, since the incidents have been reported, the Commissioner of Police has been in constant touch with my Office and myself. I have given strict directives to the Commissioner of Police to take all operational measures and to be ruthless against all ill- intentioned people and troublemakers who are putting at risk social harmony and public safety.

The Commissioner of Police has informed that the following measures have been taken -

- (i) the whole Police Force, including the Special Mobile Force, Special Support Unit, Police Helicopter Squadron, National Coast Guard, have been mobilised for a demonstrative and permanent presence on ground;
- (ii) patrols have been deployed around the whole island to deter any other such incident;
- (iii) road blocks and vehicle checkpoints have been set up at strategic places round the clock;
- (iv) all other Units of the Police, including the Cyber Crime Unit, are on the alert, and
- (v) a series of community policing activities and actions are being taken at various levels.

Madam Speaker, I am fully satisfied with the work of the Commissioner of Police and his team, and the situation is being monitored round the clock.

As I stated at a press conference yesterday, as Prime Minister I will not tolerate any conspiracy against the State and the people of Mauritius.

I wish to remind the House and the population in general that our legal framework already caters for such situations. For instance, sections 62 and 282 of the Criminal Code provide for custodial sentences going up to 60 years. Regulations are also being made under the Information and Communication Technologies Act to curtail harmful and illegal communication services.

I shall personally ensure that we kill the demon today so that we do not face the devil tomorrow.

Our country has a solid reputation of a tolerant society, but we must not underestimate the fragility thereof. On the contrary, we must strive for it to be protected as well as further consolidated. I, therefore, call upon the population to act responsibly.

We must also not forget that such incidents may have serious negative repercussions to our country as a tourist and investment destination.

Madam Speaker, in the wake of the incident that occurred at Rivière des Anguilles, Her Excellency the President of the Republic met the members of the “*Conseil des Religions*”, a few Religious Heads and inhabitants of Camp Diable, Tyack and Rivière des Anguilles, Britannia at the State House on Monday 07 September 2015 at 16.30 hours in the presence of the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Soodhun. Around 100 persons were present. The Press was also invited to attend the meeting.

Her Excellency reminded those present at the meeting that ethnic groups in Mauritius live in peace and harmony and have all contributed to the socio-economic development of the Island. She urged those present not to give way to needless debates and retaliation to isolated cases and to think about nation- building.

She invited all Heads of Religious bodies to take the pledge to put a stop to violence and to spread the message of love and brotherhood.

Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, we have inherited a rich tapestry of different cultures knitted together which has given birth to a nation that is forward looking while being deeply attached to the great cultures and religions of the world.

As a responsible Government, we are making every effort to rally all Mauritians around a national project and garner all our will power and energy to shape a prosperous nation where our unique cultural mix remains a source of pride, inspiration and strength rather than a constraining factor in our development process.

I make an appeal to one and all to join us in the task of nation building and maintaining social stability, peace and harmony.

Madam Speaker, let me again reassure the House and the population at large that I shall see to it that all perpetrators of these despicable acts, whoever they might be, are brought to justice.

I am convinced that these incidents have been politically masterminded with the intention of destabilising my Government and thwart the ongoing clean up exercise, and the development of the country.

This can be testified by the statement of Mr Rama Valayden at Vallée Pitot and Rose Hill in the course of nocturnal public meetings where he exhorted the public to come to the street, I quote him -

*“ziska nou fer sa gouvernmant la aller”.*

This same sort of provoking statements were made in 1999 prior to the sinister Kaya episode.

*(Interruptions)*

But he has to be careful this time! I warn him!

Let me also be very clear. As long as I am Prime Minister, I shall not tolerate any such reprehensible acts by anybody that imperil social peace and harmony and jeopardise the safety and security of our nation.

**Mr Bérenger:** Madam Speaker, I think I heard the Rt. hon. Prime Minister say that in all eight persons have been arrested; seven around the violence committed and one in relation to internet prevention offences. Is that the case, eight in all and will he table a list of those arrested?

**The Prime Minister:** I will table the list.

**Mr Bérenger:** We have been told, Madam Speaker, that among those arrested, there is a Police Officer. Can I know whether that Police Officer has been suspended, whether he has precedence?

**The Prime Minister:** Well, he has no precedent; otherwise I would have said it in the answer. Only one has precedent. Insofar as suspension is concerned, naturally the enquiry is still on and action will be taken and I have asked the Commissioner of Police that we must get rid of such people in the Force.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I know as far as those arrested are concerned, is the Rt. hon. Prime Minister aware of one gentleman – if I can call him that - from Bois Chéri - I won't give his name at this stage - who has been arrested, who is an employee of Mauritius Telecom and he was supposedly involved in a case of stealing a vehicle from Mauritius Telecom and coincidence, coincidence when the Police went to arrest him in that case, they found the vehicle at his home and secured the vehicle, and this gentleman is reported by the Police, itself, of damaging places of worship in the recent past?

**The Prime Minister:** Apparently, this has been tolerated by the previous Government. Apparently, he was in the habit of taking that vehicle to his place, but we are going to see to it that this is stopped and any severe action that can be taken, will be taken against this fellow.

**Mr Bérenger:** Well, I am a bit surprised by the Prime Minister's answer as far as incidents weeks before the Tookay Temple. It seems that the Police has not provided the Rt. hon. Prime Minister with information in relation thereof. Will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister take the trouble to look at it, including, for example – I'll quote one example - at Goodlands, on 01 September, a temple was attacked and an idol destroyed, the head was left behind and then two days ago, same thing again at Goodlands, but this time the head disappeared; they smashed the statue and the head disappeared? This has happened in Goodlands and, according to my information, in several other places.

**The Prime Minister:** Maybe the Police does not have this information. If the case had been reported, the Commissioner would have certainly given me the information.

**Mr Bérenger:** If the Rt. hon. Prime Minister wants the dates when it was reported, I have the dates, the Police Station and everything. At first, it was reported on 01 September to the Police Station of Goodlands and then, on 07, a few days ago, again, there was a report to the Police Station. You want another example! Grand' Baie! At Grand' Baie also, there was an incident. In that case, reported on 07.

**The Prime Minister:** Well, I will certainly ask the Commissioner of Police to look into these cases.

**Mr Bérenger:** Madam Speaker, can I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister whether he has had the opportunity to congratulate and thank, specifically the leaders of the Tookay Temple, the leaders of the mosques concerned and some socio-cultural organisations that have been very helpful in trying to cool things down? Has the Rt. hon. Prime Minister found the time to thank them, congratulate them and encourage them in the same direction?

**The Prime Minister:** Well, I have been thankful to everybody who has been cooperating with the Police.

**Mr Bérenger:** Including me, I am sure!

*(Interruptions)*

Madam Speaker, can I know whether the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has been advised by the Police, by the State Law Office or by his Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation that the law, as it stands, specifically three Acts: the Criminal Code, the

Information and Communication Technology Act and the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act of 2001, that these Acts need to be further amended, strengthened so that this problem of inciting racial hatred or *incitation à la violence* or *communalisme*, including on radios be better tackled?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, we are aware of all this and it is being looked into.

**Mr Bérenger:** Madam Speaker, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister said that he is fully satisfied; can I put it on record that my feedback also is that the Police needs to be congratulated, but, at the same time, can I appeal that we improve on performance, for example, that family that was aggressed in Rivière des Anguilles had to wait for hours before a sentry, Police assistance was provided?

**The Prime Minister:** Well, maybe the Police Officers were taken up. They were so busy that it took some time. But, generally, I must say, in many cases, this is how it happens. Police always come quite late!

*(Interruptions)*

I will ask the Commissioner of Police to see to it and to see that there is acceleration in the Force.

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

**Mr Bérenger:** If I can have one last question and then I will give the floor. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister has said, I am sure we'll all agree, something very serious concerning an organised plot behind the events that have taken place. Can the Rt. hon. Prime Minister report further, Madam Speaker - one name has been mentioned, but the accusation is larger than one person - can we have more enlightenment on that?

**The Prime Minister:** I can't give any enlightenment on that, but I must say one thing, that what I have been saying here is what is officially communicated to me by the Police. But I get many information from inside, even what goes on in conversation among agents, leaders, especially in the Labour Party these days. When I come and say that it is a plot by politicians, I am serious, I know what I am talking about.

**Mr Mohamed:** As I said, I have two questions. The first one will be – I am quite amused anyway by hearing the Rt. hon. Prime Minister talk about the Police coming in late. But, to pick up from where the hon. Leader of the Opposition left off, there is an information that I received that at the time in question, the Rivière des Anguilles Police Station was greatly undermanned and that is why it explains the delay in having to attend certain reported cases like Rivière des Anguilles. But, coming to my question, could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister consider the possibility of having the relevant amendments brought to the Criminal Code as well as procedures pertaining to criminal law that would enable the Police to enter provisional information, at the same time keeping confidentiality as to the name of the accused because, in this particular case, had the Police been able, legally and logistically speaking, to keep confidentially about the name as is possible in the United Kingdom, there would not have been the name made public and perhaps this would not have allowed people without any logic and without any love for their country to go into a haphazard retaliation which was unacceptable? Could the Rt. hon. Prime Minister consider the possibility of amending the law to give this tool to the Police to keep confidentially of such sensitive issues?

**Madam Speaker:** You have made your point, hon. Mohamed.

**The Prime Minister:** Well, that the Police Station is undermanned, not sufficiently provided with Police Officers, has this happened yesterday or since December? Was it not there and were you not in Government? What have you been doing?

**Mr Mohamed:** I was not Prime Minister.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Prime Minister:** But, we...

**Madam Speaker:** Please do not reply from a sitting position!

*(Interruptions)*

**The Prime Minister:** We are working to remedy the situation. About the second question also, we are looking into all this, Madam Speaker.

**Mr Ganoo:** Madam Speaker, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has rightly said that, in spite of long years of nation building, the social fabric of our country is still fragile. Doesn't the Rt. hon. Prime Minister think he should arrange for the Heads of the different religions to come



on TV and together make an appeal to the whole population of the island so that the situation might cool down?

**The Prime Minister:** The President of the Republic has done already a good job. This has gone to the public. About information going to the public, when something takes place in a region, in a village especially, can you keep that secret? Is that what the hon. Member wanted to make us believe?

*(Interruptions)*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Ganoo, Please! You have made your point. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister has already replied. Hon. Uteem, please!

**Mr Uteem:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, during the Press Conference, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister was quite forceful; not only making an appeal to the public, but also threatening about measures he would be taking. One of the measures that he alluded to was the state of emergency and he stated that he has the majority to give him this. So, may I ask the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to give a reassurance to the House and the population that we have not reached this state of affairs which would call for a state of emergency and this would only be used in a very dramatic situation?

**The Prime Minister:** I was very clear when I said: if we reach that situation and if we reach that situation, I would not hesitate.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, hon. Mohamed!

**Mr Mohamed:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have one last question: on this side of the House, we do not want to politicise such a very, very dangerous situation and we are all for what the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has said, not on all fronts but on part of it. Since the Rt. hon. Prime Minister has made very serious allegations - not only here today, but also yesterday according to my information - when talking about some political *complot*, may we know whether the Rt. hon. Prime Minister intends to make use of the information that he has and, by all means, give a declaration to the Police and communicate it to the Police for an enquiry to be carried out, instead of just simply throwing out allegations, but an enquiry must be made?

**The Prime Minister:** We are still having discussions on that.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr Bérenger:** My last question, if you would allow me, Madam Speaker! It is addressed to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and follows up through what my colleague, hon. Reza Uteem has just said. Will the Rt. hon. Prime Minister agree with me that the way forward is through national appeals, national action, unified action by Government, the Opposition, the trade unions, the *Forces Vives*, everybody, appealing for calm and so on, and, if required, through the kind of national appeal which, we were in Opposition, both the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and myself went on television, the then President, the Government and so on, in the 1999 dramatic situation that we went through, to appeal to the population at large. Does he not agree with me that this is the way forward and not threats about a possible *état d'urgence*?

**The Prime Minister:** Well, I have appealed for the cooperation on the part of the whole nation and that includes everybody.

**Madam Speaker:** Are you done, hon. Leader of the Opposition. That's it. Time is over! Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that Parliamentary Question B/419 in regard to the allocation of the contract to Airway Coffee Ltd. addressed to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister will now be replied by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications. Furthermore, Parliamentary Questions B/429, B/430 and B/432 have been withdrawn. Hon. Bhagwan, you may ask your question!