

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SYRIA – MAURITIAN CITIZEN

(No. B/262) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the recent case whereby a Mauritian citizen was found dead and buried in Syria, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if –

- (a) other such cases and/or of Mauritian citizens suspected to be involved in holy war in Syria has been detected, and
- (b) the anti-terrorist cell is actively monitoring the situation both inland and outside our territory to detect terrorist practices and/or attacks.

Reply: I am informed that there is no official record of any Mauritian citizen who has either been found dead and buried in Syria or has been involved in holy war in Syria.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I wish to assure the House that the Counter Terrorism Unit of my office is closely monitoring the situation both inland and outside our territory to detect any terrorist activities.

BELLE MARE LEISURE WATER PARK - COMMISSION OF INQUIRY - FEES

(No. B/263) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Commission of Inquiry set up by Government in relation to the Belle Mare Leisure Water Park, he will –

- (a) state who recommended the payment of fees to the Chairperson, assessors and supporting staff thereof, and
- (b) give a list of those who have been paid their respective fees, indicating -
 - (i) in each case, the quantum thereof, and
 - (ii) when the supporting staff thereof will be paid their respective fees.

Reply (The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security): I am informed that a Committee of Enquiry was set up to inquire into the circumstances of the death of two

children at Le Water Park Leisure Village. Payment of fees to the Committee members was not determined prior or following the setting up of the Committee of Enquiry.

After the submission of the report to my Ministry, a claim was forwarded on 14 February 2014 for the payment of fees to the Chairperson and members of the Commission as well as the supporting staff.

As the fees claimed were not in line with the approved rates of fees usually payable to Chairperson and members of Committees of Enquiry, on 19 February 2014, the advice of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms was sought.

On 03 July 2014, the Standing Committee on Fees and Allowances approved the payment of fees to the Chairperson and members of Committee of Enquiry in line with the existing guidelines approved by Government on fees payable to Commissions of Enquiry, Adhoc Committees and Technical Committees.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that in August 2014, the Sugar Investment Trust has effected payment of the following fees:-

The Chairperson	-	Rs 46,500.
Members (50%)	-	Rs 23,250.
Secretary (30%)	-	Rs 13,950.

With regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed that on 10 September 2014, the Chairperson of the Committee has also made a request for the payment of fees to the supporting staff comprising an Assistant Secretary and Transcriber, a Police Officer and an Attendant. Advice on the quantum of allowance to be paid was accordingly sought from the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms.

On 09 September 2014, the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms has advised that my Ministry should stand guided by the provisions of the PRB Report.

However, as no such provisions exist in the PRB Report, my Ministry has requested the Sugar Investment Trust to effect payment to members of the supporting staff at rates to be determined by its Board.

ROCHE BOIS – POLICE QUARTERS

(No. B/264) Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Police quarters located at the Abattoir Road, in Roche Bois, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to where matters stand as to the proposed pulling down thereof, indicating the projects earmarked for implementation on the site thereof and if procedures have been initiated therefor.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that it is not envisaged to pull down the Police Quarters at Abattoir Road, Roche Bois. In fact, the quarters comprise three blocks, one of which has been allocated to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life since 2011 and is being used as a Methadone Drop-in-Centre.

One of the two unoccupied blocks was previously earmarked to be pulled down, as it stands on the track identified for the Port Louis Ring Road Project. The Commissioner of Police has requested the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, to carry out a survey to assess the state of these two quarters to determine whether it would be cost effective to renovate them in the meantime. In the affirmative, the two blocks may eventually be converted into warehouses for the storage of serviceable and unserviceable items.

Furthermore, the compound where the quarters are located will be rehabilitated as it is subject to water accumulation and flooding during heavy rainfall.

GOVERNMENT CAR POOL – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/265) Mr P. Jhugroo (Second Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to persons who have been allocated with an official car from the Government car pool and who have been provided with the services of the Very Important Person Security Unit drivers over the period July 2005 to 11 December 2014, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, a list thereof, indicating the –

- (a) capacity in which they have been granted same;
- (b) make and model of the car put at the disposal thereof;
- (c) duration thereof, and

(d) reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

COMMERCIAL BANKS – PENALTY INTERESTS

(No. B/299) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)

asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the alleged abuse of imposition of penalty interests on arrears by some banking and financial institutions, he will state if he will consider –

(a) introducing legislation for the elimination thereof, and

(b) requesting the issue of clear guidelines, by the –

(i) Bank of Mauritius regarding the recognition of interests income, especially regarding non-performing credits, and

(ii) banks, asking that a moratorium on capital and interests payment be granted to the customers undergoing hardships and come up with a stimulus package for borrowers who are encountering difficulties in repaying their debts.

Reply: We are fully aware of the issue being raised by the hon. Member and we are working on it.

In fact as announced in the 2015 Budget Speech, the Bank of Mauritius will be implementing the recommendations in the report on abuses of commercial banks released recently. Furthermore, we are also setting up an Office of Ombudsperson on Financial Institutions which will deal with complaints received and recommend appropriate remedial action.

BANKS - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY SYSTEMS

(No. B/300) Mr D. Sesungkur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)

asked the Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the recent leakage and publication of sensitive information pertaining to the banking transactions of some corporate bodies and individuals, he will state if he will consider requesting the Bank of Mauritius to ensure that banking systems are safe in general and that the Information Technology security systems of banks are strengthened to avoid reputational damage to the country.

Reply: I am informed by the Bank of Mauritius that in line with provisions of the Banking Act, the Information Technology security systems of banks are continually reviewed, strengthened, tested and upgraded so as to avoid, *inter alia*, any reputational damage to the country.

Furthermore, the Bank of Mauritius has also issued a guideline on “Maintenance of Accounting and other Records and Internal Control Systems” to ensure that adequate internal control measures are maintained by banks in respect of their information systems.

As such, the Banking Act provides appropriate legal safeguards for the maintenance of confidentiality of information and also the sanctity of the information system.