

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### H5N1 BIRD FLU

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*By Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that the H5N1 Bird Flu has caused the death of human beings in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia since 2003 and is now threatening to turn into a global scale pandemic like the one that killed 20 to 40 million people at the end of World War I and if so, will he –

- (i) state what protective and preparatory measures are being taken locally, and
- (ii) agree that Mauritius takes the lead to build international commitment and action to unprime the H5N1 time bomb.

**The Minister of Health & Quality of Life (Mr S. Faugoo):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to answer this PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) report of 05 August 2005, a total of 112 cases of Avian Influenza has been reported among human beings in Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia since 2003, including 57 deaths. The risk of a global pandemic may occur in case of human to human transmission of the disease. Such transmission has not yet occurred nor reported.

With regard to part (i) of the question, following the outbreak of the Avian Influenza affecting birds and human beings in the South East Asian countries, my Ministry has taken the following measures -

- (a) vigilance has been increased regarding surveillance at Port and Airport, including the airport at Plaine Corail in Rodrigues;
- (b) travellers to affected areas have been advised, through press communiqués, to avoid visiting poultry farms and crowded markets where poultry is being sold and to report to the health authority in case of illness following their return to the country;

- (c) facilities for isolation of cases of communicable diseases, including Avian Influenza, have been provided at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital;
- (d) health inspectors are carrying out regular visits to poultry farms, to ensure that proper husbandry practices are being observed and also to report abnormal deaths of poultry, which may be the first sign that the disease has reached our shores;
- (e) a stock of personal protective equipment has been procured for the health care personnel to be used when cases are reported, and
- (f) presently, we have a stock of antiviral drug for treatment of about 75 adult patients and dry syrup for some 40 children/old persons. Additional action has been initiated for the procurement of a stock of 10,000 capsules to cater for some 1000 patients.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, diagnosis of influenza is being carried out at the Virology Laboratory at Victoria Hospital, using a diagnostic kit received from the WHO annually. Specimens of confirmed influenza cases are referred to the WHO Influenza Reference Laboratory in London for identification of strain. Presently, we do not have facilities for diagnosis of Avian Influenza among humans. Specimens have to be referred to the WHO Influenza Reference Laboratory.

My Ministry is working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries, and the following measures have been taken by that Ministry to prevent the entry of Avian Flu in the country -

- (a) ban of importation from Asian countries of all live animals and animal products since December 2003, with the exception of canned poultry and pork;
- (b) increase vigilance of quarantine services at Port and Airport to avoid illegal entry of live animals and animal products;
- (c) daily monitoring of world-wide situation with regard to Avian Flu, so that appropriate measures may be taken to ensure prompt restriction of importation of animal and animal products

from newly affected countries;

- (d) ongoing serological surveillance on major poultry farms is being carried out for early detection of any infection of Avian Flu among the poultry population in Mauritius, and
- (e) shipping agents of vessel originating from Asian countries have been advised to refrain from keeping pet birds, domestic fowls and pigs on board.

The influenza strain, H5N1, originating from Avian Influenza, was also raised at the 58<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly in May 2005. One of the recommendations made was to prepare a national plan for pandemic influenza preparedness, in view of the potential threat of a pandemic of a new strain of influenza amongst humans.

In this context, my Ministry has set up a committee to be chaired by a Principal Medical Officer and comprising all stakeholders to -

- (a) take stock of the existing facilities to address the problem mentioned above and to make proposals in the light thereof;
- (b) work out a national plan to deal with the outbreak of the disease when it reaches our shores, and
- (c) monitor the situation.

As far as part (ii) of the question is concerned, Mauritius cannot take the lead to build international commitment and action to unprime the H5N1 epidemic, as we do not have the technical expertise and resources to cope with such a task. However, my Ministry is prepared to co-operate and build international commitment and take appropriate action accordingly.

I am advised that the former Prime Minister himself chaired a meeting of technicians on “Emerging of Infectious diseases including Avian Influenza”. My Ministry has already implemented the recommendations of stock piling antiviral drugs against Avian Influenza to prepare for any outbreak in the country.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Health has said that the H5N1 Bird-Flu has not yet developed into a pandemic. Can I ask him whether he is aware that, for nearly all of the world-known scientists, these days, unfortunately, it is not a question of ‘if’ but of ‘when’? Is he aware that that danger is very, very real indeed?

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the danger is there. As we said, it may become a pandemic, but all the same it may not. But, from all the indications received as at now from the WHO, they cannot pronounce on this issue at this stage.

**Mr Bérenger:** As the hon. Minister is quoting the WHO, can I ask him whether he is aware that, according to the WHO itself, within a few months of the pandemic, 30 million people would need to be in hospital and a quarter could be expected to die? Furthermore, is he aware that one of the best experts, namely Professor Osterhaus of the Netherlands, has estimated that the pandemic could infect 20% of the world population?

**Mr Faugoo:** There is no conclusive evidence so far to pronounce on this issue that this is going to happen. There is a danger and we are taking all measures that we can at our end at the level of the Ministry to see to it that if ever there is an outbreak, if there is any suspicion, we are going to act accordingly.

**Mr Bérenger:** I am glad that the present Government is carrying on with the protective, preventive and preparatory measures that had been taken some months back. Can I be allowed to point out that, unfortunately, as in the case of the earthquakes the danger is next door? I mentioned some of the countries concerned, Thailand, Indonesia, the danger is next door. Can I, therefore, request Government, through the Minister, to take special precautionary measures in the direction of those unfortunate neighbours?

**Mr Faugoo:** We are going to do the needful, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I must say that in a meeting chaired by the Leader of the Opposition on this issue, I see a comment by the Chairman which goes as follows: "The Chairman was concerned about the fact that nothing much could be done about that disease." This was a comment made by the Chairman who was chairing the Committee on this issue, but I am taking stock of all the propositions and facts which are prevailing as at to date and we are going to take necessary measures.

**Mr Bérenger:** I don't think it is fair to pick out one part of the sentence out of context, Mr Speaker, Sir, specially when no reference is made to the minutes of proceedings. I would invite the Minister to lay a copy of the minutes of proceedings on the Table. It would help Members of Parliament.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, amongst other measures which the present Government is carrying on with - and we need to increase our effort to keep a stock of antiviral Tami-flu drugs - the Minister must be aware that the lifespan of those drugs is quite short; and it is quite expensive. Should the pandemic hit us in the future, clearly, the number of doses that we have of this antiviral drug is not sufficient and it is very difficult to imagine us being in a position to put sufficient money into that when we know that the lifespan is very short. Can I ask the Minister whether he is aware that there is an international move these days to have an international stockpile of some 3 million doses of Tami-flu, of this antiviral drug and other antiviral drugs, such a world stockpile on standby so that should trouble erupt in any part of the world - and specially in our part of the world - this would be available at very short notice?

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware that in England and France they have procured a large quantity of these Tami-flu and we have also at our end at least made provisions for one thousand patients for the time being and the lifespan of this tablet is 10 years. So, we are on the safe side as far as this is concerned. These medicines have been sent to some of the regional hospitals. They are in stock there in case of need and we are looking at other avenues maybe to procure more of Tami-flu.

**Mr Bérenger:** I would ask the hon. Minister to double-check, because our information was not along those lines at all, because the lifespan is not 10 years unfortunately, but much ...

*(Interruptions)*

I am talking about serious issues, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would request the Minister to double-check because, the lifespan of those drugs according to the information we had was much, much shorter than 10 years. Mr Speaker, Sir, as the Minister is aware, I am sure, the problem is that there is today no vaccine when we are talking about these antiviral drugs, Tami-flu and others; they do not prevent the disease, they help those who are hit by that disease. The Minister must be aware that there is research bearing fruit on the development of such a vaccine. But will he agree with me that what has been lacking to date is the political commitment internationally to accelerate the development of such vaccine? It is in that sense that I mentioned the contribution that Mauritius can bring in politically to bring about that political commitment that would accelerate the completion of the development of the vaccine.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am told that the medicine in question comes in two forms, namely in powder form and in the form of syrup. I am told that the lifespan for the medicine in powder form is 10 years and for the syrup is much lesser. As far as the vaccine is concerned there is none which is available on the market so far, but I am aware that countries like the USA, are working on some vaccine. In fact, this morning I was going through a document, but it is true to say that there is a long way to go in this context.

**Mr Bérenger:** This is my point. The longer the way we all have to go the more urgent is the political commitment, action and pressure that big and smaller countries like ours should bear on the international community and the countries concerned in particular. Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister to liaise with the Prime Minister, because clearly neither the Prime Minister nor the Minister got the point of the last part where I requested to know whether the Prime Minister, Government agrees that Mauritius, within its means, of course, should take the lead politically to get as much political commitment and action as required to move things forward? Because we are really dealing with a time bomb that can kill millions and millions of people. What I have in mind, Mr Speaker, was for small Mauritius to take the lead, specially at the forthcoming UN Special September Summit in New York where some issues now have obtained the required political commitment and action like HIV/AIDS. But this time bomb that is next door has not yet obtained the kind of political commitment and action that is urgently required. That is why I had put the question to the Prime Minister, it is not too late. Can I ask, through the Minister, whether the Prime Minister would be prepared to move along those lines, and prior to the UN Special Conference of September to write to Kofi Annan, the Prime Minister of India, the President of France, the President of China, of the US, Japan, South Africa, amongst others, to build up this consensus, this political commitment on this dramatic and very dangerous issue?

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, when I answered the second part of the PNQ, I said that Mauritius cannot take the lead as far as the technical side is concerned, but if it comes to the political side, I don't think we'll have any quarrel on this issue.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, I am glad to hear this, but I would have been even more glad to hear it from the Prime Minister, but clearly that part of my question was misread. I am not saying that we should take the lead technically as I know that we are not equipped to do that, but I meant politically. Sometimes small countries like Mauritius can play a vital role in provoking, as I said, the political commitment that has been lacking as far as this H5N1 time bomb is concerned. May I be allowed to thank the Minister for the positive attitude that he has adopted? And I hope that the Prime

Minister between now and the forthcoming UN Special Summit in New York travels the same route.

## **POLICE COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATION BUREAU/POLICE FORCE**

**(No. I B/1) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that the Police Complaints Investigation Bureau is being perceived as being party and judge at the same time by reason of the fact that the Bureau is part of the Police Force and, if so, will he consider the advisability of having the Bureau detached from the Force.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker Sir, since October 1999, all complaints against members of the Police Force are investigated by the Complaints Investigation Bureau, which is under the administrative control of the Commissioner of Police.

With the setting up of the National Human Rights Commission under section 3 of the Protection of Human Rights Act 1998, the Complaints Investigation Bureau works in close collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission which, among other things, deal with complaints against members of the Police Force.

At present, any member of the public who feels aggrieved by the conduct of a Police Officer may make a complaint in writing to either the Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission or the Commissioner of Police or the Complaints Investigation Bureau or the Divisional Commander or by calling at any Police Station.

The Police is required by law to forward to the National Human Rights Commission a copy of every complaint and to report the outcome of the inquiry. Should the Police decide not to take any action on the complaint, the National Human Rights Commission may decide to reopen the case.

All complaints are investigated by the Complaints Investigation Bureau under the supervision of a Police Officer not below the rank of an Assistant Superintendent. This was decided because we want to minimise trivial or malicious cases of complaints as it has been done in other countries, especially the U.K. Cases inquired by the Complaints Investigation Bureau are submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions for

advice or the National Human Rights Commission for recommendation. A return of minor cases of complaints disposed of by the Police is sent periodically to the National Human Rights Commission, which is empowered by law to query or review any such decision. Otherwise where Police Officers have acted in breach of the Police Code of Discipline, proceedings are instituted against them before the Departmental Orderly Room chaired by a Superintendent of Police delegated by the Commissioner of Police.

This is the situation that prevails now and this was done for various practical reason and modelled at the time on what obtained in the UK then.

Mr Speaker Sir, the United Nations Human Rights Committee established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in its conclusion following the consideration of the fourth periodic Report of Mauritius, observed that there was a need for Mauritius to ensure that complaints against Police Officers are dealt with by an independent body. I am aware that following similar complaints the United Kingdom has, some two to three years back, introduced an Independent Police Complaints Commission which has the responsibility to handle complaints against Police Officers and to hold the Police to account.

I am of the view that this perception of being judge and party at the same time will persist; it has persisted in other countries with the same results. It is important that there should be confidence in the procedures. Therefore, I, can say, I will look carefully at the suggestion made and consider it. Once a policy decision is reached, I will ask my friend, the Attorney General, to prepare the necessary legislation for its application in Mauritius.

#### **PARASTATAL ORGANISATIONS - BOARDS - COMPOSITION**

**(No. I B/2) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether there have recently been changes in the composition of some Boards of parastatal organisations and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, ascertain whether the employees thereof have been paid their wages and other benefits within the time limit laid down in the Labour Act.

**The Prime Minister:** Yes Sir, changes are being effected in the composition of Boards of parastatal organisations.

So far, neither my office nor any other Ministry has received any complaint regarding delay in the payment of salary and wages of employees of parastatal organisations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the information of the House, Government has recently decided that pending the appointment of a Chairperson of the Board of a parastatal organisation, the most senior civil servant should chair Boards and Committees falling under the aegis of their respective Ministry.

### **COI MEETING, MADAGASCAR - FRENCH PRESIDENT/PRIME MINISTER - MEETING**

**(No. I B/3) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state if during his recent meeting with the French President at the COI Meeting in Madagascar he raised the issue of Tromelin Island and, if so, will he state if he claimed sovereignty over same, and whether he will give details on the issue raised and, if no such issue was raised, will he say why.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, before the start of the IOC summit in Madagascar, I did raise the issue of Tromelin with the French Ambassador.

It appears that during the official visit of the former Prime Minister in France from 11 to 14 February 2004, the French President had suggested that a meeting at experts level be held to discuss issues relating to Tromelin. On 15 February 2005, the French Government, through its Embassy in Port Louis, proposed that the meeting of experts be held in May this year. Although the Mauritian Government, it seems, accepted this, in May 2005 the Mauritian side reacted to say that because of the upcoming general elections, the meeting scheduled for 18 May be postponed.

So, we have decided that we should find mutually suitable dates for the experts meeting so that the matter can then be pursued at the highest political level.

For the information of the House at the IOC Summit, I delved lengthly with the French President on the recent proposal for the review of the EU Sugar Regime which, in its current form, could have very serious consequences for Mauritius and solicited the support of the French Government for the safeguard of the interests of ACP Sugar Producing Countries in the reform process. I must put on record that the French President went out of his way to defend our position with EU Commissioner

Louis Michel. And he has assured me that he will extend full support of France to Mauritius and other ACP Sugar Producing Countries in their endeavour to obtain a reform that is both fair and equitable to all stakeholders.

I am confident that our view is now better understood. In this context, I have invited the EU Commissioner, Michel to Mauritius to see how we have organised our sugar industry and the efforts we are making. The gist of my position has been that we are a small island developing State; we are more vulnerable and we have made sacrifices and efforts and we should not be penalised for our efforts.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Prime Minister has made reference to the points he put forward on the issue of the sugar regime reform proposed by the European Union Commission. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there was a request for a formal *tête à tête* between the hon. Prime Minister and President Chirac on both issues, that is, the sugar issue and on Tromelin Island, and, if yes, whether that request was entertained or whether it was a discussion at lunch with other Heads of State, Government and the Commissioner from the European Union present?

**The Prime Minister:** There was a formal request, Mr Speaker, Sir, and we were made to understand that, in fact, President Chirac is going to make an official visit before the Summit and he would be there for only one day, but still we had a *tête à tête* - not just at the lunch where everybody else was present - and this is when I talked about the position of the sugar in Mauritius and why we are a vulnerable State and this is why he also invited me for an official visit, but we did have a *tête à tête*.

### **LABONNE, MR S. - DEATH AT GRNW PRISON**

**(No. I B/4) Mr J.C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the case of Mr Steeve Labonne who died as a result of an incident at the GRNW prison, he will state the cause of the incident and say whether any inquiry into the matter has been conducted.

**The Prime Minister:** Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 11 July 2005 at about 1330 hours, at GRNW Prison, a fight occurred between two groups of detainees.

The Prison staff on duty intervened, but due to the large number of prisoners involved, they could not prevent detainees Denis Claude Steeve Labonne, Patrick Elvis Seewoo and Abdool Nawshad Jeewooth from being assaulted.

After the fight, detainee Denis Claude Steeve Labonne was found lying senseless on the ground, bleeding profusely from multiple injuries, whereas detainee Patrick Elvis Seewoo and Abdool Nawshad Jeewooth sustained bleeding injuries.

SAMU was called and attended and detainee Denis Claude Steeve Labonne was pronounced dead whereas Patrick Elvis Seewoo and Abdool Nawshad Jeewooth were conveyed to Dr. Jeetoo Hospital for treatment. Patrick Elvis Seewoo was admitted at Ward 8 of Dr Jeetoo Hospital whereas Abdool Nawshad Jeewooth was transferred to J. Nehru Hospital and admitted thereat. They are both presently admitted at Beau Bassin Prison hospital.

An autopsy was carried out by Police Medical Officers and it attributed the death of Denis Claude Steeve Labonne to "shock following multiple injuries". During the course of the autopsy, eight small packets wrapped in aluminum foil and cellotape containing a white powder were retrieved from the mouth of the deceased.

The Police inquiry which started straightaway has revealed that -

- (a) the white powder is, in fact, "Buprenorphine", a narcotic analgesic drug, commonly known as "Subitex", and that
- (b) according to detainee Abdool Nawshad Jeewooth the cause of the incident is the result of a feud between detainees Labonne, Ramlagun and Edouard which existed since their detention at Beau Bassin Prison.

Provisional complaints have been lodged against seven detainees for murder and two detainees for attempt at murder.

All these detainees are now held at Beau Bassin Prison.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that Police inquiry is still underway.

The Prison Service is also conducting a departmental inquiry into the events leading to the incident and a final report is expected.

I also wish to inform the House that I had a meeting with Mr William Duff, the Commissioner of Prisons on his return from leave from the UK to discuss the overall situation prevailing in the prisons. Among other things, my attention has been drawn to the failure of the intelligence gathering mechanism at the Prisons department. Such a system according to the Commissioner of Prisons could have prevented occurrence of such a tragic incident. It is clear, that there are major problems at the prisons, not just lack of proper and effective intelligence, but also with my discussions with the Commissioner of Prisons, we discussed on how things can be improved in the short term. The High Powered Committee has been tasked to look at all the aspects of prison safety and discipline.

**Mr Barbier:** May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether it has been established which type of arm was used in the incident? Can the Prime Minister inform the House how these arms were introduced in the prisons? Have these facts been established?

**The Prime Minister:** Well, the Police inquiry is still going on, but what I can say is that the person has died, he has been bleeding profusely; obviously he has been attacked and this will have to be looked into. But again, this, in fact, points to the way prisons were handled.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I be allowed to say that I take good note of the positive tone which the hon. Prime Minister has adopted when referring to Mr William Bill Duff, the present Commissioner of Prisons? And may I request the Prime Minister to allow the Commissioner to go on with the good work he has started? It is a very difficult situation and may I, therefore, make the request that he be given every possibility to keep on with his work?

**The Prime Minister:** He was on leave and as soon as he came back from the UK, I had a discussion with him. Of course, it is a difficult situation and we are looking into the matter.

### **BEAU BASSIN PRISON – DETAINEE – PROHIBITED ARTICLES & DRUGS**

**(No. I B/5) Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware that at a recent landing of the ADSU at the Beau Bassin prison, 22 small packets (sachets) of heroin

were discovered and, if so, will he state if any Prison Officer has been arrested or suspended.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the information of the hon. Member is incorrect. I am advised by the Commissioner of Prisons that, on Wednesday 27 July 2005, a search of all areas of the Central Prison at Beau Bassin was undertaken by the Prisons staff, from 06 15 in the morning to 10 o'clock. Among other prohibited articles, twenty-two small folded white glazed papers, all containing a quantity of a whitish powder, were found in the possession of a detainee. The powder was suspected to be a dangerous drug.

Thereupon, ADSU officers were called to the prison and the folded glazed papers were handed over to them. This is the normal practice, that is, when drugs are found, they must be handed over to ADSU and this is exactly what was done.

Police inquiry has been started and I am further informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that no Prison Officer has been found to be implicated and therefore none has either been arrested or suspended, but the Police inquiry, as I said, is continuing.

### **RIVIÈRE DU REMPART – MARKET (NEW)**

**(No. I B/6) Mr D. Boodhoo (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the new market at Rivière du Rempart, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Pamplemousses/Rivière du Rempart District Council, information as to –

- (a) the cost of the project,
- (b) the procedures laid down for the lease of a stall and the cost thereof,
- (c) who will be responsible for the allotment of stalls, and
- (d) the number available as well as the number of applicants therefore to date.

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to report that the project for the construction of a new market at Rivière du Rempart is a concrete example of poor planning and mismanagement.

*(Interruptions)*

Just wait, just listen then the Opposition will see how they mismanaged things. It was mismanaged, this is why they were deleted.

(Interruptions)

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

**Dr. David:** The contract for the project which initially comprised the construction of a single reinforced concrete building to accommodate vegetable, meat and other sellers was awarded in January 2003 at the cost of Rs22 m, which was gradually extended to ultimately reach the project value of Rs51 m (more than 130%), Mr Speaker, Sir. The delivery schedule was 30 September 2003 and up to now the project has not been completed and handed over.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the Pamplemousses/Rivière du Rempart District Council will be responsible for the allotment of the stalls in the new market and priority of consideration will be given to all those stallholders who were already operating in the old market fair. These stallholders will be required to pay a one-off fee of Rs5,000 and a monthly stall fee of Rs400.

I am further advised that 381 stalls for vegetable and 166 stalls for general merchandise will be available in the new market. In addition, there will be 3 fish stalls, 6 meat stalls for beef and chicken, 8 food courts and 24 shops, which will be allotted by way of tender exercise.

To date, the Pamplemousses/Rivière du Rempart District Council has received 230 applications for merchandise and 408 applications for vegetables, which include the stallholders who were operating in the old market fair.

**Mr Boodhoo:** May I ask the hon. Minister to see to it that the committee, responsible for the allotment of stalls, is constituted properly so that we eliminate situations where there can be bribes?

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, certainly we will look into the matter. I am not going to constitute the committee, but I'll see to it that things are now done properly.

(Interruptions)

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Hon. Boodhoo, next question.

## **RIVIERE DU REMPART VILLAGE - FOOTBALL PLAYGROUNDS**

**(No. I B/7) Mr D. Boodhoo (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he is aware that there is a lack of football playgrounds in the village of Rivière du Rempart and, if so, whether he will consider the advisability of arranging for additional ones to be put up.

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that three football pitches already exist in the village of Rivière du Rempart, namely Rohit Boolaky football ground which has floodlights facilities, one at the locality known as Le Ravin and another one attached to the Ramsoondar Prayag State Secondary School.

My Ministry is currently carrying out an audit of existing sports facilities in the country with a view to determining the need to put up appropriate new facilities in specific localities. Moreover, a modus operandi is being worked out with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources with a view to providing increasing access to sports facilities attached to the secondary schools to the general public.

In the light of the audit, consideration will be given to putting additional sports facilities to relevant regions and villages, including the village of Rivière du Rempart as appropriate.

## **POUDRE D'OR & POSTE LA FAYETTE - TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

**(No. I B/8) Mr D. Boodhoo (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to development in the tourism sector, he will state if he is aware that the North East coastal area of Mauritius has been completely neglected and, if so, will he consider its development as a matter of priority.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. Duval):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the region around Poudre d'or and Poste La Fayette.

This area has indeed been quite neglected and there is practically no major tourism development there.

Furthermore, I am informed that there is actually no application for any tourism project in the area being processed at my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can assure the hon. Member that my Ministry will endeavour to facilitate and encourage the implementation of any future projects in that region, which appear viable.

### **DOUBLE TAXATION AGREEMENTS (NEW) – OCTOBER 2000 TO JUNE 2005**

**(No. 1 B/9 Mr D. Boodhoo (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart))** asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to double taxation agreements entered into by Mauritius he will –

- (a) give the number of such new agreements signed by Mauritius between 01 October 2000 and June 2005, and
- (b) the reason/s, if any, for the cancellation of the agreement between Mauritius and Indonesia and the steps taken then to prevent such cancellation.

**The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, between 1st of October 2000 and 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2005, Mauritius has signed six Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements, namely with Rwanda, Senegal, Croatia, Uganda, Barbados and Seychelles.

As regards the DTA with Indonesia, the decision of the Indonesian Government not to sustain it any longer was conveyed in a Note Verbale dated 9 February 2004 from the Indonesian Embassy in Dar-es-Salaam. The reasons given therein were that, following an assessment and evaluation of the implementation of the Treaty, the Indonesian government has concluded that there was an abuse that was inflicting a revenue loss upon Indonesia. The letter referred specifically to those foreign companies that are registered in Mauritius as Global Business Licence (GBL) companies and to our domestic legislation that enabled them to obtain tax dispensation or tax nullification on their business income from Indonesia.

I am informed that the following steps were taken in a bid to prevent the cancellation -

- (a) The then Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Co-operation wrote to his Indonesian counterpart on 24 February, conveying the disappointment of Mauritius, providing details of the supervisory practices of financial services in Mauritius and he proposed the visit of a high-level delegation to Djakarta to discuss ways of improving the functioning of the Agreement.
- (b) On 11 June 2004, the Indonesian Authorities reconfirmed their decision to terminate the DTA but indicated their willingness to “discuss and negotiate a new agreement that would safeguard the mutual interest and benefits of both countries in the future”.
- (c) Foreign expertise was sought to advise on the negotiations, including from the International Bureau for Fiscal Documentation, an institution that was involved in the successful renegotiation of the DTA between the Netherlands and Indonesia.
- (d) On 19 August 2004, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Cooperation replied to the Indonesian Authorities that the Government of Mauritius was agreeable to recommend negotiations on a new Tax Treaty and invited them to suggest convenient dates.
- (e) On 24 September 2004, the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development wrote to the then Minister of Finance of Indonesia, urging for an early start of negotiations for a new Treaty in order to remove uncertainties to business in the mutual interest of the two countries.
- (f) In addition, the Commissioner of Income Tax also took up the matter on 22 October 2004, with his counterpart in Indonesia.
- (g) On 25 October 2004, the Indonesian Director of Tax Regulation replied that it was not possible to fix an early date as the new Government was involved in a major fiscal reform.
- (h) On 19 November 2004, the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development wrote again to the new Minister of Finance of Indonesia renewing the request for a start of the negotiations. He also proposed that an arrangement be made to extend the existing Treaty for one additional year so as to avoid a vacuum.

- (i) On 03 March 2005, the Commissioner of Income Tax again wrote to his counterpart for an early start of negotiations.

The Indonesian authorities have so far neither responded to the proposals made by us nor submitted dates for negotiations. So much so that the DTA with Indonesia is no longer in operation, effective as from 01 January 2005 for the Indonesian authorities and 01 July 2005 for the Mauritian authorities.

Sir, I wish to state here that I will again take up the matter with the Indonesian Government with a view to reaching a mutually satisfactory solution.

### **MONT ORY - LANDSLIDES**

**(No. I B/10) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that landslides often occur at Mont Ory along the road leading from the trunk road to the village and , if so, will he consider the advisability of arranging for retaining walls to be constructed thereat and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that the road starting from Junction Motorway M1 at Mont Ory towards Moka which bears the name of Montagne Ory road (B46) is found in a cut and on both sides there is an embankment of 12 m high. Landslides have occurred frequently on that road and measures to remedy the situation during this financial year are being considered.

### **MAHATMA GANDHI AND RABINDRANATH SECONDARY SCHOOLS - RECTORS & DEPUTY RECTORS**

**(No. I B/11) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Heads of the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools and the Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School he will state –

- (a) when such schools became operational;
- (b) the title of the posts at their respective inception and their respective title today;

- (c) if the same privileges, pay packet, allowances and title of post in State Secondary Schools and/or Confessional Secondary Schools were resorted to and, if not, why not, and
- (d) upon whose advice or recommendation was the practice followed.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that as far as part (a) is concerned, the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools of Moka, Flacq and Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School, Ilot and the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary School, Nouvelle France came into operation in January 2002 and January 2003 respectively.

As regards part (b), at the time of the setting up of those schools, temporary arrangements were resorted to and after an in-house exercise, most senior Education Officers of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute were identified by the management of Mahatma Gandhi Institute to act as Officer-in-Charge as from the date the schools became operational, against payment of an allowance of Rs1,800 per month. That was so because the scheme of service for the post of Rector had not yet been prescribed. They were subsequently appointed as Deputy Rector with effect from 04 January 2005 and their current appellation is still Deputy Rector pending a decision for the Mahatma Gandhi Institute to fill the post of Rector.

As regards part (c), the post of Rector and Deputy Rector on the establishment of Mahatma Gandhi Institute/Rabindranath Tagore Institute carry the same salary scale and conditions of service as that of Rector and Deputy Rector both in the State schools and the private secondary schools, including the confessional schools.

With regard to part (d), the salary grading for the post of Rector and Deputy Rector were made by the Pay Research Bureau as is the case for all posts in the Civil Service and parastatal bodies. The designation of Officers-in-Charge and appointment of Deputy Rectors have been effected by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute/Rabindranath Tagore Institute Council on the recommendation of the Management of the Institute.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister when the Deputy Rector will be promoted to the post of Rector and the subsequent filling of the post of Deputy Rector. Could the Minister consider the advisability of backdating the appointment of these posts since the Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School conduct classes of Form IV as from January 2005?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, procedures are on for the appointment of the Chairmen of MGI and the RTI. As regards the backdating of these posts, I shall refer the matter to the appropriate institutions.

### **MAHATMA GANDHI SECONDARY SCHOOLS - LABORATORY, SPORTING FACILITIES, ETC**

**(No. I B/12) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools, he will state -

- (a) if they are equipped with (i) a Biology, Chemistry and Physics laboratory, and (ii) volleyball pitch, basketball pitch and football playground;
- (b) if any sporting facility and Domestic Science Room and/or a Design and Communication Room and Library exist and, if not, why not;
- (c) if the prevocational classes conducted thereat are equipped with any workshop facilities and, if not, why not, and
- (d) the arrangements, if any, made or to be made for the provision of the above basic facilities.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a), I am given to understand that the Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School at Ilot and which is part of the Mahatma Gandhi Schools has Biology, Physics and Chemistry laboratories as well as volleyball and basketball pitches and football ground.

As for the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools at Central Flacq, Moka and Solférino, they have neither Science laboratories nor proper sports facilities.

Since no building has been put up yet for the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary School, at Nouvelle France, its students are accommodated in the Nouvelle France Sixth Form State College next to the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary School site. They do not have Science laboratories and football ground, but they benefit from the volleyball and basketball facilities available at the college.

With regard to 'sporting facility' mentioned in part (b) of the question, this has just been answered.

The Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School has a Domestic Science Room, a Design and Communication Room and a Library.

But the four Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools do not have any of those facilities.

I am given to understand that the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools, like a few other State Secondary Schools, are being constructed phase-wise due to time constraint and the urgent need for classrooms for accommodation purposes in the first instance. The Domestic Science room, Design and Communication Room and Library will be put up in the second or third phase of the respective projects.

As regards part (c), the Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School has got workshop facilities for the prevocational classes.

These facilities are not available at the four Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools.

The workshop infrastructure has not yet been built in those schools, but will be put up in the second or third phase of the construction works of those four schools. However, equipment has been purchased in March 2005 for the prevocational streams of all the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools.

As regards part (d), some simple tools among those items of equipment are already being used by the students in practical work carried out in the classrooms. The rest of the equipment will be installed and put to use when the necessary infrastructure is put up in the second or third phase of their respective projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is working closely with the MPI with a view to speeding up the completion of the remaining phases of all the schools, including the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the school yard is so small that the ratio of the number of students to the area of school yard is less than 1:1, that is, one student to less than 1 square metre. More particularly, in the case of that MG SS Flacq where morning assembly could not be conducted because of lack of space, and parents rightly claim that this age which the students are presently living will not be revisited.

Therefore, I should like to appeal to the hon. Minister to look into the matter.

**Mr Gokhool:** I am fully aware of the problems being faced by the students in these schools, Mr Speaker, Sir. And again, I would say, as was mentioned by my colleague, Minister Burty David, this is yet another example of very poor planning and very poor project management. This is the reason why the students are facing ...

*(Interruptions)*

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

**Mr Gokhool:** I assure the House that every step is being taken to correct the situation which has been prevailing over the last four and a half years.

### **RIPAILLES, ST PIERRE – CREMATION GROUND – UPGRADING**

**(No. I B/13) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether he is aware that the cremation ground of Ripailles, St Pierre is in a pitiable state and, if so, will he make necessary arrangements towards upgrading same, including its fencing and the provision of other basic amenities and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this pitiful state of affairs demonstrates a clear case of lethargy on part of the former Minister of Environment and National Development Unit. Even the dead were not properly respected!

The plot of land of an extent of 633m<sup>2</sup> which is being used as a cremation ground at Ripailles was donated by Mr Parmanand Ghoorah.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, the now Leader of the Opposition came in as best loser once. They should go and look back in history!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I'll ask the Minister to address the Chair, please!

**Dr. David:** I always have a passion, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can't do anything else. I am advised that the land in question has been vested in the Ministry of Environment & National Development Unit by the Ministry of Housing & Lands on 27 June 2004 for use as a cremation ground. Subsequently, on 30 November 2004, a request was made by the Moka/Flacq District Council to that Ministry for putting up two pyres; one covered and one uncovered, with shelter and other amenities for the benefit of the inhabitants of that locality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that nothing has been done so far, thus causing undue hardship to the inhabitants of that region.

I have liaised with my colleague, the hon. Minister of Environment & National Development Unit, the new one, to do the needful so as to redress the situation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Dayal:** Can I ask the hon. Minister how long will the dead have to wait so that they may rest in peace in a better environment?

**Dr. David:** That's a good question, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have impressed upon the Moka/Flacq District Council to assist and I have liaised with my colleague, Minister of NDU and I am sure I will get a positive reply. He is going to do it and that will be the end of the matter. We are going to redress injustice done even against the dead.

## **MAHEBOURG HOSPITAL – OPERATION, EXTENSION AND MODERNISATION**

**(No. I B/14) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether Government has decided to reopen the Mahebourg Hospital and, if so, will he state if Government proposes to extend and modernise the said hospital and indicate the steps he proposes to take in this connection.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, at the outset, I would wish to inform the House that Mahebourg Hospital ceased functioning as a district hospital in November 2002.

As a result of decision in 2002 to transform Mahebourg hospital into a community hospital, admission of patients for emergencies and operations were discontinued. Admission for emergency cases were transferred by ambulance to Rose Belle Jawaharlall Nehru Hospital. Pharmacy services were functional up to 10.00 p.m until 23 August 2004.

On 01 April 2005, with the approach of general elections, arrangements were made hastily for Mahebourg hospital to re-admit patients with the opening of a female ward with a capacity of 22 beds and a male ward with a capacity of 24 beds.

Government has now decided to make Mahebourg hospital fully operational as it used to be in 2002 and the following facilities will be reintroduced.

- The operation theatre is being equipped with an operating table and a mobile scyaltic lamp to perform minor surgery.
- The rehabilitation ward for alcoholic patients is being re-opened.
- The maternity ward will be re-opened.
- The bed capacity is being increased from 46 to 70.

The improvement and upgrading work is expected to be completed in September of this year.

An old derelict building at the premises of the hospital is being pulled down and the space left behind is being transformed into a “green space” to improve the general environment for patients and members of the public attending the hospital for health care.

As Mahebourg hospital is an old structure, for the long term, it is proposed to embark on a project to provide a new block with well-equipped ward to modernise the hospital and extend a wide range of services to inhabitants of Mahebourg and surrounding localities.

**Mr Varma:** Can I know from the hon. Minister why the decision was taken in November 2003 to close Mahebourg hospital?

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't see any valid reason why it was closed. In fact, when it was closed, it caused a problem to Rose-Belle Hospital. Rose-Belle Hospital is congested to such an extent that we are pressed to take a decision. We have taken a decision to re-open Mahebourg hospital and we are going ahead.

### **CITE TOLE, MAHEBOURG – LAND LEASE**

**(No. I B/15) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether there are legal or other implications regarding the lease of land on which stand the houses of the inhabitants of Cité Tôle, Mahebourg and whether he will state

what steps he has taken or proposes to take for them to obtain their relevant documents.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the legal and other implications regarding the lease of land on which stand the houses of the inhabitants of Cité Tole, Mahebourg are as follows –

- (i) detailed survey of the site followed by a pegging exercise of each plot, and
- (ii) drawing up of lease agreement and the registration thereof after signature by all parties, i.e the lessee and the lessor.

However, in many cases where some beneficiaries have encroached on land, which is outside lots attributed to them, the structures need to be pulled down.

I have already given necessary instructions for the exercise of survey and pegging to be completed within the next two months.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to add that in July 2001, the previous Government decided to regularise the situation of some 3200 families who were occupying State land in different localities of the country, including at Cité Tôle, Mahebourg which concerns some 51 families.

However, it is only as from early this year and in many cases on the eve of the last general elections that letters of intent were issued, i.e four years after taking the decision. I must add that in most cases, the extent of the plot for each beneficiary was not given in the letter of intent but only an approximate figure was mentioned. The exact extent was to be determined after on-site survey and a pegging exercise. Since the decision in 2001 and the issue of letters, this year, next to nothing has been done in this connection. As regards Cité Tôle, Mahebourg, letters of intent were issued in February 2005 to some 51 inhabitants.

### **MAHEBOURG/PLAINE MAGNIEN - FACTORIES – CLOSURE**

**(No. IB/16) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, having regard to the textile and other factories that have closed down in the Constituency of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, he will -

- (a) give the number of workers -

- (i) sent away
  - (ii) redeployed, and
  - (iii) unemployed, and
- (b) state the steps, if any, taken to find suitable or corresponding jobs for them.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the constituency of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, in November 2001, four main factories namely Century Knitting Industries Ltd., (Mahebourg branch), Summit Textiles Ltd (Plaine Magnien, Mahebourg and Trois Boutiques branches), Floreal Knitwear Ltd (Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien branches) and Southern Textiles Ltd closed down. And since April 2005, Grove Industries (Mtius) Ltd has been in the process of closing down and is expected to stop operations completely by the end of this month.

As regards part (a)(i), the number of workers laid-off by these factories is as follows -

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Century Knitting Industries Ltd: | 23  |
| Summit Textiles Ltd:             | 324 |
| Floreal Knitwear Ltd:            | 288 |
| Southern Textiles Ltd:           | 370 |
| Grove Industries (Mtius) Ltd:    | 942 |

As regards redeployment, let me first point out that such activities of the employment service of my Ministry only started in April 2003 after the closure of Summit Textiles Ltd, a company which had branches all over the island, including Mahebourg, Plaine Magnien and Trois Boutiques in Constituency No. 12. No figure is however available regarding the redeployment of employees of this factory in constituency No. 12.

Regarding the 288 laid-off workers of Floreal Knitwear Ltd. 65 have been redeployed in the other branches of the same company located in other regions.

As regards Southern Textiles Ltd, 61 of the 304 local workers have been redeployed. Of the 66 Indian workers previously employed there, 40 have been redeployed and the remaining 26 have already left for India.

Regarding Grove Industries (Mtius) Ltd. out of 794 local workers, 336 have so far been redeployed. The 148 Chinese workers employed by Grove Industries Ltd have already left the country.

It must be noted that all the laid-off workers of Grove Industries (Mtius) Ltd were offered alternate jobs by *Compagnie Mauricienne de Textile Ltd* but only 195 have accepted the offer.

Moreover, 51 workers from Southern Textiles Ltd and 198 workers from Grove Industries (Mtius) Ltd have been referred to the IVTB for training, and to self employment facilitators such as the National Handicraft Promotion Agency, the Small and Medium Industries Development Organisation (SMIDO) and the National Women's Entrepreneur Council.

As regards part (a) (iii) of the question, out of a total of 1947 laid-off Mauritian workers of the four factories which have closed down in the constituency of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, 1445 should in principle be still unemployed. However, this figure may not be correct as both employers and the persons concerned have been quite reluctant to provide precise information.

Regarding part (b) of the question, the following steps were taken to facilitate the redeployment of these workers -

- (i) The workers were convened in the Employment Information Centres nearest to their place of residence for counselling on redeployment opportunities and registration for subsequent placement, training and self-employment.
- (ii) Employers were contacted, particularly in the southern region, for potential redeployment of the laid-off workers.
- (iii) A list of redundant workers was subsequently submitted to all the employers who were contacted.
- (iv) The employment service of my Ministry follows up with the employers concerned to have a feedback on the recruitment exercise.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the fact that the officers of this section are doing their best, I still believe there is much room for improvement. I am proposing to review these practices to ensure that every possible measure is being taken for maximum redeployment of laid-off workers.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Can I know from the hon. Minister what steps will be undertaken by the Ministry to redeploy the laid-off workers?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** As just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a committee working on that at the Ministry and I have given them directives

to find all ways and means to get these people redeployed as soon as possible.

## **STATE HOUSE - RENOVATION & REFURBISHMENT**

**(No. IB/17) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the renovation and refurbishment of the State House, he will state the amount spent for (a) furniture and (b) the purchase of kitchen equipment.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is as follows -

- (a) the amount spent for refurbishment of furniture is Rs8.4 m, and
- (b) the expenditure to date for the purchase of kitchen equipment is Rs 8,2 m.

These two amounts form part of a larger contract for soft furnishings and fit out in the refurbishment and upgrading of the State House for the fixed amount of Rs35.6 m. inclusive of VAT awarded on 30 April 2003.

I am given to understand that the total amount paid to date under this contract is Rs32.3 m.

**Dr. Mungur:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask whether all the kitchen items have in fact been supplied according to contract conditions?

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** This is a very difficult question, Mr Speaker, Sir! I am given to understand that the contract for the supply of kitchen equipment and accessories, which form part of the main contract, was awarded on 27 February 2003 for the sum of Rs8.2 m. inclusive of VAT. I can only infer from the figures that I have that it was according to the contract.

## **HEALTH CARE ASSISTANTS - RECRUITMENT**

**(No. IB/18) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the last exercise carried out for the recruitment of 388 Health Care

Assistants, he will state if an inquiry is being carried out or will be carried out thereinto at the level of his Ministry with a view to determining the circumstances of such recruitment and, if so, by whom is the inquiry being or will be conducted.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not envisaged to conduct any inquiry with respect to the last exercise carried out for the recruitment of Health Care Assistants as the facts speak for themselves. We note that out of 388 candidates who were selected for the post, 101 - more than 35% - were inhabitants of the constituency No. 8, Quartier Militaire and Moka.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Faugoo:** Further, Mr Speaker, Sir, letters of appointments dated 30 June 2005 were posted on Saturday 02 July, two days before the general election, which is not a normal working day. I have not found any plausible reason for such haste, and it leaves no doubt that the timing was meant, for obvious reasons, i.e, to influence the selected candidates.

**Dr. Ramloll:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister to lay on the Table of the House a breakdown of the recruitment exercise carried out between 2000 and 2005 countrywide?

**Mr Faugoo:** I have no objection whatsoever, Mr Speaker, Sir, except for the case which is pending before the judge in Chambers; so maybe pending the case, I won't be able to lay the last one. But, I must also add that there is an inquiry, which is being carried out by the ICAC. There have been two different complaints, first in a letter dated 16 June which was written to the Ministry and another letter written by ICAC to the Ministry on 21 June asking for information on the whole recruitment exercise.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will confirm that in fact the recruitment of these 380 Health Care Assistants was the fifth such exercise since 2000? 333 have been recruited in March 2002; 52 in July 2002, 239 in September 2003 and 229 in April 2004. This was therefore an ongoing and repeated exercise.

**Mr Faugoo:** In fact, these facts stated by the Leader of the Opposition are correct. But this is also a cause of concern, because I have been going through the figures, for example, for hospital servants who were recruited in 2002 out of 250, 109 (more than 25%) came from Constituency No. 8.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Faugoo:** Again, in 2001, Mr Speaker, Sir ..

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Faugoo:** In 2001, out of 183, 75 were recruited from Constituency No. 8. These are facts, which speak for themselves, as I say. I do not understand what are the criteria used, which, at the end of the day, qualified 101 people out of 388 from Constituency No. 8.

**Mr Bérenger:** We do not agree; whatever be the address of those recruited, all procedures were followed...

*(Interruptions)*

They were qualified. It went to the Public Service Commission and we are dealing with ordinary '*ti-dimounes*', ...

*(Interruptions)*

.... people who have the right to have a job, Mr Speaker, Sir! Will the Minister agree?

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Faugoo:** Does it stand to reason, Mr Speaker, Sir, by any parameter, only four were recruited in Constituency No. 1, and only twelve were recruited in the Constituency of the then Prime Minister? How do we explain this?

The then Prime Minister, has, himself, said that he was going to give a free and fair election. Parliament was dissolved on 24<sup>th</sup> of April and the then Government was only a Caretaker Government and responsible only for the day-to-day management of the country.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr Faugoo:** .... which was responsible only for the day-to-day management.

*(Interruptions)*

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

**Mr Faugoo:** The Government was only responsible for the day-to-day management of the country. They are talking of convention, Mr Speaker, Sir. But, convention should be applied everywhere. This is why I am saying that the exercise was done in such a way that colourable device was used to recruit so many people from Constituency No. 8.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Faugoo:** They intentionally selected people from specific regions.

**Mr Bérenger:** As I said four times, in a regular manner, every year Health Care Assistants had been recruited. Will the Minister confirm that, in fact, for the fifth time, in 2005, a yearly exercise was to be carried out and the vacancies for these poor 380 Health Care Assistants were advertised in September 2004, that is, a long time before general elections, Mr Speaker, Sir, before the House was dissolved.

18,814 applications were received. 8,998 were qualified and interviewed between February and March 2005. Therefore, will the Minister agree that this had nothing to do with general elections?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, the fact speaks for itself. The fact is that exercises carried out before the last exercise, were less irregular. And the last exercise was most irregular.

*(Interruptions)*

Most irregular! The way it was carried out says it all.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Last question, please.

**Mr Dayal:** Is the hon. Minister aware that St. Julien D'Hotman is in Constituency No. 8, not in No. 9? In confusing between St. Julien D'Hotman and St. Julien Village, the figure of 101 could even be inflated.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Next question!

**HIV/AIDS – CASES ( 1995/2005),  
COMMITTEE, TASK FORCE, ETC.**

**(No. I B/19) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the HIV/AIDS, he will state (a) the number of cases for each of the years –

- (i) 1995 to 2000, and
- (ii) 2000 to 2005 and say if any Committee or Task Force was set up to look into all the aspects of the problem and, if so, will he give the composition of such Committee or Task Force, indicating the name of its Chairman and the number of meetings held.

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of cases regarding HIV/AIDS is as follows –

- (i) 1995 to 2000

|                                       | 1995      | 1996      | 1997      | 1998      | 1999      | 2000      |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Total number of cases detected</b> | <b>27</b> | <b>23</b> | <b>28</b> | <b>29</b> | <b>33</b> | <b>57</b> |

- (ii) 2001 to 2005

|                                | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | End June 2005 |
|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|---------------|
| Total number of cases detected | 69   | 102  | 240  | 535  | 527           |

A National AIDS Committee (NAC) was set up in September 2001 within the context of the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2001/2005. The NAC was chaired by the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of

Finance up to September 2003 and from October 2003 to June 2005 by the former Prime Minister. The NAC has met on 16 occasions and the last meeting was held in May 2005.

With your permission, Sir, I propose to lay on the Table the information regarding the composition of members of the Committee as it is a long list.

**Dr. Mungur:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in looking at the comparative figures, in terms of steering, that is, policy decisions and in terms of rowing, that is, service delivery, will the Minister come with a new strategic plan or a new health promotion policy in future to curb the rising prevalence of HIV/AIDS?

**Mr Faugoo:** My Ministry is actually working on a new formula.

**Mr Jugnauth:** When the National AIDS Committee (NAC) was meeting, there was a Member of the then Opposition who was in the NAC. Can I ask the Minister how many times that Member of the Opposition did attend those meetings?

**Mr Faugoo:** I don't have the relevant figures.

**Mr Bérenger:** Will the Minister confirm that, indeed, it is throughout the world that the request of the UNAID which requested that in every country there should be a National Coordinating Committee with the highest possible political leadership put in, so that there would be the political commitment in every Member State of the United Nations? And, therefore, as a result of that, that Mauritius is one of the few countries where the National Committee was chaired at the highest level by the Deputy Prime Minister, at one point, I made it a point to chair as Prime Minister. Is the Minister aware that, as a result of that work - and in that Committee, all NGOs were present, NGO like PILS, like 'Vivre Plus', this is probably the only country in the world where all of them have been present - that the UNAID, UNICEF have been full of praise for Mauritius? Can I, therefore, appeal that we carry on the same way?

**Mr Faugoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, political commitment is not sufficient. We need to take actions, because irrespective of committees, such task force, the figures speak for themselves again and it is on the increase.

*(Interruptions)*

The figures have been increasing. But, I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that there is a lot to be done and it has to be done at the highest level.

**Mr Bérenger:** Since reference is made to required action, can I ask the hon. Minister how many African countries are giving completely free anti-retroviral treatment to all HIV infected people?

**Mr Faugoo:** I don't have the relevant information, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bérenger:** I can, therefore, help the Minister in telling him that there are only two countries: Botswana that has all those diamonds in the world and little Mauritius. We acted; we didn't just sit in committees.

**SAMLO KOYENCO LTD. – ACCIDENT (JUNE 2005) –  
CAUSE, LEGAL ACTION, ETC.**

**(No. I B/20) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment whether any accident occurred at the Samlo Koyenco Ltd. premises in June 2005 and, if so, whether –

- (a) (i) it was reported that four workers sustained severe injuries;
- (ii) an inquiry has been carried out by his Ministry to ascertain the cause thereof and its outcome, indicating if legal action has been initiated by his Ministry;
  
- (b) any remedial action has been taken by the employer, and
- (c) any compensation has been paid by the employer to the workers and, if so, the quantum thereof.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Yes, Sir. With regard to part (a) (i) of the question, the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate of my Ministry was notified by the Personnel Manager of the company on 30 June 2005 that four employees, namely Messrs Rungapen, Govind, Domun and Legentil, of Samlo Koyenco Steel Co. Ltd. had sustained injuries. They were immediately conveyed to Victoria Hospital for treatment. With the exception of Mr Legentil, all of the other three were admitted.

With regard to part (ii), an enquiry was undertaken on the same day and is still in progress. After completion of the enquiry, the matter will be referred to the State Law Office for any action deemed appropriate.

Insofar as part (b) of the question is concerned, I am advised that the following remedial action has been taken by the employer. Employees have been given, in the presence of relevant officers of my Ministry, on 01 July 2005, improved personal protective equipment. Onsite training on safety measures have been conducted by the employer on 08, 15 and 22 July 2005 and such training programmes will continue to be imparted to workers on a monthly basis. Furthermore, I have been informed that an electromagnetic charger will be installed within a month to reduce manual handling of the scrap metals.

As regards part (c), the issue of compensation, this is a matter for the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions. According to information obtained –

- (i) Mr Legentil does not qualify for benefits as he was incapacitated for less than two weeks;
- (ii) Mr Rungapen was discharged from hospital on 16 July 2005 and applied for industrial injury benefits at Curepipe Social Security Office on 03 August 2005 and his application is being processed;
- (iii) Mr Domun has been discharged on 06 August 2005, and
- (iv) Mr Govind is still hospitalised at Victoria Hospital. The two last named employees have not applied for industrial injury benefits, but I am made to understand that they will soon apply.

**Mr Soodhun:** Sir, recently there has been an official request from the representatives of the trade unions for a survey to be carried out by the Health and Safety Division at the Ministry. I understand that there is a report already prepared by the officers. Can the Minister table a copy of the report?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The inquiry is still ongoing and the report is not ready yet. As I said, when it is ready, it will be sent to the State Law Office and then we'll see what has to be done.

## **SPORTS COMPLEXES/PREMISES - MPs - UTILISATION**

**(No. I B/21) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether it is the

practice of Government to put at the disposal of elected Members of the National Assembly the different sports complexes or other premises falling under the aegis of his Ministry to enable them to receive their respective constituents and, if so, will he table a list of premises that may be used for the above purposes.

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not the normal practice to put at the disposal of the elected Members of the National Assembly sports complexes or premises falling under the aegis of my Ministry to enable them to receive their respective constituents.

However, exceptionally, in only one instance, the Boardroom and not the office or the Secretariat of the Mauritius Sports Council was used by the elected Members of the National Assembly on two Wednesdays in the morning for receiving all members of the public, irrespective of party politics, with a view to providing them with the necessary assistance/support, as appropriate.

I must point out that this measure, which is only a transitional one, was resorted to as a result of the absence of readily available building in the region of Belle Rose. Surprisingly, I fail to understand how this measure which is meant to provide a service to all the members of the public is being given a political connotation by certain section of the press which has not thought it proper to report on the utilisation of the Maryse Justin Stadium on 12 June 2005 which was then used mainly for the organisation of a disguised political gathering.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** May I inform the Minister that he cannot use what the press has said in his answer?

## **WASTEWATER SECTOR - SECTOR POLICY PAPER**

**(No. 1 B/22) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the benefit of the House, ascertain -

- (a) the rate chargeable for waste water users under the Sector Policy Paper adopted by Government in January 1998, and
- (b) if a fresh policy will be implemented to bring down the waste water charges and, if so, will he state the new rates thereof.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, on 09 January 1998, a Sector Policy Letter was agreed upon to permit the efficient and effective management of the waste water sector. The principles enshrined in the document created the required conditions not only to uphold the development of the sector, but also advocated the need for financial sustainability. This was a prerequisite to be able to attract funds from donors reckoning with huge investments which waste water projects call for.

Furthermore, the Sector Policy Letter established a tariff structure covering the period 1998 to 2004.

*(Interruptions)*

The hon. Member is not in Quinze Cantons. Please, listen!

**Mr Speaker:** I will ask the hon. Minister to address the Chair, please!

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Kasenally:** I am informed that the rates applied have been as follows -

For domestic customers

January 2000 - an average of Rs2.30 per cubic metre

January 2001 - Rs4.40 per cubic metre

January 2002 - Rs6.00 per cubic metre

August 2003 - Rs6.90 per cubic metre

For non-domestic customers

January 2000 - Rs6.00 per cubic metre

January 2001 - Rs8.60 per cubic metre

January 2002 - Rs12.00 per cubic metre

August 2003 - Rs15.50 per cubic metre

However, the textile and clothing enterprises were allowed to pay Rs12.00 per cubic metre until December 2003 to ease off part of the difficulties which this sector was facing at that time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, after examining the records, it has been found that it was possible to apply rates which were slightly below those agreed upon in the Sector Policy Letter. This was mainly due to considerable delays in the

implementation of the waste water projects to the extent that the level of expenditure on operations and maintenance was lower than expected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that a draft Sector Policy Statement covering period 2005-2010 has been prepared and was submitted for consideration at a Donors' meeting held in November last year. This document has yet to be finalised and approved by Government. As can be expected, apart from mapping out the developmental trend of the sector, the document also provides for a tariff structure aimed at ensuring the financial sustainability of the sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in keeping with this Government policy favouring social justice and equity, my Ministry has set itself to work out a tariff policy which while focussing on the financial sustainability will also put unreserved emphasis on the affordability of the rates to be charged bearing in mind that those who are at the lowest rung of the social ladder have to be given special attention.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether the waste water charges are calculated on 100% of the water consumed?

**Dr. Kasenally:** This has been the formula used so far and, as I mentioned, I am informed that this draft sector policy statement has been approved as far back as in August last year for consideration at the Donors' meeting held in November 2004. As could be expected, the document does contain a tariff part for the period 2005-2010. I am further informed that this document is in draft form and has yet to be approved after it has been updated. This new Government proposes to revisit the whole document in the light of its policy orientation which provides attention to be given to those who are economically vulnerable and ensuring that they are adequately protected. Therefore, it would be premature at this stage to evoke any definite or indicative future price.

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

*On resuming at 2.35 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.*

**MILLENNIUM MONUMENT TOWER – MAINTENANCE COST,  
ARTICLE IN ISLANDER MAGAZINE, MASTER PLAN, ETC**

**(No. I B/23) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Arts & Culture whether, in regard to the Millennium Tower, he will state –

- (a) the initial cost of the project;
- (b) the amount spent on its maintenance on –
  - (i) a monthly basis;
  - (ii) a yearly basis, and say if there is at present a crack in its structure and, if so, whether it has been reported to him that such crack constitutes a threat to visitors and indicate –
    - (I) the number of visitors since its construction to date, and
    - (II) the arrangements, if any, made to have it included in the touristic itineraries.

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards parts (a) and (b) (i) & (ii) of the question, this has already been replied to in PQ No. B/240, dated 17 April 2001.

With regard to the other parts of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Museums Council, which manages the site, that it costs around Rs18,000 per month, that is, Rs216,000 yearly, to operate and maintain the site.

I am further informed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure that no cracks have been observed in the Tower. The question of threat to visitors, therefore does not arise.

The total number of visitors, since its opening on 01 November 2000 up to 31 July 2005, is 10,749.

/...

I wish to inform the House that, with a view to encouraging people to visit the site, a pamphlet on the Millennium Monument was published in March 2001 by the Mauritius College of the Air and was distributed to the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Education, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority and tour operators. The pamphlet was also put on the web site of my Ministry.

Furthermore, in February 2003, two signboards of the Millennium Monument were placed at the entrance of the site and at the Wooton roundabout.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I further wish to inform the House the following –

- (i) my Ministry, in consultation with the Mauritius Museums Council, is proposing to include an article on the Millennium Monument in one of the forthcoming issues of the Islander magazine of Air Mauritius, which is made available to tourists who travel on board our national airline, and
- (ii) the Master Plan, which is currently under preparation at my Ministry, includes the setting up of a centre, comprising local facets of art and culture, which will be displayed to tourists in all their variety and diversity. The Millennium Tower shall occupy an important place in the forthcoming project.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister in a position to give a breakdown of the maintenance cost on a monthly basis?

**Mr Gowressoo:** I need notice of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there was a project proposal for the upgrading of the monument, in order to attract more visitors. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the fate of that project.

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, in August 2002, the Ministry of Arts & Culture referred to a project for the upgrading of the monument and its surroundings, and which comprised the setting up of a multifunctional exhibition hall cum museum for artistic activities and for display of geological exhibits. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure has estimated the project to cost Rs24.5 m. However, as the Ministry of Finance has not provided the required amount, the project has not taken off.

CA/D03/P10/3

### **FORM I TO VI COLLEGES – MODE OF ADMISSION**

**(No. I B/24) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether colleges which were previously not admitting pupils in Form I, such as the Royal Colleges and the Queen Elizabeth College, will do so for the January 2006 intake and, if so, will he state the criteria that will be used for such admission.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as already publicly announced, my Ministry will be reinstating Form I to VI colleges and, in the light of this

development, we are currently considering the existing mode of admission to Form I together with the different views which we have obtained from stakeholders.

This matter will be looked into carefully, and we will come up with proposals soon.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure the House that everything is being done according to a set calendar, and filling of admission forms for Form I is scheduled for Saturday 24 September 2005 before examinations starting on 17 October 2005.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether the regionalisation policy will be kept as it is?

**Mr Gokhool:** As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, all implications are being looked into and a decision will be announced soon.

### **NHDC HOUSING UNITS – SQUATTERS**

**(No. B/25) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to squatters occupying NHDC houses, he will state if –

- (a) any social inquiry relating thereto has been conducted and, if so, if it has been completed and the outcome thereof, and
- (b) any action is being taken to determine the real and genuine hardship cases.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, over 550 persons illegally occupied the housing units at the NHDC housing estates at Camp Levieux, Chebel, La Tour Koenig, Cité la Cure and Riche Terre, during the last week of June 2005, that is, before the last general elections. The previous Government failed to take appropriate action.

This Government has, after assuming office, through dialogues, arranged for those persons to leave the housing units which they have illegally occupied. The families concerned collaborated fully and did the needful by 20 July 2005.

Subsequently, the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups was invited to conduct a survey to gauge the socio-economic conditions of the squatters and to prioritise their housing needs. The survey

was carried out from 25 July to 29 July 2005, and a report was made available to my Ministry on Tuesday 02 August 2005.