WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ASSEMBLÉE DE DIEU (ILE MAURICE) – DRAFT BILL

(No. B/1030) Mr. E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the consultations held at different levels concerning the Bill to provide for the establishment, incorporation and management of the Assemblée de Dieu (Ile Maurice), he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The draft Bill proposed by the hon. Member is being examined by the State Law Office.

KAMATCHI, MR MOOTOOSAMY – EX-DIRECTOR, MCIT - RETIREMENT

(No. B/1031) Mr. N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Mr Kamatchi, ex Director to the MCIT, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the circumstances in which he retired from service.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Mr Mootoosamy KAMATCHI, Superintendent of Police was enlisted as Police Constable on 01 June 1967 and confirmed in his appointment on 01 June 1969. He will reach the retiring age limit on 10 December 2007 and was expected to proceed on pre-retirement leave with effect from 14 October 2007.

I am also informed that following the demise of late SP RADHOA, a temporary arrangement was made for SP KAMATCHI to supervise the MCIT pending the posting of a senior Police Officer to that unit.

One ASP has been posted to the MCIT with effect from 16 October 2007.
DIPLOMATS – CRIMINAL OFFENCES AGAINST

(No. B/1032) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the diplomats posted in Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof who have been victims of criminal offences since January 2007 to date and, if so, indicate if inquiries have been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof in each case.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2007 to date, seven cases of criminal offences have been reported to the Police as follows -

(i) five cases against members of staff of diplomatic missions based in Mauritius, and
(ii) two cases of theft and attempt at larceny in the compounds of Embassies.

The Police is investigating into these cases and after completion of the enquiries, they will be submitted to he Director of public Prosecutions for advice.

I am also informed that a Committee has been set up under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation, to look *inter alia* into the safety and security arrangements in the foreign missions in Mauritius. The Committee is composed of -

(i) a representative of the Prime Minister’s Office;
(ii) a representative of the Attorney-General’s Office;
(iii) representatives of the Police Department; and
(iv) the Commissioner of Prisons.

In the light of meetings held by this Committee, it has been agreed that -

(i) all Foreign Missions based in Mauritius will appoint a contact person who will act as liaison officer with the Police Department;
(ii) the Embassies will be provided with progress report pertaining to cases of theft and intrusion reported to their prejudice; and
(iii) contact details of all Divisional Commanders to be made available to all Embassies in Mauritius.

I am further informed that in the wake of the criminal cases reported at the Chinese Embassy, a meeting was held at the Police Headquarters with the Political Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy. A site visit was subsequently carried out at the Embassy and the Police has
advised the latter on measures to be taken to reinforce security in its premises. A Police sentry has also been provided round the clock at the entrance of the Embassy’s compound.

I am given to understand that the Police is monitoring closely the situation.

LAW AND ORDER

(No. B/1033) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the law and order situation prevailing in the country, he will state the urgent actions that are envisaged to reinforce security for the public and for the tourists, in view of the number of cases of assaults and thefts since August 2007 to date.

Reply: I wish to refer the hon. Member to my reply to the PNQ of 17 April, 2007 and reiterate that the issue of law and order remains one of the priorities of my Government.

We are fully committed to take all necessary steps to consolidate law and order in the country with a view to clamping down on violence, crimes and thefts. We will continue to focus our efforts to bring down the level of crimes and thefts in Mauritius.

As I replied in PQ 1026 earlier on, the number of reported cases of offences involving tourists is on a decreasing trend.

A full range of measures have already been taken to fight against crimes and thefts by the Police Force as indicated in my replies to previous Parliamentary Questions. In addition, other measures are being considered by the Police Force, including a permanent police presence throughout the island, in order to reinforce the security of the public in general, as well as the tourists, especially in view of the forthcoming end-of-year festivities. The human and physical resources of the different units of the Police Force, namely the Emergency Response Service, the Police du Transport, the Police du Tourisme, the Brigade pour la Protection des Mineurs, the ADSU, the SSU, the National Coast Guard, as well as the Special Mobile Force are being pooled together and placed under the responsibility of the Divisional Commander in charge of the respective divisions to ensure coordinated actions with a view to enhancing the operational effectiveness on the ground.

Insofar as intelligence gathering is concerned, Crime Intelligence Cells have been set up in all Police Divisions since the beginning of August this year, including Rodrigues, to assist the Divisions as well as the CID in better managing crimes. These units form part of the proposed National Crime Intelligence Service which would eventually be set up to deal exclusively with intelligence relating to criminal activities, with the integration of other law enforcement agencies.

Emphasis is also being put on the reorganization of the Forensic Science Laboratory and the elaboration of a long-term strategy for the use and development of forensic science with a view to assisting in detection of crimes.

In my reply to PQ B/6 on 27 March 2007, I had informed the House of discussions I had with the Chief Executive Officer of the UK Forensic Science Services Ltd, on collaboration between that organisation and Government. It has now been confirmed that an International Crime Scene Advisor will be deputed to Mauritius for three weeks by the end of this year to
undertake a crime scene review. Besides, the UK Forensic Science Services Ltd has also agreed
to undertake a two-week study of the Forensic Science Laboratory with a view to assisting in the
development of a long term strategy for the use and development of forensic science. I should
add that the British Government has agreed to jointly fund these two reviews with the
Government of Mauritius.

Furthermore, during my recent visit in the UK, I met with the Pro Vice Chancellor of
Staffordshire University, a Mauritian national residing in the UK, and discussed with him
possible avenues of assistance from the University of Staffordshire. This University is one of the
leading institutions in the UK in terms of Forensic Science studies and is amongst the first four
universities having obtained accreditation from the Forensic Science Society, an international
professional body in the field of Forensic Science.

In the light of discussions held during the meeting, it was agreed that a team from the
University of Staffordshire would proceed to Mauritius for an exploratory needs analysis focusing
on the awareness and understanding of key practitioners, leaders and training and development
managers on the importance of forensic science and its evidence in helping to solve crimes and
crime-related activities on the island. I can confirm to the House that this team will arrive on the
11th November.

In order to deal with the threats of domestic and international crime, we must have an
effective, well-trained Police, operating within a new culture of service and accountability. In
this respect, we are sparing no efforts to enhance the capability and professionalism of the Police
Force and to provide the necessary tools and resources to enable them to operate in a most
effective and efficient manner.

I wish to add that a complete reorganization of the Police Force is being contemplated to
reinforce its institutional and operational effectiveness. Furthermore, the legislative framework
has been reviewed and is continuously being reviewed to combat criminality in general.

**MBC – EMPLOYEES - SCHOLARSHIPS**

(No. B/1034) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port
Louis East) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil
Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard
to each of the scholarships offered to the employees of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation
since July 2005 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation,
information as to -

(a) the names and the grades of the employees who benefited therefrom,
    indicating the criteria used for their selection;
(b) the scholarships offered, and
(c) the amount of money spent in terms of air tickets and other
    allowances.

**Reply:** The information is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the
National Assembly as soon as it is available.
LA BASTILLE PRISON – CLOSING DOWN

(No. B/1035) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member of Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the closing down of La Bastille Prison, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to –

(a) the reasons for its closure, and

(b) if adequate measures have been taken for the incarceration of prisoners who need a high security environment.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that during its recent visit to Mauritius, between the 08 and 18 October 2007, the UN Sub-Committee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment made certain observations regarding the general conditions of detention at the Phoenix Prison and reported on some allegations of ill-treatment of detainees there.

On 18 October, the Commissioner of Prisons requested the Commissioner of Police to carry out an in-depth enquiry into the alleged cases of ill-treatment of detainees at the Phoenix Prison. Moreover, he transferred the 14 detainees from Phoenix Prison to Beau Bassin Prison pending the conclusion of the Police enquiry and the eventual improvement of the conditions of detention at the Phoenix Prison with a view to providing a more humane detention environment.

I am further informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that facilities now exist at the Beau Bassin Prison to accommodate difficult detainees and I have been reassured that adequate security arrangements are in place at Beau Bassin Prison to cater for this category of detainees. There are Punishment Cells to accommodate detainees committing prison offences and Segregation and Protection Units at Beau Bassin Prison for protecting detainees from being assaulted.

It is proposed to improve the detention facilities at Phoenix Prison to accommodate difficult and dangerous detainees. Once the renovation works are completed, the Phoenix Prison would be opened for re-use.

Mauritius acceded to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in December 1992 and to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture in June 2005. Besides, torture is prohibited under our Constitution. In fact, section 7(1) of the Constitution provides that “no person shall be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading punishment or other such treatment”.

My Government is committed to respecting, promoting and protecting human rights. I should like to make it clear that we cannot and will not tolerate ill-treatment of detainees in any forms in our prisons. We have to respect the human dignity of detainees and adopt the “human rights” approach in our prisons.

The Prisons authorities have to strike the right balance between public safety and security, prison discipline and the protection of human rights at the prisons.
BEAU BASSIN/GRANDE RIVIÈRE PRISONS – INCIDENTS

(No. B/1036) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Prisons, information as to whether violent incidents occurred in compound of the Beau Bassin Prison and the Grande Rivière Prison during the past six months, involving detainees, indicating –

(a) the number of times the Prisons Special Squad has intervened, and
(b) the outcome thereof, in each case.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Prisons that during the past six months, there has been no major violent incident involving detainees in the compound of Beau Bassin Prison and Grand River North West Remand Prison, which might have threatened security in these prisons. However, there have been a few minor cases of assaults involving some detainees.

I am also informed that lately, there has been an incident at Beau Bassin Prison involving three detainees who were fighting among themselves during the lock-up time and this was promptly attended to by the General Duties Staff and the Prison Security Squad posted there. This exercise was carried out under the supervision of a Deputy Commissioner Prisons and order was promptly restored. The three prisoners were then segregated and appropriate disciplinary actions were taken against them according to Prison Regulations.

I am further informed that there has been no other major incident during the past six months which warranted the intervention of the Prison Security Squad at Beau Bassin Prison and Grand River North West Remand Prison.

PRISON OFFICERS – AGGRESSIONS AND ASSAULTS AGAINST

(No. B/1037) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to aggressions and/or assaults committed on Prison Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

(a) the number of reported cases thereof since May 2007 to date, and
(b) the number of police inquiries completed since October 2006 to date.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since May 2007 to date, a total of five cases of aggressions and assaults involving seven Prisons Officers have been reported to the Police. Of these seven Prisons Officers, five were on duty and two were off duty. One of the off duty cases was reported in Rodrigues. These five cases are still pending enquiry.

I am further informed that since October 2006 to date, eleven cases of aggressions and assaults against Prisons Officers have been reported to the Police involving thirteen Prisons Officers, of whom eight were on duty and five were off duty. Police enquiry has been completed in three cases. Of these three cases, one has been disposed of and the accused has been sentenced.
to undergo three months imprisonment and to pay a fine of Rs2,000 plus Rs200 as cost and two cases are pending trial before the Court. Police enquiries are ongoing in the eight cases and as soon as they are completed, they will be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

POLICE OFFICERS – AGGRESSIONS AND ASSAULTS AGAINST

(No. B/1038) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to cases of aggressions and/or assaults on Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of cases reported since January 2007 to date, if any, indicating where matters stand in each case.

Reply: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since January 2007 to 31 October 2007, 106 cases of aggression and/or assault on Police Officers were reported whilst they were on duty.

Out of these 106 cases, 66 cases are still under Police enquiry. Forty cases have already been completed, out of which 9 have been determined by Court and the remaining 31 are awaiting trial.

Aggressions against the person of a Police Officer cannot be tolerated. Police Officers are responsible for preserving peace and order as per the provisions of the Police Act. Government will consider adequate measures to be taken against those who commit aggression on Police Officers on duty.

POINTE AUX CANNONIERS BEACH – TOURIST – ALLEGED ATTACK BY DOGS

(No. B/1039) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether a case was reported of an attack on a tourist by three ferocious dogs on the beach at Pointe aux Cannoniers and, if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof.

(Withdrawn)

LARCENY/LARCENY WITH VIOLENCE/ RAPE CASES

(No. B/1040) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to
reported cases of larceny, larceny with violence and rape, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof in each case since January 2007 to date.

**Reply:** I am informed by the Commissioner of the Police that from January 2007 to 31 October 2007, 959 cases of larceny with violence, 13,716 cases of larceny and 59 cases of rape have been reported to Police.

I am also informed that in addition to existing preventive measures, the following new ones have been implemented in the context of the policing strategy to curb the crime trend:

(i) ERS, Bike Patrol, *Police du Transport, Police du Tourisme* and *Brigade des Mineurs* are now under the direct command of Divisional Commanders;

(ii) MF is providing two mobile patrols each for Southern, Central and Western Divisions;

(iii) SSU is providing one mobile patrol each for Northern and Eastern divisions;

(iv) NCG is providing one mobile patrol each for Port Louis North and Port Louis South divisions;

(v) Administrative personnel of the Force comprising mainly of PHQ/Executive Services, DHQ and Office are providing patrol teams throughout the island;

(vi) Divisional Commanders are also deploying DHQ personnel on weekend operations.

Moreover, the Crime Intelligence Cell which was launched on a pilot basis on 03 August 2007 in the Northern Division, has since 23 October 2007 been extended to all Police Divisions, including Airport and Harbour with a view to bringing down crime.

I am also informed that the Rodrigues Crime Intelligence Cell has also become operational on 01 November 2007. It is expected that both policing and crime investigation which will be increasingly intelligence-led and intelligence-driven, will yield highly positive results on the crime front in the months ahead.

Further, with the forthcoming induction of 500 recruits in November 2007, the Police will be in a better position to provide a more reassuring police presence whenever required in the coming months.

**“GENERATION CONTACT” CALL CENTRE – EBÈNE CYBERCITY – EMPLOYEES - BODY SEARCH**

(No. B/1041) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the body search effected on the employees of the Generation Contact Call Centre Company at
the Ebène Cybercity, on or about 08 October 2007, by three Police officers, he will, for the
benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

(a) if the search was effected following a complaint;
(b) who gave instructions for the search;
(c) where these officers were posted, indicating if they have been suspended and, if
not, why not, and
(d) if an inquiry has been initiated and the outcome thereof.

*(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1025)*

**PIG BREEDERS ASSOCIATION/PRIME MINISTER - MEETING**

(No. B/1042) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and
Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of
Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in
regard to the problems being faced by the pig breeders, he will state if he has had a meeting with
the Pig Breeders Association in connection therewith and, if so, where matters stand.

*(Withdrawn)*

**PTA, CHITRAKOOT GOVERNMENT SCHOOL/ PRIME MINISTER – MEETING**

(No. B/1043) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and
Montagne Longue) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of
Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he
will state if he has had a meeting with the Parents Teachers’ Association of the Chitrakoot
Government School and, if not, why not.

*(Withdrawn)*

**LAND COMPULSORY ACQUISITION – COMPENSATION - SEPTEMBER 2005 TO NOVEMBER 2007**

(No. B/1054) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the
Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the compensation payable on compulsory
acquisition of landed property by Government since September 2005 to date, he will state the
number of portions of land acquired by Government indicating in each case –

(a) the purpose of the acquisition;
(b) the names of the former owners;
(c) the location and the extent;
(d) the amount of compensation payable, as assessed by the Government Valuer, and
(e) the actual amount of compensation paid.

**Reply:** The requested information is being compiled and will be released as soon as it is ready.
BUS LAY-BYS – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1055) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether, in regard to the bus stops, he will consider the advisability of making provision for lay-bys, with a view to alleviating traffic congestion thereat –

(a) wherever there is none, and
(b) in cases where no space is available to provide for such lay-bys, to relocate the bus stops to other places.

Reply: I am informed that provision is made for the construction of bus lay-bys in the case of new road infrastructure and major development projects.

As regards bus stops which have been in existence for many years, my Ministry approves the construction of lay-bys on a case to case basis, depending on the traffic, the location of the bus stop, the financial resources and the availability of land and acquisition procedures.

Each case is determined after detailed engineering surveys by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit as to whether a lay-by is warranted.

The construction of lay-bys is not feasible in built up zones where bare land is not readily available or the extent of available bare land is not sufficient to accommodate a bus lay-by.

With regard to part (b) referring to the relocation of bus stops to other locations, proposals are considered, with due consideration to road safety and any inconvenience that may be cause to bus users.

EASTERN INSTITUTE FOR INTEGRATED LEARNING IN MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY - MAURITIUS BRANCH CAMPUS

(No. B/1056) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the setting up of a Branch Campus of the Eastern University Sikkim in Mauritius, he will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as the number of courses which have been accredited so far for the academic year 2007/2008 and the number of students enrolled thereat.

Reply: The question refers to Eastern University Sikkim. At the very outset, I would like to inform the House that there is no Branch Campus of the Eastern University Sikkim in Mauritius; Eastern University does not even exist in Sikkim, India.

The Tertiary Education Commission, which is the regulatory body responsible, inter alia, for the registration of private post secondary educational institutions and accreditation of their academic programmes, has registered only one Branch Campus to date and the name of that Branch Campus is “Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning in Management University, (Mauritius Branch Campus).”
I presume that the hon. Member is referring to that Branch Campus and in that case my reply is as follows –

I am informed by TEC that the Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning in Management University, (Mauritius Branch Campus) was registered by the Commission on 04 May, 2007. At the time of registration, it also granted provisional accreditation for the institution to run the Bachelor in Business Administration programme.

Subsequently, the Commission received an application for the accreditation of six additional programmes. Out of those six programmes, the Commission has, after following a rigorous accreditation procedure, granted provisional accreditation subject to conditions for the following programmes –

(i) BA Fashion Marketing and Promotion;
(ii) Bachelor in Computer Applications; and
(iii) BA Journalism and Mass Communication,

To date therefore, only four programmes have been provisionally accredited by the TEC to be run by the Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning in Management University (Mauritius Branch Campus). Depending on the outcome of follow up action by TEC, the provisional accreditation may be converted into full accreditation after one year.

At the time of application for accreditation, applications were received for programmes as follows –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor in Business Administration</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA Fashion Marketing and Promotion</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor in Computer Applications</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA Journalism and Mass Communication</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TEC has requested EIILM (Mauritius Branch Campus) to provide for the actual enrolment and I have been informed that up to now the relevant information has not been provided. I will impress upon TEC to follow up with the institution.

**ST FÉLIX SUGAR FACTORY - COMPENSATION & LAND ALLOCATION**

(No. B/1057) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the payment of compensation and to the allocation of land to the workers of the St Félix sugar factory, following its closure, he will state where matters stand.

**Reply:** I shall reply to B/1057 and B/1085 together.
Société Usinière du Sud as the company receiving the cane of St Félix and therefore having the responsibility to implement the conditions of the Blue Print, has been advised that it would need to conform to all the provisions concerned with the package of workers as per the blueprint. The cash compensation and its relation to the accompanying measures form part of the negotiations on the all inclusive package deal between the Government of Mauritius and the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association. Once this is finalized, cash compensation will be paid. The Mauritius Sugar Authority and SUDS have already made practical arrangements to this effect.

With regard to the issue of land compensation I have already informed the House in reply to PQ B/1369 of 14 November 2006. All the workers and staff have agreed for land allocation at Bel Air in the factory area of St Félix. The site is located along the main road at Bel Air and it is an extension of the existing village. SUDS would acquire the land and undertake all infrastructural works before transferring the land to the employees.

Pending the finalization of matters, I, in April 2006, impressed upon Compagnie Usinière de St Félix (CUSF), to maintain its employees.

CUSF accepted to do so till recently and it has advised me of its intention to move for a winding up.

I have in a meeting chaired by me on 03 November 2007, impressed upon CUSF, SUDS and the SIT to find a solution so that the employees of CUSF receive all their remuneration entitlements in toto, till mid January 2008 inclusive of all basic and associated bonuses for the year 2007.

In addition, I have also set up a Technical Committee to work out a solution and submit a report to me. This committee had a first meeting on 5 November 2007 at which consensus was reached on the willingness to attend to my appeal. SIT, SUDS and CUSF have expressed their intention to share the responsibility to the satisfaction and to the benefit of the workers.

PETIT CAMP – POLLUTION

(No. B/1058) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether, in regard to the problem of pollution in the region of Petit Camp, he will state –

(a) the causes thereof, and
(b) the remedial measures that are being envisaged.

Reply (The Minister of Public Utilities): I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the event which occurred at Petit Camp on Saturday 20 October 2007.

As regards to part (a), on Wednesday 17 October 2007, I noted a significant volume of water flowing down the side of the motorway in the vicinity of Pont Fer, Phoenix and requested the Wastewater Management Authority to immediately investigate the source of overflow. The WMA located the point of obstruction on the main trunk sewer, some 500 metres from the Phoenix roundabout. Attempts to unblock the sewer line carried out by means of specialized equipment, jetting of the pipeline, and a more complex technique called winching were unsuccessful. The WMA had to intervene directly on the sewer line itself which required the
diversion of the flow from the trunk sewer at Pont Fer, Phoenix. The WMA reported that the system was blocked by foreign objects including a galvanized pipe of about one metre long, a wooden plank and a concrete mass of about 300 mm in size. These were removed from the trunk sewer. It is suspected that such a blockage cannot, but be the result of an act of vandalism. The trunk sewer was then patched with concrete and allowed to set prior to backfilling and putting the pipeline back into operation. The whole procedure which started on Thursday 18 October was successfully completed on Saturday 20 October late in the afternoon. After a general clean up operation was undertaken, the situation was back to normal at around 10.00 a.m. on Sunday 21 October 2007; and

As regards to part (b), following the event, I sensitised the general public of the circumstances of such an act of vandalism. Any individual or group of individuals that are caught tampering with WMA’s services or any private wastewater carriers caught discharging their contents at unauthorized locations will be dealt with severely, as provided for in the law.

**STC - PULSES & BROAD BEANS – IMPORTATION**

*(No. B/1059) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)* asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to pulses and broad beans, you will for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Trading Corporation, information as to whether the Corporation proposes to import these commodities, and if so, what pricing policy is being envisaged.

**Reply:** The State Trading Corporation currently imports butter beans and yellow split peas and has already imported the following quantities -

(i) 20 Metric Tons of Butter Beans from China; and
(ii) 44 Metric Tons of Yellow Split Peas from Australia.

All the consignment of Butter Beans from China and 18.6 MT of Yellow Split Peas has been sold as at 31 October 2007.

STC has also ordered butter beans from Madagascar and a first consignment of 40 Mtons has arrived on 29 October 2007 and will be put on the market within a week. An additional consignment of 100 Mtons is expected to arrive around 10 November 2007. Further consignments of Butter Beans are expected up to 19 December 2007.

I am further informed that STC applies a mark-up of approximately 5% on the landed cost of these commodities for its administrative expenses. A price structure is built taking into account cost, freight and rate of exchange plus margins. The House may wish to note that retail prices are not subject to price control, however STC has currently set recommended retail prices of Rs24 per half kg of butter bean, and Rs12.90 for yellow split peas. It is expected that prices of butter beans are expected to fall further in the near future.
NRPT – AMOUNT COLLECTED

(No. B/1060) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the payment of the National Residential Property Tax, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to –

(a) the number of taxpayers who have paid such tax;
(b) the total amount which has been collected, and
(c) if in some cases, this tax has not been declared in the returns of the Mauritius Revenue Authority.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1047)

TAXATION ON INTERESTS – AMOUNT COLLECTED

(No. B/1061) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the taxation of interests on savings, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to the amount collected for the current exercise.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1047)

ECROIGNARD & BEL AIR – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/1062) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the supply of drinking water, he will state if he is aware of the difficulties faced by the inhabitants of Ecroignard and Bel Air and, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Water Authority, information as to if remedial measures have been taken and, if so, where matters stand.

Reply: In reply to PQ No. B/795 on 17 July 2007, I informed the House of the measures being taken by the CWA to abate water supply problems in the East, including the regions of Bel Air and Ecroignard.

I am informed that the project for the ‘rationalisation, upgrading and extension of the water distribution system in the East’ is almost completed. One important component of the project which comprised the laying of some 4 km of pipes from the new reservoir at Belle Rose to Bel Air was completed on 25 October 2007. Consequently, there is now a regular supply of water to the inhabitants of Bel Air.

As regards the village of Ecroignard, I am informed that the inhabitants are supplied with water from the Caroline borehole which also supplied with water from the Caroline borehole which also supplied other nearby villages, including Bel Air.
With the commissioning of the new project, water from the Caroline borehole is no longer diverted to the region of Bel Air. Accordingly, water supply in Caroline, Ecroignard, Bramsthahn and Camp Ithier has considerably improved and is now on a regular basis.

However, some forty households in the upper part of Ecroignard are supplied only during off-peak hours. The CWA is providing a water tanker service to these households.

The CWA is presently carrying out an extensive leak detection and repairs in Caroline and Ecroignard regions with a view to further improving the water supply to the upper parts of Ecroignard.

MONTAGNE BLANCHE – ROAD SAFETY

(No. B/1063) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, following the road accident which occurred at Montagne Blanche on 06 October 2007, in the vicinity of the supermarket La Corniche and the CMT factory and, subsequent to the representations made by the Village Councillors, he will state the measures he proposes to take to reinforce the safety of the road users thereat.

Reply: Following the road accident at Montagne Blanche which occurred on 06 October 2007 and requests from the Police for placing of humps and fixing speed limits, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has carried out a site survey at the location.

It has noted that speed limit signs of 50 km/hour already exists along the road at Montagne Blanche Sans Souci.

However, there are no footpaths to segregate pedestrians from vehicular traffic.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit does not recommend the construction of a road hump in view of the gradient of the road, but has recommended –

(i) the construction of raised footpaths;
(ii) the construction of one bus layby, and
(iii) setting up of a pedestrian crossing.

Action is being taken to implement these measures.
MORCELLEMENT HERMITAGE, COROMANDEL - SOIL EROSION

(No. B/1064) Mr. S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the rehabilitation of the Chemin La Mort at the Morcellement Hermitage, Coromandel, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: The road embankment at Morcellement Hermitage, Coromandel has collapsed as a result of soil erosion. The scheme was implemented by the Municipality of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill.

As this represents a hazard to road users, a decision was taken at Government level on 02 June 2006 for conducting a comprehensive study to remedy the situation.

Initially, the consultancy firm GIBB (Mtius) Ltd. was called upon to carry out an in-depth study of the problem. The consultancy firm GIBB (Mtius) Ltd. was of the view that taking into account the complexity of the problem, there will be need for a detailed study and extensive geotechnical soil investigation.

In the meantime, the contract of the consultancy firm GIBB (Mtius) Ltd. expired. I would like to inform the House that the problem at Morcellement Hermitage, Coromandel is of a complicated nature in view of the necessity of soil stabilisation, provision of retaining wall structure to ensure safety, design of suitable access involving way leave negotiation and land acquisition formalities. It has, therefore, been decided to resort to a separate consultancy for a thorough study of the problem to redress the situation.

The Road Development Authority (RDA), conversant with road projects, has been approached to design the draft document. Being given the complexity of the problem and in view of its own commitments RDA could not extend any form of support.

The technical team of my Ministry has been mobilised to work on the draft tender document which is expected to be ready shortly. Formalities will be followed to seek clearance of the Central Tender Board in respect of the distinct consultancy tender in order to remedy the situation.

BEAU-BASSIN & PETITE RIVIÈRE - NDU PROJECTS

(No. B/1065) Mr. S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Constituency No. 20, Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, he will state the number of projects initiated and/or completed by the National Development Unit during the financial year 2006-2007.

Reply: The information sought is being compiled and will be deposited in the Library of the Assembly as soon as it is ready.
SWINE FEVER

(No. B/1066) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to suspected cases of swine fever in different parts of the island, he will state the current situation and the measures, if any, taken to prevent the spread of the disease and to assist the pig breeders.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1051)

HIV AND AIDS – SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

(No. B/1067) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to HIV and AIDS, he will state the number of persons suffering therefrom as at today, indicating those engaged in the syringe exchange programme.

Reply: I am informed that as at the end of September 2007, 2810 Mauritians are living with the virus; out of whom 149 have reached the AIDS stage.

With regard to the second part of the question, as the House is aware, there has been a drastic shift in the main mode of transmission from heterosexual to injecting drug use as from the year 2002 – from 14% in 2002 to 92% in 2005. The percentage in 2006 was 86% and it is expected to be lower for the year 2007.

Although the HIV and AIDS Action Plan (2003 – 2008) for injecting drug users provided, *inter-alia*, for the implementation of a Syringe and Needle Exchange Programme, nothing was done as at June 2005. It is only when this Government came to power in July 2005 that appropriate measures have been taken to address the problem. In fact, it was at the meeting of the National AIDS Committee held on 27 April, 2006, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister that it was decided to introduce methadone substitution therapy and the Needle Exchange Programme as harm minimization strategies.

Government has already shown its commitment by introducing Methadone Substitution Therapy in November 2006. However, for the proper implementation of the Needle Exchange Programme, Government had to establish the appropriate legal framework. In this connection, the HIV and AIDS Act was passed in December 2006.

We also, in consultation with the Attorney-General’s Office, have had to prepare appropriate regulations and guidelines for the implementation of the programme. Accordingly, the regulations, which provide for, *inter-alia*, the prescription of the NGOs, have been promulgated on 4 October, this year. 7 NGOs have been prescribed and 3 of them are ready to participate in the programme. 30 outreach workers have already been trained.

While awaiting the finalization of the regulations and guidelines, my Ministry, in partnership with ‘Collectif Urgence Toxida’, has been sustaining since May 2007 the pilot project for Needle Exchange which was initiated by the association in November 2006 for a period of six months. There is a good response to the current programme which covers two sites, namely Baie du Tombeau and Roche Bois and which caters for 200 IDUs. Three new NGOs are ready to
participate in the scaling up of the programme. It is expected that by June 2008, 10 sites will have been covered, targeting a number of 2000 clients, at an estimated cost of Rs8.4 m.

In this connection, I wish to point out that provision has had to be made for additional funding. To re-affirm its commitment, Government has provided, under a Special Fund, for the first time ever, an amount of Rs10 million in the budget of my Ministry to, *inter-alia*, scale up the Needle Exchange Programme.

The hon. Member has requested for an indication on the number of HIV infected persons engaged in the Needle Exchange Programme. I wish to stress on a very important point. The Needle Exchange Programme which is an evidence-based strategy does not aim specifically at reaching HIV infected persons. Its objective, similar to the Methadone Substitution Therapy, is to reduce the incidence of HIV and AIDS among Injecting Drug Users.


*(No. B/1068) Mrs M. Martin (Second Member for Curepipe and Midlands)* asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the irregularities noted in the French paper of the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations 2006, he will state if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and, if so, indicate –

(a) the outcome thereof, and

(b) the recommendations made, if any

**Reply:** Contrary to what is stated in the question, there was no irregularity in the French Paper for the Cambridge School Certificate examinations 2006. However, in May 2007, in the grade review exercise for candidates who had scored border line marks which was carried out by MES in December 2006/January 2007, it was noted that the review marks of only 470 out of 1808 candidates were forwarded to Cambridge by MES.

Corrective measures were taken by MES. Marks of the remaining candidates were forwarded to Cambridge for review, as a result of which 234 candidates had their grades changed. However, it was felt that we should probe further and shed light in the matter.

Accordingly, Government approved the setting up of a Fact Finding Committee chaired by a sitting Magistrate and comprising two Assessors to –

(i) ascertain whether procedures had been followed;

(ii) situate responsibilities; and

(iii) make recommendations to improve the existing procedures.

The Fact Finding Committee, started its enquiry on 11 October 2007 and todate has had four sittings.

The outcome and recommendations of the Committee will be submitted to my Ministry once the exercise is completed.

It is expected that the Committee would complete its investigation and submit its report within three months of its first meeting, held on 11 October 2007.
PROCUREMENT ACT - PROCLAMATION

(No. B/1069) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Procurement Act, he will state why it has not yet been proclaimed.

(Withdrawn)

SUGAR SECTOR - REFORMS

(No. B/1070) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the reforms in the sugar sector, he will state whether funds have so far been disbursed by the European Union in connection therewith and, if so, indicate the amount and the use to which they have been put.

(Withdrawn)

RAI FOUNDATION - SCHOLARSHIP

(No. B/1071) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the scholarships awarded by the RAI Foundation, India, he will state –

(a) whether these were advertised;
(b) who sat on the scholarship selection panel, and
(c) table a list of the selected candidates who have been awarded scholarships.

(Withdrawn)

MAURITIUS EMBASSIES AND HIGH COMMISSIONS – ECONOMIC AND TRADE ADVISERS

(No. B/1072) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether, in regard to the Economic and Trade Advisers posted in the Mauritius Embassies and High Commissions since July 2005 to date, he will state their names, indicating –

(a) the Embassy of High Commission to which they are posted;
(b) the terms and conditions of appointment, including salaries, allowances and other fringe benefits drawn and if they are being paid in foreign currency.

Reply: I am tabling a list of the 6 Economic and Trade Advisers posted in our Embassies and High Commissions giving the date of their appointment and the other information asked for.
PENSIONS PAYMENT - IRREGULARITIES

(No. B/1073) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the alleged cases of fraud in relation to the payment of pensions, she will state –

(a) when these have been discovered;
(b) if these cases have been referred to the police for inquiry;
(c) if the officers suspected thereof have been suspended, and
(d) the remedial measures she proposes to take to avoid any such recurrence.

Reply: We cannot, at this stage, utilise the term fraud to refer to the irregularities, which have been detected at the beginning of May 2007, following the implementation of the new mode of pension payment.

The previous method of cash payment by Pay Clerks, which was considered outdated and inefficient, had to be reviewed and was long overdue. Following the implementation of the new system in April 2007, it was observed that there was an unusually high amount of refund from the Post Office representing unpaid pensions. The Internal Audit team of the Ministry investigated into the matter and submitted a report which has in fact highlighted several irregularities and loopholes in the computerised system of the Ministry. Regarding part (b), yes the case has been referred to the Police. Enquiry is still ongoing.

In view of the complexity of the situation, it is not possible at this stage to situate responsibility for irregularity committed. In reply to part (c) of the question, no officers have therefore been suspended up to now.

Regarding part (d) of the question, preliminary corrective measures have been taken, namely automatic suspension of pensions for beneficiaries who have not cashed their pensions after three consecutive months. As per section 5(1) of the National Pensions Regulations, the National Pensions Officer is empowered to stop payment of a pension in case of a lapse of three months from the day on which payment was due. Action has already been taken to remove all double entries from the system and to add strict controls such as restrictions on user’s access and other controls and validations within the software programmes and modules. The House may wish to note here, that following the implementation of these immediate measures, the amounts refunded by the post office for subsequent months have decreased considerably.

In addition, arrangements have been made with the Civil Status Office and Passport Office for information of death of beneficiaries and departures respectively to be made available to my Ministry promptly and on a regular basis so that appropriate action can be taken to cease payment of pension as appropriate thereby reducing the risk of overpayment.

Moreover, a major review of the whole benefit and contribution systems will soon be implemented through the Social Insurance Management Information System. This system will integrate all the functionalities and business processes of the Ministry. It will include enhanced verification and controls of each process to eliminate any risk for fraud and irregularities. It will also allow officers to have a 360 degree view of the beneficiary to eliminate the risk of overpayment and underpayment.
MRC RESEARCH GRANT SCHEME - PROJECT

(No. B/1074) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if he has taken cognizance of the report on indiscipline in schools published by the Mauritius Research Council and, if so, the actions he proposes to take to address the issue.

Reply: I wish to inform the hon. Member that the document to which she is referring is not an MRC Report but an unsolicited research project carried out under the MRC Research Grant Scheme by a team of academics lead by Dr. V. Ramharai of MIE.

That being said, the research project which is premised on a survey carried out in schools both by way of interviews and questionnaires provides a useful set of quantitative and qualitative data. This will be certainly of use to my Ministry in formulating policies to address the problem of indiscipline.

On a more practical side, and as indicated in the reply I gave to PQ No. B/798 at our sitting of 17 July 2007, I have set up a working group under the Chairmanship of the Chief Technical Officer of my Ministry to look into the matter and make recommendations.

The Committee has solicited public participation and I understand that it is currently examining 11 sets of proposals received from various quarters including NGOs, trade unions and individuals. Five of the bodies/persons have also expressed the wish to be heard by the Working Group.

In parallel, my Ministry, in consultation with the Federation of Union of Managers, has worked out a series of amendments to be brought to existing legislation in order to exercise better control on indiscipline of students and attendance at school. This is being examined with the Attorney General’s Office.

In due course, my Ministry will come up with detailed proposals for implementation as from January 2008.

STATE, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS – PRE- VOCATIONAL CLASSES

(No. B/1075) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the pre-vocational classes, he will state if -

(a) he has been informed whether any private or public secondary schools presently running pre-vocational classes will no longer be doing so as from January 2008, and

(b) the number of secondary schools which had no intake in January 2007.
Reply: I wish to remind the House that the current policy regarding pre-vocational education is that any pupil who has failed CPE twice or has failed CPE once, but is over-age to repeat, is offered admission in Form I Pre-Vocational in either a State or a grand-aided private secondary school within the zone in which he/she resides.

There is no statutory provision compelling a school to run a pre-vocational stream, but since the inception of the project, all schools having the capacity to do so have been encouraged to admit at least one section of pre-voc. However, there were a few schools, both in the State and the private secondary schools sectors, which could not run a pre-vocational stream because of space constraints.

I am informed that -

(a) there are 110 schools (41 State and 69 private) which are currently running pre-vocational classes;

(b) it is estimated that 109 schools (39 State and 70 private) will be running pre-vocational classes in January 2008, and

(c) 37 schools (16 State and 21 private) did not have any intake in January 2007.

The reasons accounting for the above state of affairs are –

(i) problems of space – on the State side, schools are being constructed in a phased manner and many of them are still incomplete whereas on the private side, many schools are in rented buildings without scope for expansion;

(ii) several schools on the State side are accommodating students from other schools as part of the contingency arrangements; and

(iii) National colleges are not taking pre-vocational students as a matter of policy.

The intake of pre-vocational students in the last four years has been steadily decreasing. The figures reflect a clear indication in a reduction in the intake for the pre-vocational stream and eventually lesser pre-vocational classes in the State and private secondary schools.

I can, however, assure the House that in terms of demand and supply, my Ministry is in a position to afford a seat in Form I pre-vocational to all eligible students. I also wish to inform the House that the pre-voc project is in a transitional stage and is being reconsidered within the broader objective of revamping Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and the setting up of an Institut de Formation et D’Education Tertiaire (IFET) as proposed in the Government Programme 2005-2006.
MINISTRY OF FISHERIES – MAINTENANCE TEAM – ALLOWANCE

(No. B/1076) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the maintenance team of the Ministry of Fisheries, he will state if the workers thereof have been paid the agreed allowances for the periods January to June 2006 and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Reply: The maintenance team has not yet been paid the agreed allowance for the period January to June 2006 because the attendance sheets of the workers have not yet been certified and submitted by the supervisor of the team. I am advised that payment will be effected shortly.

CT POWER LTD. (MTIUS) – EIA LICENCE

(No. B/1077) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to CT Power Ltd. (Mauritius), he will state if the EIA licence from the Department of Environment has been obtained, as required in the letter of intent.

(Withdrawn)

CT POWER PROJECT –
MONTAGNE JACOT - JETTY FACILITY

(No. B/1078) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to CT Power Project, he will state if the relevant clearances, as required by the letter of intent, have been obtained for the setting up of a jetty facility at Montagne Jacot.

(Withdrawn)

CT POWER PROJECT
– ELECTRICITE DE FRANCE - CONSULTANT - MISSIONS

(No. B/1079) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the CT Power Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the outcome of the missions held by the consultant Electricité de France to assess the cost reasonableness and the technological issues.

(Withdrawn)
POINTE-AUX-SABLES HEALTH CARE CENTRE
– EXTENSION PROJECT

(No. B/1080) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if there is a project for the extension of the Pointe-aux-Sables Health Care Centre and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

HIGHLANDS – NEW TOWN – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/1081) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a new town in Highlands, he will state where matters stand.

Reply: As the House is aware, Government through the State Land Development Company Ltd. (SLDC), is promoting through the PPP framework the creation of a new town on 920 hectares of land at Highlands.

In this context, to sound the market, the SLDC floated a call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) in December 2006. Parallel to that exercise and with grant financing from the SADC Banking Association, an international firm of Consultants, CRISIL Infrastructure Advisory Ltd, was appointed to undertake an initial feasibility study. The services of CRISIL Infrastructure Advisory Ltd were obtained through a competitive tendering exercise conducted by the SADC Banking Association. The initial study has revealed that the Project is financially feasible and as per the project concept, the private sector would be interested to implement the project on a PPP basis. CRISIL Infrastructure Advisory Ltd. has also made recommendations on an appropriate project structure and bidding framework.

As regards the status of the project, the SLDC has recently launched a tendering exercise to recruit a Transaction Advisor that will be responsible amongst others, to validate the initial feasibility study and prepare the bid documents for the selection of a private developer for implementing the Project. The SLDC aims at appointing a Transaction Advisor by the end of December 2007.

It is expected that a private developer would be selected within a period of twelve months from the appointment of a Transaction Advisor.

PORT LOUIS – TRAFFIC CONGESTION

(No. B/1082) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether in regard to the traffic congestion in Port Louis, he will state the remedial measures that are being envisaged to alleviate same.
Reply: The hon. Member may wish to refer to the reply made to PQ B/444 at the sitting of 05 June 2007.

Government is addressing the problem of land transport and traffic congestion as a priority and is looking at the issue in a holistic way by focusing on expansion of the road infrastructure, demand management and road safety.

Thus in 2006, a package of 18 measures was recommended with the advice of a transport consultant. Consequently, Government has decided to construct the Terre Rouge/Verdun/Trianon link road as a dual carriageway over a length of 21.7 kms. The new road is expected to provide a new corridor to enable goods and persons to travel from North to South and thus alleviate traffic flow in Port Louis.

Another project aiming at relieving the problem of traffic congestion is the bus lane, which will provide a segregated lane for buses and reduce traveling time to Port Louis.

My Ministry and the National Transport Authority are also currently working on the reform of the taxi industry, a revised parking policy within Port Louis and a review of bus routes. Government has also approved the setting up of a Land Transport Authority which would ensure greater coordination among the existing institutions and spearhead the implementation of land transport measures.

COOKING GAS AND FLOUR – SUBSIDY

(No. B/1083) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether he will state if Government proposes to subsidise cooking gas and flour and, if so, indicate –

(a) the amount earmarked for each, and
(b) when and why the decisions have been taken.

Reply: I wish to inform the House that with the policy of re-orienting of subsidy on rice and flour by the Government as from 01 July 2006, the Corporation is funding all shortfalls in flour from its overall surplus.

Based on the purchase price of flour for the current contract as from January 2007, STC will be disbursing about Rs400 m. for year 2007.

As far as the year 2008 is concerned, the tender evaluation is still in progress and at this stage, it would not be possible to know the quantum of additional fund that STC would need to disburse, over and above Rs400 m.

With respect to cooking gas in cylinders 5 kg, 6 kg and 12 kg, STC has disbursed about Rs275 m. for financial year 2006/2007. It is estimated that for year 2007 / 2008, in view of the rise in prices on the world market, STC may have to disburse around Rs368 m.
As regards part (b) of the question, the hon. Member may wish to be informed that the retail price of flour was last fixed at Rs 5.30 per ½ kg as from 03 July 2006 and this price is maintained up to now. Based on the tender exercise for the year 2007, the retail price of flour should have been Rs 7.50 per ½ kg. But as a caring Government, the price of Rs 5.30 has been maintained.

As regards cooking gas in 5 kg, 6 kg and 12 kg cylinders, the retail price was fixed in October 2006 and a 12 kg cylinder was fixed at Rs 315. The same price is still prevailing. For instance, based on the CIF and exchange rate, the retail price of a 12 kg cylinder should have been Rs 555.71 for the month of June 2007.

This Government is sensitive to the hardship faced by consumers regarding the increase in prices of commonly used commodities and has deemed it fit not to pass on the real cost to consumers, thus, the prices of flour and cooking gas have not been increased.

**ALBION SHELTER – SEXUAL AGGRESSION**

(No. B/1084) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Women’s Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether in regard to the recent case of alleged sexual aggression by a warden on a young resident of the Albion shelter, she will state –

(a) if her Ministry has initiated an internal inquiry and, if so, when and the outcome thereof and, if not, why not, and
(b) if a certificate of morality was submitted by this warden before taking up employment at the shelter.

(Withdrawn)

**ST FÉLIX SUGAR FACTORY – WORKERS – COMPENSATION**

(No. B/1085) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether in regard to the payment of compensation and to the allocation of land to the workers of the St Félix sugar factory, following its closure, he will state where matters stand.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/1057)

**TAMASSA HOTEL, BEL OMBRE – TAXI LICENCES**

(No. B/1086) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether in regard to applications for public service licences to operate from the Tamassa Hotel, Bel Ombre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to the number received, indicating –
(a) those applicants whose present base of operation is at Bel Ombre, Baie du Cap, St Martin and Choisy, and
(b) if he will consider the advisability of allowing taxi drivers of Bel Ombre to apply to operate at the Tamassa Hotel with a view to enabling the inhabitants of the nearby villages to benefit from the tourism development in that locality.

Reply: I am advised by the National Transport Authority that following an invitation in the press, 98 applications were received by the closing date for the grant of public service vehicle (taxi) licences to operate from Tamassa Hotel, Bel Ombre. While processing the applications, it was considered that, out of that number, 25 applicants do not satisfy one of the criteria laid down in the press communiqué, in that they should have been operating from their current base of operation for more than three years.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am informed that applications have been received as follows for the locations mentioned –

- 1 from Bel Ombre
- 4 from Baie du Cap
- 6 from St Martin and
- 2 from Choisy.

However, apart from the one applicant from Bel Ombre and three from Baie du Cap, the others are among the 25 taxi operators who are not eligible to apply. They were informed accordingly by registered post on 24 October 2007.

As far as part (b) of the question is concerned, it is to be noted that the applications of the 73 remaining qualified candidates, including the one from Bel Ombre, were published on 27 October 2007. These applications will be considered by the Board of the National Transport Authority in due course. It would not be proper at this stage to change any of the criteria while the exercise is being completed.

LAND (DUTIES AND TAXES) ACT – AMENDMENT

(No. B/1087) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether in regard to the recent amendment to the law pertaining to succession, he will state the estimated amount of money expected to be collected with the application of this new measure.

Reply: I wish to state at the outset that there could not and there have not been any amendment to the law pertaining to succession as the legislation relating to succession duty has simply and purely been repealed.

The purpose of the amendment brought by regulations to the Schedule of the Land (Duties and Taxes) Act in September 2007 is meant to plug a loophole whereby the exemption from land transfer tax on the transfer of property acquired by inheritance to third parties has been removed.
The exemption is considered to be an anomaly. For example, if a father sells a property to his son and the latter afterwards disposes of the property to a third party, he is liable to land transfer tax; whereas if his father is deceased and the son inherits that property and afterwards sells it to a third party, he is exempted from land transfer tax. Hence the amendment brought in Regulations 2007.

If the loophole is not plugged, transfer of property acquired by inheritance to third parties would escape payment of land transfer tax. For example, in a recent case where 6 plots of land excised from a larger plot of land acquired by inheritance have been transferred to third parties for a declared value close to Rs50 m. in the aggregate, land transfer tax amounting to around Rs2.5 m. was not paid. It has been noted that many large real estate /property development could use this loophole to avoid the payment of land transfer tax. I should like to inform the House that land acquired not by inheritance and sold to third parties attract land transfer tax.

Any transfer of property by an ascendant to a descendant or the latter’s spouse is still exempted from registration duty and land transfer tax. Where property acquired by inheritance is transferred among heirs of a deceased person, the transfer continues to be exempted from land transfer tax and registration duty. We have, furthermore, given additional protection in the regulations made in September 2007 by extending the exemption on transfers among heirs of undivided rights of property acquired by inheritance.

As regards the second part of the question, it is the practice to take the opportunity at budget time to plug loopholes in our tax legislation and we do not enumerate in details each and every one of them but mention only the salient ones. I would like to quote from paragraph 259 of the Budget Speech 2007.

“I am proposing to bring through the Finance Bill and by way of Regulations a number of amendments to revenue and related laws to plug identified loopholes, improve tax compliance and administration and streamline certain provisions.”

METHADONE SUBSTITUTION THERAPY – CENTRES

(No. B/1088) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether in regard to the methadone substituting therapy, he will state if he will consider increasing the number of the centres offering the therapy to cater for the large number of drug addicts.

Reply: In the Government Programme 2005 – 2010, it is stated that, I quote –

“HIV and AIDS proliferation statistics are alarming and show that this matter has been sorely neglected. Government will treat this as a major concern of utmost priority. In this context, significant reforms will be brought to the AIDS Unit and the Sexually Transmitted Disease Unit in order to tackle this concern with the focus and seriousness it deserves. Government will also set up a modern detoxification centre”.

In fact, the first major step that was taken was the setting-up of a modern Detoxification Centre at Barkly. This was immediately followed by the introduction of the Methadone Substitution Therapy.
It was launched at the National Detoxification Centre on 21 November 2006, following the recommendation of Dr. Suresh Kumar, Consultant at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, on the introduction of Methadone as a means of harm reduction, and the advice of Professor Marta Torrens, WHO Consultant.

In fact, the decision to introduce Methadone Substitution Therapy for injecting drug users was taken at the meeting of the National AIDS Committee, held on 27 April 2006, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister.

As at to date, some 340 patients/clients are under this therapy. The short term target of my Ministry is to reach 1000 patients by the end of June 2008 and the cost of the Methadone only will be Rs6 m.

Methadone Substitution Therapy requires an induction period of 15 days at the Detoxification Centre at Barkly. Presently, we have only 15 beds. Arrangements have been made to increase the number of beds by an additional 30 and this will allow us to meet our short term target. In fact, refurbishment works for the extension of the Barkly Detoxification Centre and renovation works in Ward 5 at Old Brown Sequard Hospital are currently under way and are expected to be completed by the end of the year. The additional facilities at Brown Sequard Mental Health Care Centre will cater for female clients.

With a view to enabling patients who have to go to work to receive their daily doses, the opening hours of dispensing of methadone have been set as from 6.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m since 17 September 2007. Moreover, during the month of Ramadan, special arrangements were made for the dispensing of Methadone in the evening in order to cater for patients of Muslim faith who were fasting.

In spite of some constraints at the level of dispensing, the programme is being run successfully, as evidenced from feedback received from clients and their families.

As an immediate measure, it is proposed to open a third dispensing unit in the region of Port Louis at the Dr. Idrice Goomany Area Health Centre to cater for the increasing number of Methadone clients in this region.

Mr Speaker, Sir, increasing the number of centres offering Methadone Substitution Therapy is important, but what is more important is increasing access to the therapy. In this connection, my Ministry is presently working on new strategies with the aim of reaching 4,000 patients by the end of December 2010.

SCHOOL CHILDREN – CHEESE & DRIED FRUITS – SUPPLY

(No. B/1089) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the increasing cost of living, especially the increase in the price of milk, he will consider the advisability of reintroducing the scheme for the supply of cheese and dried fruits to school children to supplement their diet.

Reply: I thank the hon. Member for this question which relates to the nutrition of pupils.
I wish to inform the House that the scheme for the supply of cheese and dried fruits to school children to supplement their diet was first introduced in the Primary Schools in 1970 with the assistance of the World Food Programme (WFP) to combat malnutrition and to improve school attendance and performance, at a time when undernourishment was widespread among school going children in the country. The project, as it was then conceived, comprised 20 grams of cheese, a cup of milk, and a loaf of bread to all pupils daily.

In 1989, the then Government agreed to the proposal of an Evaluation Mission of the World Food Programme, to gradually phase out the project in view of increasing demand for similar facilities from more needy countries. In 1996, when foreign assistance was completely stopped, Government immediately implemented, as its own costs, the supply of bread daily to all pupils of the primary schools, excluding the ZEP schools, where provision is made for each student to be given in addition to the loaf of bread, one portion of soft cheese and either one pastry or a fruit within a comprehensive project.

Government has maintained the Primary School Feeding Project this year until a more equitable way is found to focus on greater assistance to children who really deserve it and a sum of MUR 30.6 m has been earmarked for financial year 2007/2008 to fund this project. The number of pupils benefiting from this Project, at present, stands at around 103,387 (including RCEA and Hindu aided excluding ZEP schools) for the Republic of Mauritius.

In view of the above and the tight economic situation, it is not in the programme of my Ministry to supply cheese and dried fruits to all primary school children at this point in time.

I can understand the concern of the Hon. Member and I wish to reassure him that Government is equally concerned of the importance of good health and of developing good eating habits among students. However, on account of budget constraints, it is not possible for Government to do as much as it would have wished. On the basis of existing resources, Government is implementing its policy of targeting needy students and of providing assistance to those who are most in need of it. We are also ensuing that PTA’s of schools which have the resources are encouraged to come in and assist in the provision of meals to pupils in need thereof.

Should more funds be available to my Ministry, the proposed project will be given consideration.

AFRICAN SWINE FEVER

(No. B/1090) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether, in regard to the African swine fever, he will state when was it first detected, indicating the remedial measures taken by the veterinary services in connection therewith.

(Withdrawn)
BELLE MARE SQUATTERS

(No. B/1091) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the squatters of Belle Mare, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS - VACANCIES

(No. B/1092) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Co-operation whether he will state the number of vacancies that exist at his Ministry, indicating the different grades and if any action has been taken to fill in these posts.

Reply: There are 61 vacancies in respect of General Services and Departmental grades at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Cooperation. Action has been initiated to fill those vacant posts for which provision has been made in the Budget. The filling of the other posts would depend upon availability of funds.

I am tabling the list of vacancies and relevant details.

SME PARTNERSHIP FUND LTD - BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/1093) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the SME Partnership Fund Ltd, he will state the number of persons who have benefited therefrom, indicating –

(a) the sectors involved, and
(b) the amount disbursed.

Reply: In regard to the SME Partnership Fund Ltd, I am informed that 57 projects have been approved in respect of which an aggregate amount of Rs38.6 m. has already been disbursed.

Insofar as the sectoral distribution projects is concerned, 15 projects are in the Manufacturing Sector, 13 in Ago Industry, 10 in tourism, 3 in ICT and 16 are from other sectors.

I am further informed that an amount of Rs5.7 m. is under process for disbursement and 24 other projects are currently being appraised.
MILK POWDER – SHORTAGE ON LOCAL MARKET

(No. B/1094) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives whether he is aware that there is a shortage of milk powder on the local market and, if so, will he state the remedial measures he proposes to take.

Reply: I am informed that the monthly consumption of milk powder turns around 1,000 metric tons per month. During the month of October 2007, a quantity of 1018 metric tons was received and distributed at retail level. The stock of the commodity at importers’ level as at 05 November 2007 was 265 metric tons. The quantity of liquid milk imported during the month of September 2007 was about 366 metric tons. Further, about 1099 metric tons of milk powder are expected to reach the country during November 2007 and I am informed that this quantity would be sufficient to ensure supply of milk powder for that month.

I am also informed by the Consumer Protection Unit that most of the brands of milk powder were available at retail level on 02 November 2007. However, in certain places, the commodity was not available since a few days and traders were awaiting supply. These traders have also complained that they were receiving milk powder irregularly and in limited quantity. Further, despite the availability of certain brands, their demands are reported to be very low.

I also wish to point out that to a previous Parliamentary Question Set on 31 July 2007, it was stated that there had been a severe drought in Australia for the past five years and that there is increasing demand for the commodity, especially from emerging economies. All these factors compound to affect the availability of the product on the international market and as a result, on the local market as well.

The Consumer Protection Unit is effecting regular visits at retail and importers’ levels to ensure, as far as possible, that no hoarding is being practised by traders. The help of Police Department is solicited where necessary.

ST. PIERRE, L’AVENIR ROAD - HUMPS

(No. A/36) 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 will state if he has received representations from the l’Avenir Village Council for the installation of humps along the l’Avenir road at St. Pierre and, if so, where matters stand.

Reply: A request was made on 20 June 2006 by l’Avenir Village Council to the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit for the construction of road humps along Royal Road, l’Avenir.
The TMRSU has examined the request and recommended that a pair of humps be placed along a section of the road near Mohunlall Mohit Government School.

The exact siting of the road humps would be determined after the relocation of the bus stop and realignment of boundary wall with a view to accommodating a lay-by by the Ministry of Education.

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**ST PIERRE, L’AVENIR – NAPOLEON BRIDGE - LANDSCAPING WORKS, RIVER DREDGING, ETC.**

(No. A/37) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the Napoleon bridge in l’Avenir, St. Pierre, where there is a Kalimaye, he will state if he has received representations from the l’Avenir Shivam Mandir for –

(a) landscaping works;
(b) dredging of the river;
(c) construction of a retaining wall on the river banks, and
(d) installation of –

(i) pavements, and
(ii) lighting.

Reply: The Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit has received a request for these works from the l’Avenir Shivam Mandir.

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**L’AVENIR, ST. PIERRE – MOHUNLALL MOHIT GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL**

(No. A/38) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resource whether he is aware if the classes for the pre-primary school children of l’Avenir, St. Pierre, are run in one of the classrooms of the primary school thereat and, if so, will he consider the advisability of having a pre-primary complex constructed at the Mohunlall Mohit Government School.

Reply: I am aware that the pre-primary school operated by the Pre-School Trust Fund is housed in one of the classrooms of the Mohunlall Mohit Government School. This is not an unusual situation. In fact, 90 out of the 179 pre-primary schools operating under the aegis of the Pre-School Trust Fund are housed in primary school classrooms and not purposely built pre-primary schools.
The classroom housing the pre-primary school at the Mohunllall Mohit Government School is of an area of 49 sq. mts and there are only 30 pupils in a pre-school setting in the class. This is in accordance with the prescribed norms for pre-primary schools.

The Ministry does not propose to construct a pre-primary complex at the Mohunllall Mohit Government School for the following reasons, namely -

- the number of classrooms is sufficient to cater for both the pre primary unit and the primary school;
- part of the school premises is liable to be waterlogged during heavy rainfall;
- it will not be cost effective as there is no high and additional demand for pre primary seats can be met by the 3 private pre-primary schools which have the capacity to accommodate children of other pre primary going age of the locality, and
- it is the policy of Government to encourage the private sector to partake in the delivery of pre-primary education.