The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. N. Ramgoolam) (By Private Notice) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICT Authority), he will state -

(a) if the ICT Authority has funded any of his overseas missions and, if so, the expenses incurred;

(b) the names of the Directors of -

(i) the Legal Affairs Department

(ii) the Communications, International and Consumer Affairs Department and

(iii) the Finance and Administration Department, the dates they were appointed, the recruitment procedures followed and the terms and conditions of their employment

(c) the number of overseas missions effected by the Chairman and Directors and the expenses incurred;

(d) the procedures adopted by the ICT Authority for the purchase of cars and rental of office space, and

(e) whether any of his former advisers has been recruited by the ICT Authority.

Mr Jeeha: Sir, with regard to part (a), no, Sir, the ICTA has not funded any of my overseas missions.

As regards part (b), four Directors were recruited initially. Mr Mamade Aleem Boccus, Barrister and ex-senior Magistrate, has been
recruited as Director of the Legal Affairs Department. Mr Subash Gobin is the Director of Communications and International and Consumer Affairs Department. Mr Harish Bholah, Chartered Accountant, is the Director of Finance and Administration Department and Dr. Krishna Oolun is the Director of the Engineering and Licensing Department.

Their recruitment was effected by the Board following a Board resolution to that effect in 2002.

Information regarding the date of their appointment and their terms and conditions is being tabled.

As regards part (c), detailed information regarding the overseas mission effected by every Director and the Chairman is being tabled. Total expenditure incurred on these missions from June 2002 to May 2004 amounts to Rs4.9 m. and is within the annual budgetary provisions approved by the Board.

As regards part (d), I am informed that quotations were sought from various suppliers every time a new car had to be acquired and all procurements were effected with prior Board approval. As far as renting of office space is concerned, same was effected after receiving advice of the Government Valuer and the Board's approval.

With regard to part (e), yes, Sir, my ex-adviser on information matters who was employed on contract as from October 2000 has been recruited by the ICTA, as Communications Officer in March 2004, following a press advertisement and a selection exercise carried out by the ICTA.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not got the papers that the Minister has tabled. But can the Minister confirm that these three Directors were initially appointed on a two-year fixed term contract?

**Mr Jeeha:** Yes, Sir, they were appointed on a two-year full time fixed contract initially.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Can he say how they were chosen for this initial two-year period contract?
Mr Jeeha: Sir, the ICT Authority was constituted in June 2002 and there was an urgent need to build up capacity, to recruit staff. The outgoing Directors of the former MTA had resigned and vacated their posts. There was an urgent need for staff of high calibre to be recruited; and the Board took the decision to recruit the initial Directors and the need was also felt to recruit qualified and experienced people with the required expertise to run such an Authority.

Dr. Ramgoolam: Did the Board take it on itself to decide who had the experience and expertise and did not think it fit to advertise the posts?

Mr Jeeha: That was a decision that was taken by the Board and I cannot comment on it today. That decision was taken in 2002.

Dr. Ramgoolam: I expect the Minister would comment on it, because it is a bit strange. When the two-year contract expired, can the Minister say whether these posts then were turned into substantial posts?

Mr Jeeha: I am informed that there was a review of the organisation chart of the MTA when the ICTA was created and accordingly, it had taken the new Authority some time to come up with a new organisation chart. Thereafter, in November 2003, following the performance of the four Directors that were initially employed on contract, it was decided to offer them jobs in a permanent capacity and, as such, they were brought under the permanent establishment of the Authority.

Dr. Ramgoolam: The two-year fixed term contract were given, because there was apparently an urgent situation at the ICTA. May I ask the Minister whether these posts were turned into substantial posts without going through any advertisement or interview?

The Prime Minister: The Board has decided.

Dr. Ramgoolam: Yes, but we know who is chairing the Board and who are the people on the Board! It is a policy of petits copains!

(Interruptions)

No! It is a policy of getting petits copains into big jobs without going through interviews!
What would the people of the civil service say about the Mauritius Revenue Authority if this is the way that they have treated people …

I do not think it is right. I think it should have been advertised. Doesn't the Minister agree?

Mr Jeeha: Sir, the first four appointments, as I have explained earlier, were made, because the situation in June/July 2002 dictated that we recruited these people. For instance, Dr. Oolun was a Senior Lecturer at the University of Mauritius in Engineering. He was brought in from the University of Mauritius. The same thing applies to the Director of Legal Affairs. The Director of Finance is a Chartered Accountant. All these people were qualified. They have been taken from wherever the Board got them at that particular point in time. The Leader of the Opposition should also remember that there was a tariff rebalancing exercise that had to be carried out, that the liberalisation of the telecommunication sector had been preponed to January 2003 and accordingly, the Board decided on its own - and it is a good judgment - to recruit these people. After one year, upon satisfactory performance of these people, the Board decided to offer them employment on a permanent basis. I do not see where is the problem.

Dr. Ramgoolam: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister said that the Board needed to get these people, but we all know where Mr Subash Gobin worked before. They know he was at the Sun Trust. He was just chosen without any advertisement! I have never asked a question about the Director of Engineering and there is a reason why I did not do it. But as far as the other three persons are concerned, the Board decided to choose them without advertisement. We know how the Board is constituted! Does the Minister think it is right that somebody who had such a position with the MSM should be found to be the proper person to be recruited there?

Mr Jeeha: Sir, I would refrain from going into political belief or appartenance of people that have been recruited elsewhere, because if the Leader of the Opposition wants to open this avenue, he will be shocked if I give further reply as to the people who have been recruited at the ICT
Authority. Recruitment at the ICT Authority is not made with regard to political *appartenance* of professionals, especially.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Mr Speaker, suddenly, the Board found there was an urgent need to give them a two-year contract and thereafter appointed them on substantial posts without any interviews and advertisement. I am saying that it is wrong. I do not know why the Minister does not agree. It is plainly wrong to recruit people like this - and people who have these connections, as we all know.

**Mr Jeeha:** Mr Speaker, there are more than 40 members of staff that have been recruited at the ICT Authority. It is only the four Directors who were recruited initially and the rest of the staff has been recruited after a proper press advertisement and a selection exercise carried out by the Board of the Authority.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Is this why, at the opening ceremony of the TRASA at the Plantation Hotel, he said -

"The ICT cannot be independent of Government."

May we know why he said that?

**Mr Jeeha:** I think the Leader of the Opposition did not understand what I said, and I am going to explain it to him. There is a debate going on worldwide as to the independence of a regulator. Unfortunately, sometimes, the regulators themselves confuse this notion of independence as being totally independent from Government. An independent regulator, as is known worldwide, is independent from the industry. But, the creation of the regulatory authority itself emanates from any Government of the day. In the law itself, it is written that the regulator has to apply Government’s policy; it has to make policies in consultation with Government. So, regulators cannot operate independently from Government. Otherwise, Government’s policies will not be applied in a country. It is in this context that I made a speech at the TRASA Conference in Mauritius, which the leader of Opposition is quoting today.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in that case, why is it called independent? It is not independent!

*(Interruptions)*
Yes, but it is going to take directions from the Minister. If there are going to be political nominees, then we might as well not call it independent!

Mr Jeeha: This is why I said earlier that the Leader of the Opposition is making confusion on the definition of independence. There is independence, but vis-à-vis the industry, so as to create a level playing field for everybody in the industry. I think that any sensible person understands what I want to convey.

Mr Dulloo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the three Directors - who were appointed initially – were appointed upon his recommendations, and whether those people are closely associated with the Chairman?

Mr Jeeha: I don’t have this information, and I don’t make any recommendation, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is the Board that decides.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know whether there were other applicants apart from those three?

Mr Jeeha: No, Sir.

Mr Dulloo: We have just heard that those three persons were, at one moment, appointed to a permanent post afterwards. So, did not the Minister recommend that there should be public advertisement, in order to make sure that we have the best persons available for such a very important sector for Mauritius?

Mr Jeeha: I have already replied, Sir.

Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether it was on the recommendation of the Chairman that the posts being held by those three Directors on a contract basis were transformed into substantive permanent posts?

Mr Jeeha: I am not aware, Sir.

Mr Dulloo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether the Director of Communications International & Consumer Affairs is also a Board member of other statutory bodies?

Mr Jeeha: As far as I know, he is no longer member of any statutory body, Sir.
Mr Dulloo: Can I ask the Minister whether, while holding office for one time, the Director of Communications International & Consumer Affairs was a member of other statutory bodies and which ones?

Mr Jeeha: Yes, probably, Sir.

Mr Dulloo: Can I ask whether the Director of Communications International & Consumer Affairs sits on the Work Permit Committee at the PMO?

Mr Jeeha: I don’t have that information.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether quotations were called for, for the acquisition of cars?

Mr Jeeha: Yes, Sir. All the quotations were called. In fact, I am tempted to lay a document on the Table of the Assembly, as I have been given permission by ICTA to that effect. In fact, the question that is in front of the House today has been the subject of an inquiry by ICAC before, that is, the appointment of the Directors and acquisition of cars. So, I am laying the reply of the ICTA to ICAC on the Table of the Assembly.

Dr. Boolell: Can the hon. Minister inform the House as to the number of companies which submitted quotations?

Mr Jeeha: I don’t know, but all the information is in the letter. What I have been informed is that quotations were sought from various suppliers every time a new car had to be acquired.

Dr. Boolell: Can the Minister inform the House as to the controversy that arose in respect of the quotations obtained, and the choice made?

Mr Jeeha: I am not aware, Sir.

Mr Dulloo: With regard to part (d), can I ask the hon. Minister what was the whole amount involved for the purchase of cars and rental of office?

Mr Jeeha: I don’t have the information, but it is in the letter that I have just tabled, Sir.

Mr Dulloo: In view of the amount involved, can I ask the hon. Minister whether it should not have proceeded by tendering procedures instead of direct negotiations with suppliers of cars? May I ask him also
who were those suppliers and whether they supplied all the cars themselves, and the number of cars involved?

**Mr Jeeha:** As I said earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, the cars were bought after quotations were sought from the suppliers. Then, this was submitted to the Board for approval; and the Board approved. From information I have been supplied with in the letter that I just tabled, one car was acquired in August 2002, the other one in September 2002, a third one in November 2002 and a fourth one in January 2003. They were acquired for the price of Rs1.7 m. each.

**Mr Dulloo:** Can the Minister give us the total amount and say whether, for such an amount, we should not have proceeded by way of tendering procedure, instead of the ICTA negotiating directly with the car suppliers?

**Mr Jeeha:** These are individual procurements for which I cannot speak, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there was controversy about the purchase of cars, because of tendering procedures not properly followed. Can we come to the cost of office space at Jade House? Can the Minister inform us as to the cost and whether there was controversy again in respect of additional office space which was rented, because tendering procedures were not followed?

**Mr Jeeha:** Yes, Sir. As I said, when ICTA was created in June 2002, they needed to recruit people, they needed to find space to work. Probably, at that time, all the necessary procurement procedures were not fully in place as they operate in any normal situation. As far as the office is concerned, renting was done only after advice obtained from the Government Valuer. The area rented is about 8,000 square feet.

**Dr. Boolell:** Can I ask a specific question as to whether tendering procedure was followed when an additional floor was rented?

**Mr Jeeha:** I don’t have this information, Sir.

**Dr. Boolell:** Can I ask the Minister to find out? Because there has been controversy again in respect of rental of additional floor space.

**Mr Jeeha:** I will check, Mr Speaker, Sir.
**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the Minister say that he is not sure whether Mr Gobin is still working on the Work Permit Committee. If he is, does the Minister not think that there is a conflict of interest here?

**Mr Jeeha:** I think Mr Gobin – I am speaking under the correction of the Prime Minister – was a member of the IBA, which he is not by virtue of what the Leader of the Opposition is saying today. As far as the Work Permit Committee is concerned, I don’t see any situation of conflict of interest arising.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Can the Minister say whether ICTA has a foreigner as Executive Director?

**Mr Jeeha:** Yes, Sir, he is employed on a two-year contract.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Being a foreigner, does he not need a work permit to work here?

**Mr Jeeha:** I think that’s very cheap, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** He does need a work permit. The Minister does not see any conflict of interest! But, there is a conflict of interest! There is a direct conflict of interest, if he is working on that Committee!

**Mr Jeeha:** I am not prepared to follow the Leader of the Opposition, Sir.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there is controversy over the recruitment of staff, over the acquisition of cars and rental space. Can I ask the hon. Minister as to the persons who were forced to retire and those whose resignation was provoked, because of direct interference by the Minister? Can he give me the names of those persons?

**Mr Jeeha:** I will not follow the hon. Member on this line, Sir.

**Dr. Boolell:** Can the Minister give us the reason as to why Mr Beeharry, Mr Makunlall, Mr Boodhram, Miss Dussoye and Mr Seetohul were forced to resign?

**Mr Jeeha:** I am not aware, Sir.
**Dr. Boolell:** Is the Minister aware that because of gross political interference these people were forced to resign? And no explanation has been given to them!

**Mr Jeeha:** I do not agree with the Member, Sir.

**Mr Dulloo:** The hon. Minister has just said that his former Adviser was recruited by the ICTA after an advertisement or something like that. May I ask him whether he has got the names and qualifications of those candidates who have competed for this post and who were called for interview? Can we have their names and qualifications?

**Mr Jeeha:** I’ll certainly find it, Sir.

**Mr Dulloo:** Can we know whether that Adviser who was recruited by the ICTA was replaced at his Ministry by an Adviser called Jeeha?

**Mr Jeeha:** No, Sir.

**Mr Dulloo:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will say that as a result of those three political appointees, that is, the three Directors appointed there, there was conflict with high technical officers of the ICTA, so much so that some of them were forced to resign, because of the political intervention of those appointees?

**Mr Jeeha:** I am not aware of any resignation at the ICTA over the last 12 months, Sir.

**Mr Dulloo:** The hon. Minister has given us the value for foreign missions, almost Rs5 m for less than two years' period; and the list shows that about 57 missions were carried out by the Chairman and the Directors. May I ask him whether there is an evaluation of those missions and what it brought by way of value to the ICT Authority?

**Mr Jeeha:** Sir, as I said, all these missions on which the Directors and even the Chairman have gone, have been approved by the Board and they are within the budgetary estimates and provision made. The accounts of the ICT Authority are being audited by the Director of Audit; if there is something wrong, I am sure that the Director of Audit will flag it out.
**Dr. Boolell:** Can the Minister say who is the Chairman of the ICTA?

**Mr Jeeha:** Mr Ashok Radhakissoon.

**Dr. Boolell:** Is he the one who said loud and clear that differential treatment should be meted out to Government, that is, Ministers could interfere, because it is Government policy not to comply to corporate governance?

**Mr Jeeha:** I am not aware of what the Member is speaking, Sir?

**Mr Dulloo:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether the Chairman of the ICTA is also the Chairman of other bodies and remunerated by same?

**Mr Jeeha:** In his capacity as Chairman of the ICTA and by virtue of the Postal Services Act, he has to act as the Chairman of the Postal Authority; and within the ICT Authority he acts as the Chairman of the Radio Frequency Management Unit.

**Mr Dulloo:** Can I ask him whether now the Government and he personally as Minister have started procedures for the merger of the ICTA and the IBA under one umbrella with that same person as Chairman?

**Mr Jeeha:** No, Sir.

**Mr Dulloo:** The convergence authority as it is called.

**Mr Jeeha:** The convergence is a wishful idea on which we have to work, but the Member has to be patient, Sir, until we reach there.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** When the ICTA was created, it took over all the assets and liabilities of Mauritius, can he say what happened to the existing staff of the Mauritius Telecommunications Authority?

**Mr Jeeha:** No, Sir. I think hon. Dr. Boolell put a question earlier on.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** A lot of them were thrown out. This is what we want to convey to the Minister and that is why hon. Boolell was asking that question. Can he say then why the technical staff was not re-employed?
**Mr Jeeha:** Sir, they were only two, that is, the Manager and the Assistant Manager. They had submitted their resignation and they took employment in the private sector.

**Mr Dulloo:** Can I ask the Minister whether there is a Director now who is acting as Secretary of the Board and, if so, who is he?

**Mr Jeeha:** Yes, the Board Directors, members of the Board and the Secretary must be among full-time employees of the Authority; and I think it is the Director for Legal Affairs who acts as Secretary to the Board.

**Mr Dulloo:** May I, therefore, ask the hon. Minister whether Mr Boodhram, the Executive Officer and Secretary of the Board was harassed and forced to resign so that one of the political appointee, one of the Directors, should become the Secretary in his place and, therefore, get double benefits as Secretary and as Director?

**Mr Jeeha:** I am not aware of that.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Dulloo, I have said that you are making a statement of facts within a question. Can you substantiate how Mr Boodhram was harassed? I am asking this because we have certain principles and rules in the House. I have said that you cannot make statements in your questions unless you are prepared to substantiate. Can you substantiate that Mr Boodhram was harassed?

**Mr Dulloo:** The information has been supplied to us…

**Mr Speaker:** Can you table the evidence of your information? Can you put it before the House.

**Mr Dulloo:** Well, I have to bring the person himself who gave me the information….

**Mr Speaker:** This is not the procedure in the House. We cannot bring strangers in the House. This has to be clear. Unless you have evidence to substantiate statement of facts in questions, you cannot make them.
Mr Dulloo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with all due respect, we come to this House as we are briefed outside by our mandates, our constituents who give us verbal representations which we raise in this House. I have got a lot of verbal representations from the citizens of Mauritius who are labouring under injustice in this country.

Mr Speaker: Why don't you then propose an amendment to the Standing Orders so that I do not insist on evidence? I am sorry, but these are the rules and I have to abide by them. As you are saying, anybody can say anything against anybody and we won't have the opportunity to test the veracity of what is being said. I do not think it is proper for us in this august Assembly to listen to whatever people are saying outside unless we are serious and bring evidence.

Mr Dulloo: May I seek your guidance, Mr Speaker, Sir? May I ask whether whenever I have to raise a problem before this House on representations made to me by citizens of Mauritius, I have to bring persons here in order to testify before this House and I have to amend the Standing Orders accordingly?

Mr Speaker: Yes, you are perfectly entitled….

(Interruptions)

Order, please! You are perfectly entitled to…

(Interruptions)

Yes, hon. Dulloo, you wanted to get my guidance, I am giving it. Would you please listen? You are perfectly entitled…..

(Interruptions)

Order! You are perfectly entitled to raise the problems of your constituents or the public in this House. What I am saying is that statements of facts made in a question are not allowed unless you are prepared to substantiate. Day in day out, you are raising the problems of your constituents in this House, you have never been stopped to do that. What I am saying is that we have rules in our Standing Orders which say that unless a Member is
prepared to substantiate a statement of facts which is contained in a question, he cannot be allowed to make those statements.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** At one point, the Minister said that he would be prepared to say who had been recruited by the ICTA? Will he give all the names of the recruits, their salaries and conditions of employment? Is he prepared to table the information later on?

**Mr Jeeha:** Yes, Sir.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** May I ask him when were the Chairman and the Directors of the ICTA appointed? What is the exact date?

**Mr Jeeha:** Are you referring to the Board Directors or the Executive Directors?

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** I mean the Chairman and all the Directors mentioned in the question.

**Mr Jeeha:** Concerning the Directors, I have laid the information on the Table of the Assembly. The Executive Directors were appointed in August, September, October and November 2002 and the Chairman was appointed in June 2002, if I am not mistaken.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Can he confirm that by law they are supposed to take an oath of secrecy when they are appointed?

**Mr Jeeha:** I think if this is written in the law, that should have been done, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** The last one, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** I have two more questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister say why the Chairman and the Directors did not take the oath of secrecy when they were appointed? It is after a long delay that they have taken the oath of secrecy. They were acting illegally and unlawfully.

**Mr Jeeha:** The Leader of the Opposition wants me to reply for the Chairman of the ICT Authority! I can't do that, Sir. I can't know what is the
reason why he delayed in taking the oath or declaring his assets as provided by the law.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Did not the Minister himself say that they are not independent and they must follow Government policy? The law says that they have to take an oath of secrecy because of accountability. So, it is unlawful and illegal and they have been acting in an illegal manner. Since they are acting in an illegal manner, they don't take the oath of secrecy, it's unlawful! We have seen many cases where people have resigned and the Minister does not know why.

(Interruptions)

I am asking because these are the facts. The Minister said they were urgently needed, that is why they bypassed the interview and the advertisement system. He just said himself that the procedures for procurement were not in place, that is why the tendering procedures were bypassed. He said that at one point in his reply. Can he say, therefore, whether he doesn't think that the ICTA is not at all independent and is a place where *petits copains* have been recruited for jobs of Rs50,000 or Rs60,000 with cars worth Rs2 m. or Rs3 m.?

**Mr Jeeha:** No, Sir, I shall not follow the Leader of the Opposition on this track.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, time is up. Let me again reiterate what I have said about statements of facts in questions. Let the House not misunderstand me on what I said earlier on. What hon. Duloo says is very serious. He said that the Chair requires hon. Members to bring members of the public to substantiate what they are raising in the House. This is not proper.

(Interruptions)

Order!

This rule which has been made by this House itself, I think it has been made in the interest of the Members of this House and that of the public also, because otherwise, under parliamentary immunity, anybody can come and make any statement and make grave allegations. Members of the public or anybody for that matter can become victim of serious unfounded
allegations and they won't be able to do anything and they won't be able to have any compensation or reparation in the Courts of law. This is why we have this rule. I am going to stick to this rule and I won't allow hon. Members to make statements of facts in questions which are serious and which they are not prepared to substantiate.

Thank you.

**Dr. Ramgoolam:** Can I seek your guidance? Would it be proper, therefore, for us to ask for information?

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, you are perfectly entitled to ask for information, hon. Leader of the Opposition. I think you understand what I said because tomorrow if a Member accuses, in this House, the wife or relative of any Member of serious misconduct or anything like this, that won't be proper. This is why I am saying that you cannot come and make statements in the form of questions accusing people left, right and centre, accusing Members of the House, members of the public and officers in Government without substantiating them. This is why I said we have to be very strict about this.

**POLICE FORCE - HEADQUARTERS AND TRAINING FACILITIES**

(No. B/759) **Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information from the Commissioner of Police as to -

(a) the number of new Police Headquarters which will be constructed in 2004, and

(b) the training facilities that will be made available to the Police Force for the same period, giving full details thereof.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, following observations made by the Director of Audit on the low utilisation of land at Line Barracks and lack of office space, and with a view to improving the working environment and to have a more functional Police Headquarters, Government has decided to shift the Police Headquarters to Bagatelle, Trianon on a plot of 50 acres of land. Procedures are under way to vest the land in the Police.
I wish to add that there is only one Police Headquarters which is presently situated at the Line Barracks, and there are Divisional Headquarters.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the following training facilities are available -

(a) Management Training Course;
(b) Refresher Course on Human Rights;
(c) BSc Police Studies; and
(d) Overseas courses.

The Police is also envisaging to mount the following new courses in the near future -

(a) Probationers Training (for new intake);
(b) Certificate in Criminal Justice;
(c) Training for trainers;
(d) CID Course;
(e) Promotional Development Courses, and
(f) A degree in Criminal Justice System.

Further, the new Police Training Centre which will be set up within the premises of the new Police Headquarters, will be a fully comprehensive and integrated one and will be a centre of excellence to impart appropriate training to the different units of the Police Force.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that an amount of Rs250 m. has been earmarked for the construction of a new Police headquarters?

**The Prime Minister:** If he says so.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that out of the figure of Rs250 m., not a single cent has been spent as at 30 June 2003?

**The Prime Minister:** If he says so.
**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that out of Rs250 m., not a single cent has been spent as at 30 June 2004?

**The Prime Minister:** If he says so.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Thank you. As one could have expected again, Mr Speaker, Sir, when it comes to the general public, hardly anything is done. Does the hon. Prime Minister, therefore, realise that out of this figure of Rs250 m., not one single cent has been spent to this day?

**The Prime Minister:** If he says so.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Thank you. Will the hon. Prime Minister...

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Jeetah, you are putting the same question, you are getting the same answer.

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Jeetah:** With due respect, Mr Speaker, Sir, I referred to various dates. I referred to June 2003, June 2004 and as at to date. Nothing has been spent! Let me just ask another question to the Prime Minister! Will the hon. Prime Minister concede that quality in the Police Force demands a strong and reliable training system together with adequate training facilities?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Thank you. So, can he then explain why out of the figure of Rs360 m., representing the project for a Police Training Centre which is in the Draft Capital Budget, only a figure of Rs280,000 has been used as cumulative expenditure up to 30 June 2003?

**The Prime Minister:** Sir, for years and years, there has been a need to move the Police headquarters from where they are and find a suitable place and the project has been for years that there should be a training centre wherever we choose to have new Police headquarters.

Certain places were identified in the past, Mr Speaker, Sir, like La Vigie. I leave it to the past to see whether it was fit. But we have found the best piece of land, again within the Illovo Deal, 50 acres of land next to the
motorway, opposite the cybercity with perfect traffic connection to the whole of the island. So, we are taking our time. This land has to be leased and transferred. When you deal in land matters, all these things take a lot of time. Now, we have identified. You can hardly find any better siting for the new headquarters and the new training centre. So, we are going ahead with that. It will take the time that it will take, but again it will be a model of a model.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, no wonder that the record of this Government on law and order is catastrophic! My last question, Mr Speaker, Sir, has the…

**The Prime Minister:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir, you have just given your ruling. We cannot accept such stupid statements, Mr Speaker, Sir, instead of asking questions.

*(Interruptions)*

Stupid!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, please! Order! It is a statement of fact. What the hon. Member suggested is that law and order is catastrophic.

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. David, please! When I am on my feet, please don't interrupt me! Of course, if you have evidence to substantiate, you can say that it is catastrophic. Can you substantiate that?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Last week, the hon. Prime Minister presented figures himself. If you will allow me to present the figures? In 2000, the total number of reported….

**The Prime Minister:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir, what has this got to do with this question?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member said "in view of the catastrophic situation of law and order in this country", and this is a statement of fact.
The rule says that the Member can make a statement of fact in the form of a question if he is prepared to substantiate. Well, this will be a very long exercise.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to table the figures presented by the Prime Minister.

* (Interruptions) *

Mr Speaker, Sir, if this is not unprecedented, I don't know what it is!

**Mr Speaker:** Put your question now, hon. Jeetah!

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**MAURITIAN CITIZENS**  
- **EMIGRATION SINCE SEPTEMBER 2000**

*(No. B/760)* Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether he will state the number of Mauritian citizens who have emigrated since September 2000.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that no such information is available at the Passport and Immigration Office.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, has the hon. Prime Minister commissioned any study or survey to identify the effect and impact of emigration in Mauritius since September 2000?

**The Prime Minister:** I have already answered the question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Jeetah:** As a patriot, I would urge the hon. Prime Minister as follows.

* (Interruptions) *

**Mr Speaker:** Order!
**Dr. Jeetah:** Will he then consider the urgency of commissioning a survey to assess the effects and impact of emigration on our country?

**Dr. David:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he considers it important that a survey should be made on emigration? He says the figures are not available. Does he think that this is important?

**Mr Speaker:** This is not part of the question. The hon. Member can put a substantive question next time.

**Mr Dulloo:** The hon. Prime Minister just said that he has not got the figures. They are not available. May I suggest, therefore, that he should ask the relevant authorities to work out the figures?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I never said that. If the hon. Member had listened, I never referred to figures. I said: "I am informed that no such information is available at the Passport and Immigration Office". To this day, it has never been the practice to ask people whether they are emigrating or not.

Under the previous Prime Minister or under any Prime Minister, this has never been the practice. So, this information is not available.

**Mr Dulloo:** Since the information is not available, therefore the figures are not available. Would the hon. Prime Minister, therefore, consider seriously devising ways and means to ascertain these figures? This is important for our statistics.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that nurses and doctors are emigrating in large numbers and this is causing a lot of problems in Mauritius?

**Mr Speaker:** No! This has nothing to do with this question. Hon. Dr. Jeetah, next question!

**ELECTRICITY TARIFFS - INCREASES**

(No. B/761) **Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will, for the
benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board the number of times the electricity tariff has been the subject of increase from the year 2000 with full details of the quantum of each increase.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, when this Government took office, in line with its advocated policy, it started by introducing a series of measures to redress the economic situation in the country and to revamp the State-owned enterprises to allow them to overcome the financial plight in which they were.

In September 2000, the financial situation of the CEB was in shambles. Its overdraft stood at an astronomical amount of Rs1.6 billion. The near-bankruptcy situation of the CEB was a matter of serious concern.

Government had no other alternative than to take the bold decision to accede to the request of the CEB to increase its electricity tariff by an average of 20% in October 2000. I wish to inform the House that the percentage increase ranged from 6% to 37% involving different categories of consumers. However, when applying the percentage increase, as a caring Government, we impressed upon the CEB the need to protect the consumers who are in the vulnerable groups of the population. Thus, an increase of only 6% was made to apply to the domestic consumers with low consumption of electricity. Furthermore, in order to mitigate the impact of this increase on consumers, Government exempted electricity charges from value-added tax (VAT). Consequently, the average increase was effectively less for most consumers.

The tariffs increase implemented in October 2000, helped in improving the financial situation of the CEB. However, given that the CEB relies very heavily on imports for its materials, it is exposed to commodity price and foreign exchange risks.

These elements constitute a threat to the financial situation of the CEB. Circumstances evolved in such a way that a second revision became necessary.

After serious examination in January 2002, Government decided to grant CEB's request for an average 11% tariff increase. The increase ranged from 5% to 20% encompassing different categories of consumers. Again,
the domestic consumers who were in the low consumption band were protected.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it would be relevant to point out that inflation has been of the order of 6.4% in 2002, 3.9% in 2003 and expected to be about 4.5% in 2004 with the result that cumulatively since January 2002 inflation has been of the order of 15%. Since January 2004, CEB has been pressing for another tariff increase. Conscious of the likely impact of any increase on the economy, my Ministry resisted the request. However, in July of this year, with the shooting up of the price of crude oil to record levels, CEB came back with strong justifications for a tariff review. In that context, CEB put up a request for an increase in tariff of 8%. Government examined the request and my Ministry agreed to only a 5% increase in tariff effective as from 01 August of this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all of us have to acknowledge that the recent increases in oil price - unprecedented - on the international market were, in fact, of a catastrophic nature. We have witnessed the price reaching record levels. Such increases in oil price have disastrous impacts on the different sectors of the economy. It is worth pointing out that a one-dollar increase in the price of a barrel entails an additional expenditure of Rs200 m. to the country annually.

Hardpressed by the prevailing circumstances, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has had no choice than to agree to the three electricity tariff increases. This was done after having ascertained that all these increases were inevitable.

Even then, given the incidence of electricity on all sectors of the economy, great care has been taken to ensure that these increases are restricted to the bare minimum while, at the same time, they permit CEB to operate in sound financial conditions.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that since September 2000, nearly 100,000 households have been disconnected from their supply, because of the high cost of electricity?

Mr Ganoo: This question has been raised on several occasions in this House. I have answered this question, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I wish to
remind the hon. Member that less than 1%, in fact, of the consumers have been disconnected.

As I said in the past, Mr Speaker, Sir, CEB is not a charitable organisation. It has commitments to the country, to the different sectors, to industry, to the consumers, to agriculture, etc.

I repeat what I have said again. Delays are given, possibilities are given to consumers to come and pay their electricity bills, but at times the CEB has no choice. I repeat: less than 1% of the consumers, in fact, have been disconnected.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister speaks of…

Mr Speaker: Before the hon. Member puts further supplementaries, let me draw your attention to the fact that this question is specific to the increase in tariff and their quantum; that's all. If the hon. Member has any further supplementary questions on this original question, then he can put them.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just wanted to know about the effect it is having on the consumers in Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question, please!

FOOD ITEMS - PRICE INCREASE

(No. B/762) Dr. R. Jeetah (First Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart) asked the Minister of Commerce and Co-operatives whether he will state the number of food items that have been the subject of increasing prices since September 2000, giving full details of -

(a) the number of times such increase has taken place, and
(b) the quantum in each case.

Mr Koonjoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, by virtue of the Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) Act, my Ministry fixes the price of ten items in
Mauritius listed as controlled goods and determines the maximum mark-up of twenty items.

Out of these ten items for which the maximum wholesale and retail prices have to be determined five are food items, namely bread, flour, onions other than the type known as 'traditional toupie', rice and sugar.

As regards part (a) of the question, the controlled food items, which have been the subject of price increase since September 2000, are flour and bread.

With regard to part (b) of the question, since September 2000 -

(i) the retail price of flour has increased by 17% on 07 February 2004, that is from Rs2.35 to Rs2.75 per ½ kg due to an increase of 20.8% in contract price of flour for the year 2004 as compared to the contract price of year 2003.

(ii) The price of bread, that is, *pain maison* or scheduled bread of 100 gms was revised on three occasions, that is, on

15 November 2000 by 22% from 90 cents to Re1.10;
01 February 2003 by 9% from Re1.10 to Re1.20, and
07 February 2004 by 17% from Re1.20 to Re1.35.
On 15 November 2000, the retail price of scheduled bread was increased due to an increase in the cost of direct labour by 22% and an increase of 25% in overheads and on 01 February 2003, it was increased following adjustments in direct and indirect costs, that is –

- 5% increase in price of electricity and water;
- 50% increase in price of petroleum products;
- 20% increase in labour costs, and
- 10% increase in overheads.

On 07 February 2004, the retail price of scheduled bread was increased due to an increase in the price of flour by 17%, that is, the implementation of the revised Remuneration Order which was increased by 50% and also a shortfall in the yield of bread from 622 units to 606 units per bag of 50 kgs following a change in the flour specifications.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that all these frequent price increases since September 2000 have made life unbearable in Mauritius?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Dulloo:** In view of the sharp and erratic increases in food items, may I ask the hon. Minister what he is doing in order to ensure price stability as far as the essential commodities are concerned because of the effect this is having on inflation and the economy generally?

**Mr Koonjoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, at Government level, we are doing all our best so as to minimise the impact of price increases of such essential goods on the population.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Does the hon. Minister know that the best he has tried is not good enough? The price of milk has increased by 71% since September 2000. Is the hon. Minister aware of that?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has said that the prices of only certain items are controlled and he has given the items, which have been increased. If the hon. Member goes one by one for each and every item of food, we will never finish.
Dr. Jeetah: The price of commodities, in Mauritius, is out of control.

Mr Speaker: We know that it is liberalised.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF SO 10(2)

The Prime Minister: Sir, I beg to move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.