

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

NATIONAL PAY COUNCIL – SETTING UP

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr N. Bodha) (*By Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to salary compensation to be paid to workers and the setting up of the National Pay Council, he will state –

- (a) if it is proposed to review the functions of the Council and the nominations, composition and representation thereat in view of the non participation of all the major trade union organisations;
- (b) how the issues of productivity and capacity to pay will be factored in for the current exercise, and
- (c) if a quantum has already been decided relating to compensation to be paid this year after the meeting of the Council last week.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission I propose to reply to both the Private Notice Question and PQ B/383 at the same time.

With regard to PQ B/383, I would like to refer the hon. Member to the replies made to Parliamentary Questions B/181 and B/231 and also to the Private Notice Question of 24 April 2007, replied to by my colleague, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

With regard to part (a) of the Private Notice Question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not see any need to review the functions of, the nominations, the composition or the representation of the National Pay Council. The National Pay Council was set up on 04 May 2007 after due consultations with all parties concerned.

As against the annual National Tripartite Committee where Government was, at the end of the day, fixing the quantum of compensation, the National Pay

Council provides a forum for structured discussions by all stakeholders and through the regular monitoring of the economic situation, the Council will be in a position to make informed the recommendations to Government on the quantum of compensation in the light of changing economic conditions.

The Council has already held its first meeting on 10 May and a second meeting is scheduled for 16 May. I am given to understand that other meetings are scheduled for next week before the Council concludes its deliberations and submits its recommendations to Government.

As the House is aware, the Council is tripartite in composition with equal representation from Government, employers and workers and it has an independent Chairperson.

Despite the non-participation of the major trade unions in the work of the National Pay Council, we have ensured that workers are duly represented. Allow me to once again highlight the fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the major trade union organisations, in the first instance and until now, have refused to be part of the Council, despite the invitation extended to them and the appeal which I personally made to them.

I wish to inform the House that all federations of trade unions duly registered with the Registrar of Associations and the three confederations were invited to submit nominations.

In the light of the stand taken by the confederations and most of the federations of the trade unions, I had no alternative than to take appropriate steps to ensure that workers have an equal voice on the Council and that their interests are fully taken on board.

The Government has appointed representatives of workers' organisations, which had expressed willingness to serve on the Council. We have proceeded in the same manner as for the National Remuneration Board and the Industrial Relations Commission.

In this connection, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that the Committee of Experts of the ILO had, at the 79th Session of the International Labour Conference held in 1992, observed that, I quote –

“It is left to the employers and workers concerned or their organizations to appoint their representatives on the bodies that in one way or another take part in the fixing of minimum wages. This does not prevent the competent authorities, in certain cases where the organizations concerned have made no appointment, from designating representatives of the said organizations on the minimum wage fixing bodies.”

I think this is very clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. I had no choice. I had replied to the supplementary question put by hon. Ganoo who had asked me whether I would consider it if the confederation would send their names. I said yes and asked him to help me. And they refused. So, we could not leave the chairs empty. As the matter had been widely reported in the press, the hon. Member is no doubt aware that the workers’ representatives appointed by Government on the Council have, at the very first meeting, already taken a clear stand on some specific issues in the interest of workers. I have no doubt, therefore, that the workers’ representatives will forcefully defend the interests of all the 550,000 workers of this country.

As regards part (b) of the Question, this is a matter for consideration by the Council. The terms of reference of the Council clearly stipulate that it should take on board such factors as productivity and capacity to pay in its determination of the compensation to be recommended to Government. We cannot interfere in the work of the Council and I would advise the hon. Leader of the Opposition to await the Council’s report in this matter.

However, I wish to inform the House that various factors have always been taken into account in deciding the quantum of salary compensation. It has never been a mathematical calculation: rate of inflation ‘x’, multiply, and then give the result. There would have been no need for sitting down and discussing. It has never been like that. The economic factors have already been taken into consideration in deciding the quantum of salary compensation. These include the rate of inflation, of course, the current economic situation and, to a very great extent, the financial situation of both the public sector and the private enterprises which reflect their capacity to pay.

On the subject of productivity, I would like here again, Mr Speaker, Sir, to refer to ILO Recommendation 135 which is for us ‘*jurisprudence* - we follow these regulations - and which stipulates in paragraphs 11 & 13 the following, I quote -

Paragraph 11

“Minimum wage rates should be adjusted from time to time to take account of changes in the cost of living and other economic conditions.”

It is not for the cost of living only, but “to take account of changes in the cost of living and other economic conditions”. I am quoting ILO, not IMF, not World Bank!

Paragraph 13 (I)

“In order to assist in the application of paragraph 11(...)

Paragraph 11 says that from time to time, we have to review, but in Mauritius, we review every year the compensation. We have decided it to be like that. We are continuing like that.

“(..) of this Recommendation, periodical surveys of national economic conditions, including trends in income per head, in productivity and in employment, unemployment and underemployment, should be made to the extent that national resources permit”.

That is capacity to pay. This is stipulated in the *jurisprudence*, as I said, of the ILO which is supposed to guide us.

As to part (c) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am afraid I cannot enlighten the hon. Leader of the Opposition on this specific issue. The National Pay Council is an independent body. All that I am aware of is that the NPC held its first meeting, as I said, on the 10 May and other meetings are scheduled. The Chairperson has indicated publicly that he expects to submit his recommendations to Government by 25 of May.

As we know, whatever the quantum is going to be decided upon, it is going to have some bearing on public finances and the quantum of compensation for the public sector will have to be taken on board by my colleague, the Minister of Finance when he is going to present the Budget in the month of June.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bodha: M. le président, ma première question serait: est-ce que ce n'est pas une honte que ce soit un gouvernement, dirigé par le parti travailliste, qui mette fin à trente ans de tripartisme et qui soit le fossoyeur du mouvement syndical et des droits des travailleurs? Je voudrais savoir quel est le sentiment du ministre sur cette question, M. le président?

Dr. Bunwaree : M. le président, j'ai répondu plusieurs fois à la même question et je vais redire la même chose : on n'a jamais mis fin! La preuve est là! On a renforcé le tripartisme à Maurice et je leur demanderai d'attendre quelques jours, ils verront ce qui va se passer.

Mr Bodha: M. le président, je souhaiterais poser la question suivante au ministre : pourquoi est-ce que cette question n'a pas été publiée ni dans le manifeste électoral de l'alliance sociale ni dans le programme du gouvernement qu'il n'allait pas avoir de compensation salariale à la fin de la première année ?

Dr. Bunwaree: M. le président, cette question a déjà été soulevée et revue alors que le Premier ministre actuel était à son premier mandat. Je me rappelle qu'il y a eu un rapport de l'ILO en 1998 qui fait mention de tout cela. Si l'honorable *Leader* de l'opposition est intéressé, je lui ferai parvenir une copie de ce rapport. A la suite de ce rapport de 1998...

(Interruptions)

Je dois, en passant, peut-être féliciter le *Leader* de l'opposition pour une chose. Il n'a pas cédé à l'influence du MMM qui voulait venir ici défendre le patronat aujourd'hui. Le *Leader* de l'opposition est venu avec cette question pour défendre les travailleurs. Je lui accorde cela, mais il faut qu'il y ait des éléments de réponse.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I am calling you again to order. You have no right to talk across the floor.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member should stand up and talk.

Dr. Bunwaree : It is the second time that the hon. Member is coming back from hell!

Mr Speaker : I would ask the hon. Minister not to use that expression.

(Interruptions)

Order!

Dr. Bunwaree : I would like to reply to the Leader of the Opposition so that he can give the information to the trade unionists when they will come to see him. In 1998, we had that first report and in 2000, we were still here; I was the Minister of Finance at that time. Following that report, I led a tripartite delegation to Singapore where some members of the trade union confederation – I prefer not to mention the names here – formed part of this delegation. Together, we saw the system and it is a continuation of this. We were not in power in 2001 and, as I explained to this House previously - I don't want to repeat how they appointed Professor Lim from Singapore. We all know the rest; they did not have time to do what I am doing. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to be careful not to enter the track blindly when he meets the trade unionists.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has not answered the question. What they did during the campaign was 'Fooling People First'. May I ask him whether he agrees that there is a fundamental departure in philosophy as far as salary compensation is concerned? May I ask him whether he agrees that what we had as salary compensation was a compensation for loss of purchasing power which the worker had already paid for during a whole year and which, we were asking, to be compensated as a retroactive effect? This is what they are denying to the workers.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is the question?

Mr Bodha: Does he agree with that?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have replied to this many times. Two weeks ago, my colleague, the hon. Minister, has given all the information that is needed. I have told him - and I am repeating again - that although what he is saying could have been in the papers, in books, in documents, but in practice it has always been different. We have never used only the rate of inflation; we have taken into consideration other economic factors and conditions. If the hon. Member wishes, I can quote from another report of the ILO. I decided not to talk about the IMF and the World Bank. Already the president is having some problems there. So, let us talk about ILO.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. Bunwaree: Let me quote the UNDP ILO Project on Labour Law Reform, the Technical Memorandum submitted on –

“Pay Determination in Mauritius. Options for Reform.”

ILO itself refers to another report of the same ILO in 1986. I quote, Mr Speaker, Sir –

“In a sense the more recently voice for concerns of national employers in Mauritius and of the World Bank might be regarded as parallel strands of the concerns noted by the ILO in 1986, in its remarks regarding the predominant government concern of seeking to protect purchasing power of the lowest group of wage earners through the COLA system. The ILO position at that time is worth reiterating at some length, since it seems to reflect the current situation to a considerable extent.”

The ILO goes further to quote itself in its report which was published in 1986. I'll ask hon. Members to listen to what I am going to quote.

“Any sharp worsening of the Mauritian terms of trade or change in the international competitiveness of Mauritian exporters is likely to upset the present basis for COLA decisions. In such a context, the present system is likely to place a tremendous responsibility on the government.”

I am going to end, Mr Speaker, Sir. I continue the last sentence of his quote-

“With the main wage adjustment decisions being part of the political process (...)”

As it has been until now.

“(...) rather than the outcome of collective bargaining and a direct exposure to market forces, it is not evident that COLA decisions (Cost of Living Allowance decisions) would be made sufficiently responsive to changing economic conditions.”

Therefore, it is clear that we have to break from the past. But we have not done what the ILO has proposed. It has led us in our thinking. We have had so many reports. We have had Professor Lim's report and other reports as well. We have visited Singapore in a tripartite delegation; and we have come to that conclusion. Hon. Members should not forget that we have already started to change the economic model of our country which is going to last years and years. We have broken from the habits of the past. I beg the hon. Leader of the Opposition to understand this. He could have been in this place today or tomorrow and I am sure he would have done exactly the same thing.

Mr Bodha: *M. le président, le ministre est en train de noyer le poisson dans l'eau de l'ILO!* As he has been quoting the ILO, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask him whether the way he has chosen the representatives of the Trade Unions for the Council, he has not flouted the Convention 87 which preserves the Right and the Freedom of Association, and the Convention 98 which preserves the Principle of the Right of the Worker to Organise and to Bargain Collectively in a Fair Forum, Mr Speaker, Sir? I will come to this later.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained in my reply that I have been guided by the principles of the ILO. Had these people accepted to come - and I even invited them to come under protest, if they are protesting, they can keep on protesting, but they may come; but they did not. They refused and I had no choice.

Mr Bodha: *Les syndicats ne peuvent pas accepter qu'on leur casse les reins, M. le président.* Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister referred to 'due consultations'. I will now come to the nominations. May I ask him whether the five representatives of the workers do not represent only 2% of the 550000 workers in this country?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, I said!

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, if we take the same reasoning of the Leader of the Opposition, then we can also start questioning the representation of the workers in the Trade Unions. We know they are representing not more than 10% in the private sector, and as a total 20% to 22% of the workforce of the country. I don't think this is the debate.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I come to each of the representatives, Mr Speaker, Sir? Will the hon. Minister agree that, in fact, he has nominated people who are close to the Labour Party? To start with, Mr Sooklall. Will he confirm, Mr Speaker, Sir, that Mr Sooklall was on the platform of *l'Alliance Sociale* during the campaign? Will he confirm that Mr Sooklall was nominated on the Empowerment Programme? How is he going to represent the interest of the workers? Mr Speaker, Sir, may I table this?

(Interruptions)

By the way you are on the photograph but that does not matter, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sorry, hon. Bérenger is not here. Probably he would have had these replies by himself. We know the number of times hon. Bérenger has been sitting on Commissions, on Committees and so on and so forth, representing workers ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, the hon. Minister has to answer the question! Order! Order! I am on my feet and I am calling the Minister to order. Order!

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can also give examples in the past, in the Industrial Relations Commission, for example.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, hon. Bhagwan!

Dr. Bunwaree: The Industrial Relations Commission which is a very important, noble Commission. Does the hon. Member know who was sitting on that Commission between 2000 and 2005? It was Mr Cassam Edun and we all know who is Mr Cassam Edun in Constituency No. 15. So, what is the problem here? These people are giving proof of their experience; and I am convinced that they will defend all the workers of this country.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I come to a second one, Mr Maudhoo who is from a Trade Union in ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition must put the question globally and not one by one.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to say that each one is a case.

Mr Speaker: Yes, alright! But put the question globally!

Mr Bodha: Each one is a case where we are flouting...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! In order not to lose the precious time of the House, I am asking the hon. Leader of the Opposition to give all the names and put the question globally.

Mr Bodha: I'll put the question globally, Mr Speaker Sir. I will go by your ruling. Mr Quedou was the Adviser of a former Minister of the Labour Party. Mr Fritz Thomas is a Councillor of the Labour Party. He has got a trade union of 40 members. Mr Somanah said himself that he does not represent any workers. Mr Maudhoo has not been recognised by the employer. May I ask him whether these people do represent the 550,000 workers in this country and how can they bargain on their behalf, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, these people are representing the 550,000 workers of this country ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Bunwaree: .. and I can give assurance to the Leader of the Opposition, because *le nombril du Labour Party est collé dans les tripes des travailleurs!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister said, in his answer, that that the NPC is an independent body. Can I ask him, if that is the case, why there were no

consultations held with the unions and the federations when selecting the Chairman of the NPC?

Dr. Bunwaree: This was a decision of Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, and ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. Bunwaree: ... I must say that the Chairman is *un oiseau rare*, because he has had experience as a public servant, as a trade unionist and also as Director of AHRIM.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I come to the rate of inflation which is 10.7%? Will the hon. Minister agree that the 10.7% is the making of this Government? Because of the way they have been running the economy. Will he agree with me, Mr Speaker, Sir, that ..

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Bodha: .. in the IMF report, Article 4 – consultation, visit of February 28, of this year, says that “the headline inflation which has surged largely reflecting budgetary measures and the pass-through of the exchange rate depreciation to domestic prices have been their doing?” Will he agree that the 10.7% is the doing of this Government and that the workers should have a compensation of 10.7% to shoulder the responsibility and loss of purchasing power that they have lost, Mr Speaker, Sir?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Bunwaree: En deux mots, M. le président, le taux d’inflation reflète beaucoup plus encore les dettes énormes créées par leur gouvernement et qui n’ont pas été payées et ils avaient utilisé ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. Bunwaree: ... *colourable devices*. Ils ont inventé un nouveau système de paiement d’intérêts après trois ans quand eux ils ne sont pas au pouvoir pour rembourser.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister is saying that the devaluation and price rises are due to the fact that they have inherited debts. Can I ask the hon. Minister, if his theory is correct, why is it that, in the first year of this present Government, that is, for the financial year 2005/2006, the rate of inflation was about 5%?

Dr. Bunwaree: M. le président, c'est un fait que le *mismanagement* d'économie

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. Bunwaree: .. quand ils étaient au gouvernement a eu des répercussions, et continue à en avoir jusqu'à maintenant, sur le *public finances*. Cela est clair !

Mr Cuttaree : Can I ask the hon. Minister, to come back on what he has just said? If this supposed mismanagement of the previous Government was responsible for inflation, then, in the first year of this Government, the effect of the policies would have been felt and the rate of inflation would have been much bigger than 5%.

Dr. Bunwaree: We enter the debate, it's alright, but all parameters were in the red when they were there...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am on my feet! I'll tell hon. Members in the Opposition that when the question was being put, there was no noise on this side, but when the hon. Minister is giving the answer, there is a lot of noise. I will not allow this!

(Interruptions)

Order, I have said!

Dr. Bunwaree: ..à tel point que maintenant, ils ont été obligés d'aller refaire appel à un ex-ministre des finances qu'ils ont eux-mêmes surnommé *Razoir* qui a coupé le cordon ombilical de l'honorable Jayen Cuttaree lui-même !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, put your question.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know how many more questions I am entitled to put.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! This is the result. I cannot tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition how many more questions he is entitled to. I am looking at the watch! Can he put his question?

Mr Bodha: Yes. Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the meeting of the National Pay Council is not a farce and a gimmick? May I ask him, when you have the private sector with their armada of facts and figures ...

Mr Speaker: Put the question, please!

Mr Bodha: ... and, on this side, you have the five representatives who represent nobody, how can we say that this is a National Pay Council, where we are going to have structured discussions for the workers? May I ask him whether this is not a gimmick and a farce, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Dr. Bunwaree: It was a gimmick probably before, as someone mentioned. Maybe the hon. Leader of the Opposition will enlighten us, later on, after discussing with hon. Bérenger for what reason hon. Bérenger ..

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. Bunwaree: ... had refused to chair that tTripartite Meeting?

(Interruptions)

Mr Mardemootoo: Sir, I undersand that if we want to ..

Mr Speaker: Put the question!

Mr Mardemootoo: If we want to protect workers ...

Mr Speaker: Put the question! Time is running out!

Mr Mardemootoo: May I ask the Minister what could be the consequences if all the SMEs could not bear the burden of compensation? What would happen?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is the real problem, Mr Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Member for this question. I wonder whether there in none of their people who is a small entrepreneur or is conducting an SME. and who are conducting business. This is one of their major concerns and this will be taken on Board by the Council in a more structured way. This is the crux of the matter.

Mr Bodha: Will the Minister agree that there are workers who are bearing the brunt of the reform? Is the Minister aware that the price of flour has increased by 92%, the price of basmati has increased by 63%, the price of lentils has increased by 154%? And does he know that one packet of Kraft Cheddar cheese costs Rs50 and whether the workers do not deserve a 10.7% increase?

Dr. Bunwaree: It is precisely for this reason that the Council is sitting. Time has come to compensate the workers of this country for *la perte du pouvoir d'achat*. He is encouraging the unionists not to join there.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree that the way Government has proceeded in the nomination of the five Members infringes the principles of collective bargaining process?

Dr. Bunwaree: The same question was put just now and I said: "No, I have been guided by ILO principles".

Mr Speaker: Last question, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Bodha: *The last question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is whether the Labour Party is not today en train de signer la mort du syndicalisme ? Parce qu'il était au berceau du syndicalisme à l'île Maurice. Ils ne sont pas en train défendre les travailleurs, mais le patronat ; et les travailleurs seront à la merci de ce patronat, Mr Speaker, Sir.*

Dr. Bunwaree: Le parti travailliste n'a aucune leçon à recevoir de quiconque en matière de syndicalisme. Le parti travailliste a pris naissance dans la sueur des travailleurs de ce pays ; et le Premier ministre actuel veillera à ce que les travailleurs ne soient jamais perdants.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, the Table has been advised that PQ Nos. B/347 and B/348 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister have been withdrawn.

POLICE QUARTERS, BELL VILLAGE – REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

(No. B/338) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he is aware of the bad state of the Police flats at Bell Village and, if so, will he state the remedial actions that will be taken.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, Bell Village Police Quarters is composed of 99 flats and all of them are occupied by Police officers except one which is being used by the Maintenance Section of the Ministry of Public

Infrastructure. As their construction dates back as far as 1964, they are constantly being repaired and maintained.

For the three previous financial years, more than Rs4 m. had been spent for the maintenance of Bell Village Police Quarters.

During the current financial year, nearly Rs6 m. had been spent for water and wastewater works, renovation, electrical rewiring and repairs upon request of the users. Waterproofing works for two blocks is ongoing and a sum of Rs1.5 m. will be provided for the next financial year 2007/2008 for the remaining blocks.

To further remedy the condition of the flats, a meeting was held on 14 February of this year with all the relevant stakeholders. It has been decided that the Ministry of Local Government will undertake the covering of drains by concrete slabs, which is due to start, I understand, by end of May of this year.

Mr Lauthan: May I draw the attention of the hon. Prime Minister that there have been several cases of theft, policemen losing their own motorbikes? Insofar as the question of security is concerned, may we know what measures are envisaged to prevent cases of theft there?

The Prime Minister: If the policemen can't look after their own motorbikes, God knows who will!

Mr Lauthan: Well, this is quite strange! Mr Speaker, Sir, the metal structures on the balconies are falling every now and then and they might hurt children or even the cars of the policemen.

The Prime Minister: This is being looked into. As I said, there has been a meeting with the Ministry of Local Government and we are also asking them to prioritise, because, as I said, this building dates back as far as 1964, and a lot of money has already been spent, but we are still providing more funds for them to be done.

Mr Lauthan: The yard also is in a very deplorable state. Amongst the measures that will be taken, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister to pay attention also to this question?

The Prime Minister: We are spending so much money that, in fact, I ask myself whether we don't need to have new buildings. Already for the Police Quarters - I am not just talking of the Bell Village Police Quarters - it is Rs32 m.

Mr Bhagwan: Taking into consideration that there are several Police Quarters around the island, but I will refer to only one in my constituency at Coromandel. Is it not time for Government, since so much money is being spent all year through, to set up a Unit to look after the management of these quarters to rationalize expenditure and have good returns on investment?

The Prime Minister: That is a suggestion that we will take on board.

CENTRAL PRISON - Mr S. B. – DEATH

(No, B/339) 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 Prisons, information as to if one Mr S.B. passed away in his cell during the night of 16 March 2007 and, if so, if an inquiry has been carried out to ascertain the circumstances of his death.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the Ag. Commissioner of Prisons that in the morning of 18 March 2007, detainee Mr S. B was found dead in his cell at the Central Prison, Beau Bassin by a Prison Officer whilst the latter was unlocking detainees.

I am also informed that the late detainee was sharing the same cell with two other detainees. They only came to know about the death of detainee S. B. in the morning when the Prison officer came to unlock the gate. The late detainee was found lying on his back and covered with the bed sheet. There were no visible marks of violence on his body.

According to the post-mortem report, the death of the late detainee was due to "acute coronary insufficiency".

The case was reported to Barkly Police Station. Police enquiry is still under way.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Is the hon. Prime Minister in presence of any information to the effect that the detainee asked for help early in the night preceding his death, but did not receive any attention?

The Prime Minister: It appears that around 8 o'clock when the Police officers were going round, patrolling the block, which they do normally between 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., two detainees said that the detainee who passed away had complained of general pain across the body and they had knocked on the door – from what I have here – but the Prison officers said that they did not hear anything. When they came back to do their round, there was no evidence and the detainees, in fact, stated that the detainee said that he was then well. The inquiry should sort out these things.

Mr Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether he feels that there is a lack of personnel for the night duty?

The Prime Minister: I have not been told that there is a lack of personnel.

CENTRAL PRISON, BEAU BASSIN – MEALS

(No. B/340) 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 Prisons, information as to whether, on 17 March 2007, between 1100 hrs to 1400 hrs, lunch was not available for all the prisoners.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ag. Commissioner of Prisons that on 17 March 2007, there were requests from detainees at the Central Prison Beau Bassin for 205 vegetarian and 930 non-vegetarian meals. On that day, meals at the Central Prison Beau Bassin were served as from 1100 hours instead of 1020 hours, which is the normal time that they served the meal, as a significant number of detainees of catholic faith were fasting for the Easter festival and were attending a mass in the chapel within the precincts of the prison.

I am also informed that when the meals were being served, most of the detainees who were fasting, opted for non-vegetarian diet, although they had initially informed that they would take vegetarian meals. This change of diets of

the detainees resulted in a shortage of some 60 non-vegetarian meals and a corresponding excess of vegetarian meals.

Immediate action was therefore taken by the Prison officers to prepare non-vegetarian meals for some 60 detainees. These detainees were given their meals by 1315 hours. There was, therefore, a slight delay, but I have explained the reasons why.

RIVIERE DU POSTE – ROAD ACCIDENT – APRIL 2007

(No. B/341) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) 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 accident which occurred at Rivière du Poste, on or about 22 April 2007, and in the course of which one Mr M. R. passed away, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the circumstances of the accident, and
- (b) where matters stand in regard to the Police inquiry.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 22 April 2007, at about 10 35 hours, a road accident occurred along Royal Road, Rivière du Poste involving a motor bus No. 4105 DC 93 and contract van No. 3408 NV 03 make Nissan, driven by one Mr M. R, a 21-year old inhabitant of Mare Tabac who was fatally injured.

I am also informed that the stretch of the road where the accident occurred has a dangerous curve and that, very often, there is difficulty for intersecting of vehicles.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Police enquiries have revealed that on that day the owner of the motor bus, one Mr T.N has authorised his helper, one Mr V.B, who is not a holder of a driving licence, to drive the motor bus from Curepipe to Rivière du Poste.

In fact, the circumstances of the accident are yet to be determined, given that the concerned persons have retracted on several occasions on their statements given to the Police. Mr T. N. had reported to Police officers from Rose Belle Police Station that he was the driver of the vehicle at the time of the accident and was arrested on 23 April 2007 and detained at Grand Bois Police Station. He, thereafter, confessed on 24 April 2007 having given a false statement to the Police as Mr V. B. was not a holder of any driving licence.

On 23 April 2007, the bus conductor, one Mr S. A. who said that the owner was driving the bus also retracted his statement. He stated that he gave a false

statement upon instruction from Mr T. N. He was also arrested and released on parole on the same day.

Several passengers had confirmed that the actual driver had bolted away before the arrival of the Police, on 24 April 2007. Mr V. B., who was brought in for enquiry, has stated that upon instruction of Mr T. N., he drove the said vehicle from Curepipe to Rivière du Poste and that at the time of accident, he has admitted that he was the driver of the bus.

Provisional complaints were accordingly lodged against Messrs T.N. and V. B. before Grand Port Court for “Conspiracy” and “Involuntary Homicide”. They were both released on bail on the same day after furnishing a surety of Rs5000 and Rs300 and costs. Both persons will appear before the Grand Port Court on 06 September 2007.

I am also informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that action is being taken by the Police Road Safety Unit to see whether that part of the road can be improved.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there is a history of bad blood between the family of the deceased and that of the owner of the bus in question?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware that there is a history, although somebody mentioned it to me only yesterday. There is nothing in the report here to say that there is bad blood, but I am sure the inquiry will look into all this.

MBC – NEWS DEPARTMENT

(No. B/342) 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 News Department of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) the number of employees attached thereto, and

- (b) if these employees are briefed on the coverage of daily news items on radio and on television by Mr Dan Callikhan, Senior Adviser at the Prime Minister's Office and, if so, the reasons therefor.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Director-General of the MBC that the total number of employees attached to the News Department of the Corporation is 149.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the schedule of duties of Mr Callikan does not include the briefing of MBC employees on the coverage of daily news items on radio and television of the MBC channels.

Mr Callikan is in charge of the information and communication cell of the Prime Minister's Office and as such he is called upon to meet journalists and other media people in order to disseminate information on the activities, not just of the Prime Minister, but the Members of the Government in general.

The daily briefing at the MBC is done by the Officer-in-Charge of the News Department or, in his absence, by the Chief Editor.

Mr Bhagwan: May we know from the hon. Prime Minister who is heading the News Department these days? Is there somebody on a permanent basis or is acting in the capacity of Head of News?

The Prime Minister: From what I understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are different groups posted at different sections of departments, even though for the News Department. For example, there are the Senior News Producers, the Senior News Editors and others. There are different people who are actually looking at different departments.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, there should, at least, be somebody as head of the News Department, supervising everything. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether, following the PRB Report, there was a recommendation for somebody to head this News Department and the reasons why this post has not been filled?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not say that the post was not filled. In fact, there are people who are actually heading the department. For

example, for French desk it is Mr Joypaul, and the Chief Editor is Mr Armoogum. For English desk, it is Mr Essoo and the Chief Editor is Mr Gobin.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think there is cause for frustration at the MBC TV, and that the News Department is like *un navire sans capitaine*. Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House on this later later on...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr Bhagwan: But, the Minister is always making remarks at me!

Mr Speaker: I will look into that. I will ask the hon. Member to address the Chair. I am going to...

(Interruptions)

Please address the Chair! I am going to watch the Member who is going to provoke any other Member here! Then, he will get what he deserves!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware *qu'il y a un climat de terreur* à la MBC?

Mr Speaker: On what subject?

Mr Bhagwan: I am proceeding slowly, Sir, for obvious reasons. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he could inquire into the fact that there is *un climat de terreur causé par l'ingérence – je pèse mes mots – de son Senior Adviser, qui se sert de son nom pour...*

(Interruptions)

...terroriser les gens de la MBC. Je demande au Premier ministre s'il peut enquêter et informer la Chambre...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am paid from public funds to put questions and not by...

(Interruptions)

I will remind him that I am here...

Mr Speaker: I think somebody is bargaining to be ordered out of this House in a minute.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker Sir, I am very serious. Can we know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he could inquire and let the House and the public know whether *il y a ce climat de terreur causé par l'ingérence...*

Mr Speaker: The question has been put. Listen to the answer, please!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I must say that he does not sit at the MBC.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Let the Prime Minister answer!

The Prime Minister: If they are so terrified by him on telephone, God knows what will happen if he actually goes there! Part of his duties is to ensure that what the Prime Minister and Members of the Government are doing is passed on to the MBC.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister has stated that part of the duties of his Senior Adviser is to look after Government's publicity, Government's news. But, is it the duty of this Senior Adviser to give instructions, dictate to people of the News Department...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bhagwan:...*pour effectuer la censure des membres de l'opposition ?*

The Prime Minister: Certainement pas, M. le président !

Mr Bhagwan: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to inquire...

Mr Speaker: The Prime Minister has answered the question and said 'no'. That's the end of the matter! Next question! Hon. Guinness!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, I said!

(Interruptions)

I said order! Hon. Bhagwan, this is the last time that I am calling you to order. Next time, you will be ordered out of this House!

Next question, hon. Guinness!

MBC FORMAN/DRIVER – STATEMENT AGAINST MR B. M.

(No. B/343) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) 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 if, on or about 19 April 2007, a foreman/driver of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation gave a statement against one Mr B.M. and, if so, the reasons therefore

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on 19 April 2007, around 1350 hrs at Curepipe Police Station, one Mr R. S. ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I cannot tolerate this! Hon. Bhagwan, I am suspending you for the rest of the sitting of this House!

(Interruptions)

Are you challenging my authority? I order you out!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

Mr Bhagwan: I am paid to do my job!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Gowressoo, out! You are suspended for the rest of the sitting of this House!

(Interruptions)

Order! Out, I said!

Next question, hon. Dowarkasing!

At this stage, Members of the MMM Opposition left the Chamber.

S. O., Mr – 19 YEAR OLD STUDENT – ALLEDGED ASSAULT BY POLICE

(No. B/344) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) 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 if, on or about 23 January 2007, one Mr S.O., a 17 year old student, made a declaration against two Police Officers for alleged brutality and, if so, the reasons therefor.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that an incident took place on 23 January 2007 at Jan Palach Bus Stand, Curepipe, when one Mr S. O., a 19 year old student, was allegedly slapped on the face several times by a Police Officer dressed in civilian clothes.

The student also declared that he was brought to Curepipe CID Office, where he was assaulted by another man in civilian clothes, as a result of which he fell unconscious.

The student was allowed to leave after he signed an entry in the Diary Book. Later, the student, accompanied by his mother, called at the Curepipe CID Office, where he fell unconscious again. He was admitted to Victoria Hospital for treatment and was discharged on 25 January 2007.

Mr S. O. made a declaration on 29 January 2007 at the Complaints Investigation Bureau regarding the incident.

I am further informed that Mr S.O. lodged a complaint at the National Human Rights Commission on 08 February 2007 against two officers of the CID of Curepipe, with respect to the incident.

The National Human Rights Commission is investigating into the case, and appropriate action will be determined on the basis of its findings.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he is in presence of the reasons of the arrest of this young man?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are reasons given that he was using filthy language against people in the vicinity.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister state whether, despite the fact that he fell unconscious twice, he was never given any attention and brought to the hospital? He fell unconscious twice in the Police Station, and remained there.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, that is not what I have here. The inquiry should clarify matters, but here I am informed that he was admitted to Victoria Hospital.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that there are several cases of brutality with respect to the Police Force, is the hon. Prime Minister envisaging to set up the Independent Police Complaints Commission soon?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is already the National Human Rights Commission, which looks into complaints. This is why we did not go forward with this. But, we can still have a look at that.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the student said that he could identify those two Police Officers, and whether there is any procedure that he can, therefore, resort to?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that the Police Officers are already known. They have been identified.

DRIVING SCHOOL LICENCE & DRIVING INSTRUCTORS' LICENCE

(No. B/346) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North & 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 driving school owners and driving instructors, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number thereof in operation to date, and
- (b) state if it is proposed to bring any amendment to the existing regulations in relation thereto.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, as at date, 133 persons have been granted both a Driving School Licence and a Driving Instructor's Licence and 17 other persons have been issued with a Driving Instructor's Licence only.

The grant of Driving School Licence and Driving Instructor's Licence is governed by sections 2 and 3 of the Road Traffic (Driving Schools and Instructor's) Regulations.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am further informed that a committee, chaired by the Land Transport Division of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping, and comprising officers of the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, as well as the Police, has been set up to work on the Road Traffic (Driving Licence) Regulations as well as two new sets of regulations concerning driving schools and driving instructors.

Drafts of the Road Traffic (Driving Schools) Regulations and Road Traffic (Driving Instructor's) Regulations are still under consideration by the committee, whereas the draft Road Traffic (Driving Licence) Regulations has been completed, and is at present under consideration by the Attorney General's Office.

/...

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister state whether there is any illegal driving school in operation and, if so, what remedial measures

are being envisaged to stop this illegal practice, which could be a danger to the public?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no mention of illegal driving schools. But, if the hon. Member has details of that, I will be glad to have it.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm if there is any plan at all to reshuffle the examiners who have been in post for more than 15 years at the traffic branch?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is something we are going to look at generally, because I very strongly feel that people do not know how to drive in this country. I see this every day; people driving on the right instead of driving on the left; overtaking on the left instead of overtaking on the right. Basic things are not being done, control of vehicles is not being done properly, and all this will have to be addressed.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether, according to GN76 regulation, the owner of the driving school must himself drive his own driving school vehicle?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware that he, himself, must drive. If he has another driver who is an instructor, probably, he can, but I will look into the matter.

Mrs Juggoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Prime Minister aware if any case has been reported regarding registered driving schools being used not only for driving tests, but also for giving tuition by unqualified driving instructors, who, again, could be proved to be a danger to the public?

The Prime Minister: All this is being looked into and taken on board for the draft regulations that we are doing.

PUBLIC SECTOR – OFFICERS – POSTING

(No. B/347) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) 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 allowing officers in the public sector to work close to their place of residence, he will consider the advisability of setting up a committee to look into its implications.

(Withdrawn)

AFRICAN UNION PROTOCOL AGAINST CORRUPTION – RATIFICATION

(No. B/348) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq and Bon Accueil) 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 ratification of the African Union Protocol Against Corruption, he will state where matters stand.

(Withdrawn)

BAIL ACT - AMENDMENTS

(No. B/349) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) 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 Bail Act, he will state if it is proposed to introduce legislation with a view to bringing amendments thereto and, if so, when.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer the hon. Member to my answers to previous Parliamentary Questions B/85 and B/1415, wherein I replied that we could be looking into the question of amending the law concerning bail.

The question of amending the law has come up time and again mainly because of the concerns expressed against either the release on bail of persons charged with serious offences or the unduly long pre-trial detention of suspects charged amongst other things, with drug dealing offences and then they are released because there is a long period.

We have looked at the Bail Act of 1999 again. In the meantime, there have been other comments from the Judiciary, including comments from the Privy Council and we have now come to the view that the Bail Act of 1999 does not need to be amended. Previous attempts by Parliament to earmark specific offences, namely, drug dealing offences for which bail would be purely and simply denied have failed. The Supreme Court and the Privy Council have repeatedly held that the 1999 Bail Act, must always be read together with section 5 and section 1 of the Constitution which guarantee the right to personal liberty and which preclude any automatic denial of bail even in the most serious or heinous offences and crimes. There is no likelihood, in the present circumstances - I am checking, because somebody was asking me the other day why do we need three-quarter majority - that the Constitution can be amended, especially section 1, which can only be amended following a three-quarter majority vote at a referendum and an unanimous vote of the whole of the House.

It is also worth recollecting that the Privy Council explained in the case of Hurnam the Bail Act of 1989 was constitutionally defective because it did not reflect the principle that the grant of bail should be the rule as opposed to the exception. It also stated that the 1999 Bail Act cured the defect by restating that bail should be the rule. It also highlighted that the 1999 Act was by and large in line with the English Law as set out in the UK Bail Act of 1976 and also consonant with the European Convention on Human Rights from which our Chapter II on fundamental rights has been borrowed.

The real issue today, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, is not whether to amend the Bail Act, but rather instead, the issue concerns the type of evidence which can be gathered and put before the Courts in support of objections to bail in cases where it is genuinely felt that bail should be refused to a suspect. Legally, there are strict grounds for objection to bail, amongst which, as we know there is a long list, but among which -

- (a) there is likelihood that the defendant be abscond;
- (b) whether he would interfere with the witnesses or tamper with evidence or will he commit other offences whilst on bail - there is a long list;

and these risks are assessed by the Courts having regard to the seriousness of the offence and the penalty to be imposed.

It will be up to the Police to ensure that they fully substantiate the ground for objecting to bail in specific cases. It will continue to be for the Courts to judiciously decide whether to uphold or reject such objections.

For these reasons, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is felt that the law does not require to be amended to deal with the grounds on which bail can be denied or to cater for specific offences for which bail could be refused.

Each bail application and objection must therefore continue to be dealt on its particular facts and its own merits. It will be for the Police and the prosecution to bring before the Courts the necessary evidence and the arguments that can persuade the Court that, for example, the release on bail is likely to lead the suspect to tamper with the evidence or to abscond or whatever. It will be for the Court then to decide whether such risks are higher in serious offences, involving the eventual imposition of long periods of imprisonment.

This being said, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the delays in the disposal of cases in our Courts and which result either in undeserving detainees being released by the Courts because of their pre-trial detention is too long or in unduly prolonged pre-trial detention. These issues can be addressed by the Police speeding up criminal investigations and the Courts ensuring speedier trials and avoiding unnecessary postponements. In this regard, I want to stress that the Mackay Report at paragraph 2.8, recommended the prioritisation by the Intermediate Court of the trials of drug cases, which have a major incidence in the number of detainees and bail applications and objections. For its part, the Police, I hope, will have an enhanced capability in the field of forensic analysis, and should be able to complete investigations more speedily.

For these reasons, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not envisaged to amend the Bail Act at present.

POLICE OFFICERS - BSC ON POLICE STUDIES

(No. B/350) 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 Police Officers who have successfully followed the degree course leading to the BSC on Police Studies from the University of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof, and
- (b) if these officers have been called upon to assume additional responsibilities, indicating the nature thereof.

The Prime Minister: I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, by the Commissioner of Police that since academic year 1999/2000, 191 Officers from the rank of Police Constable to Assistant Superintendent of Police have been awarded a BSC (Hons) degree in Police Studies.

The 191 Police Officers who have already graduated are posted throughout the island at various Police Stations, Branches and Units of the Police Force where they are deployed mainly in operational duties.

I am also informed that with a view to providing new avenues for promotion of Police Graduates and creating more opportunities for advancement in the Police hierarchy, the Commissioner of Police has proposed the following scheme whereby –

- (a) Police Constables and Police Sergeants with more than ten years of service to be promoted to the rank of Inspector;
- (b) Inspectors of Police with more than four years of service in the rank to be promoted to the rank of Chief Inspector;

- (c) Chief Inspectors of Police with more than four years of service in the rank to be promoted to the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police;
- (d) Assistant Superintendents with more than three years of service in the rank to be promoted to the rank of Superintendent of Police, and
- (e) with regard to Superintendents of Police and above, all these officers will continue to be promoted on the established practice on the basis of merit and seniority.

I am informed that the proposed scheme will not jeopardize the promotion prospects of Police Officers not holding a degree. The implementation of the proposed promotion scheme will, however, require appropriate clearances from the relevant authorities.

The implementation of the proposed scheme in the Mauritius Police Force will, no doubt, raise a suitable cadre of professionals with the knowledge and ability to develop, influence and drive organisational innovation as well as change in response to the needs of policing in a modern, democratic, pluralistic and multi-ethnic society.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister kindly inform the House when did this course start and by whose initiative did that start?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am glad to say that this course was started by me under the recommendations of Mr Shattock on 06 September 1999. It was a six-year programme which was launched and was run jointly by the University of Mauritius and the University of Portsmouth in the UK.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, pending such time that the committee sits in order to recommend for the officers who successfully passed the BSc in Police studies for higher promotion, could the hon. Prime Minister consider the possibility that these successful officers, who have been awarded the BSc Police studies, be rewarded financially, for example, by one, two or three increments or whatever it is?

The Prime Minister: I can pass on this request, there is a procedure laid down about increasing financially and all that.

RODRIGUES CHIEF COMMISSIONER - DECLARATION AGAINST

(No. B/351) Mr A. Nancy (First Member for Rodrigues) 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 if, on or about 04 May 2007, a Social Security Officer made a declaration against the Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues at the Port Mathurin Police Station.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a Senior Social Security Officer, Mr H. R. G. has made a declaration against the Chief Commissioner on the 04 May 2006 at the Port Mathurin Police Station as he had felt prejudiced by the allegation made by the latter to the effect that he had sought favours from one Mrs R. S. in reward of a pension.

I am also informed that following the declaration made by Mr H. R. G. the police is carrying out an enquiry.

The enquiry is still underway and on completion, the relevant dossier will be forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Mr Nancy: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to my information, prior to the declaration to the Police, the Social Security Officer was called, together with three Police officers, in the office of the Chief Commissioner. Could the hon. Prime Minister set an inquiry to determine whether the Police officers are used to put pressure on the Social Security Officer in relation to the allocation of social aid or simply they used to be given directives by the Chief Commissioner?

The Prime Minister: As I said, there is an inquiry going on. I will pass on that information.

RODRIGUES EXECUTIVE COUNCIL - DRAFT ESTIMATES – 2007-2008

(No. B/352) Mr A. Nancy (First Member for Rodrigues) 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, pursuant to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, the

Rodrigues Executive Council has, since August 2006 to date, submitted to him or to the Cabinet any matter of policy relating to Rodrigues.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply is in the affirmative and the last issue that the Rodrigues Executive Council submitted to me was the draft estimates of the Council for the year 2007-2008. Moreover, in accordance with section 40 of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act 2001, the Chief Commissioner keeps me fully informed concerning the general conduct of the affairs of the Executive Council in relation to Rodrigues.

Mr Nancy: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the RRA Act 2001, policy made by the Rodrigues Executive Council must be sent to the Prime Minister or to Cabinet. Could the hon. Prime Minister, therefore, confirm that there is no policy which has been sent to him in connection to the payment of bad weather allowance to fishermen in Rodrigues?

The Prime Minister: In fact, this is a policy with which there has been some disagreement with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. This has been passed on, first of all, to the Minister of Finance who has talked to the Chief Commissioner and also to the Ministry of Agro Industry.

Mr Nancy: Can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House on the new criteria of bad weather allowance policy in Rodrigues?

The Prime Minister: The criteria will be subject to the draft estimates of the Council for the year 2007/2008.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Members. Hon. Dayal!