

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SUBUTEX – POSSESSION, IMPORTATION & TRAFFICKING

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) 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 possession, importation and trafficking of Subutex, he will state –

- (a) why the Dangerous Drugs Act has not been amended to date to provide for tougher penalties;
- (b) whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if the Police has information –
 - (i) regarding an organised gang involving one Sada Curpen and his close relatives, Police Officers, a Money Changer and a Bookmaker, and
 - (ii) that, on 23 July 2008, a politician phoned the Anti Drug Smuggling Unit whilst a controlled delivery was being effected at Riche Terre.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to Parliamentary Questions B/1032, B/1039 and B/1044 along with the Private Notice Question as they relate to the same issue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to a Parliamentary Question B/408 on 22 May 2007 on the alleged misuse of Buprenorphine commonly known as Subutex, I informed the House that I had asked the Attorney-General to bring the necessary amendments to the Dangerous Drugs Act to remove Subutex from Schedule II of the Act and to bring it under Schedule I and classified as a prohibited item.

In this regard, my office had consultations with the Attorney-General's office, the Police Department, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions, the Drug Assets Forfeiture Office and the NATReSA in view of the fact that Subutex has therapeutic use for persons addicted to opioids, specially heroin.

In the course of these consultations, one of the difficulties encountered was in relation to the policy issue raised by the then Chief Government Pharmacist of the Ministry of Health, Mr Requin as regards the rescheduling of Subutex. Subutex, like many other psychotropic drugs, is indicated for prescription by doctors for both treatment and rehabilitation purposes.

It is on the list of psychotropic substances under international control recommended by the International Narcotics Control Board (Schedule III) of the Green List, in accordance with the UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, that is, it is not banned, but for limited use.

In Mauritius, however, the product has never been registered by the Pharmacy Board, i.e never been allowed for importation, except by foreigners visiting the country who have been prescribed the product by their treating doctor. On notification by the police, and against verification of the genuineness of the prescription by the Pharmacy Board, the latter issues authorization to allow the drug to be used by the person.

This has happened a few times every year, and the amounts of subutex involved were small, as they were meant to cover the period of treatment while the person was in Mauritius.

Both at the level of the WHO and in a number of individual countries, the question of re-scheduling subutex as a "dangerous drug" has been considered as a very thorny one that could result in it ceasing to be available for medicinal use. In WHO's 2005 "Essential Medicines List", "buprenorphine" that is Subutex as well as "methadone" were included as medicines for use "in agonist therapy".

However, a number of countries have been witnessing the abuse of Subutex in injectable form with associated consequences, such as HIV infection. Such abuse has been particularly rife in countries such as Denmark, Finland, France, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Western and South East Asia.

It is evident, Mr Speaker, Sir, that our law could not be amended too lightly, the more so as Mauritius is signatory to the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 which prepares a list of Psychotropic Substances under International Control under the direction of the International Narcotics Control Board. The WHO position on the matter, as well as developments in other countries, had to be carefully studied before proceeding to a re-scheduling or classification of “buprenorphine” as a dangerous drug. Consultations with different Ministries, including Ministry of Health, had to be undertaken.

The WHO has also advocated that Governments should ensure that narcotics and substances having proven therapeutic use should be made available to patients. A change in scheduling of Subutex would, according to WHO, constitute a serious barrier for accessibility to treatment.

In spite of the reservations expressed by the WHO and in spite, I should say also, of objections - we had many objections here - from different NGOs - the Government took the decision that Subutex should be brought under Schedule I of the Dangerous Drugs Act in view of the abuse that was being made of this drug by traffickers who are dealing in Subutex as a substitute to heroin.

Accordingly, an amendment to the Dangerous Drug Act is being prepared providing for a re-classification of “subutex” or “buprenorphine” whilst including adequate safeguards for its use for medicinal purposes under a prescription.

As regards part (b) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there is no evidence of the existence of any organized gang involving one Sada Curpen and his close relatives, Police Officers, a Money Changer and a Bookmaker.

However, following ADSU operation on 23 July 2008, an anonymous facsimile was received at the ADSU Headquarters alleging the existence of a network involving the above-named.

I should like to inform the House that one of the persons referred to in the facsimile was precisely the Police officer who arrested Mr Sada Curpen in August 2006 for possession of 3,500 Subutex pills. As a result, Mr Sada Curpen was sentenced to undergo 18 months imprisonment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one must ask the question why was the name of this Police officer, who has arrested Mr Sada Curpen, be actually mentioned in that tract.

The inclusion of the name of the Police officer concerned in the anonymous tract could well be a method utilized by organized groups to get rid of efficient Police officers.

On 23 July 2008, in the course of an ADSU operation, one Ms M. C. Legallant was arrested in physical possession of Subutex. She incriminated one Sada Curpen as the person to whom the drugs were destined. Moreover, in the presence of ADSU officers, the woman contacted Mr Sada Curpen by phone. The latter, apparently, directed her to proceed to the parking area of Jumbo Supermarket at Riche Terre. Consequently, a controlled delivery exercise was organized during which one Bernard Gaëtan Roger Joly was arrested. In fact, instead of Sada Curpen who was expected, it was Mr Joly who turned up to collect the drugs. He was immediately arrested and he incriminated on the spot Mr Sada Curpen as being the person who instructed him to collect the drugs. However, when Police proceeded to the recording of his statement, he claimed his right to silence.

Following the incrimination by both Ms Legallant and Mr Joly, the Police launched an island-wide operation in search for Mr Sada Curpen. A Police communiqué was also issued in this connection. Subsequently, on 04 August 2008, at 07 10 hours, Mr Sada Curpen surrendered himself to the ADSU at the Line Barracks.

He is presently in Police custody on a provisional charge of unlawful possession of Dangerous Drugs and will appear before Court on 11 August 2008. He has so far exercised his right to silence.

The Police has, however, started an enquiry to look into the facts mentioned in the anonymous tract which I referred to earlier.

Regarding part (b) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on 23 July 2008, at about 9.00 o'clock, ASP Lablanche received a phone call from the Attorney-General who enquired from the Police officer as to the whereabouts of Mr Joly. As the Police officer was not aware of the circumstances of the case and the arrest, he reported the matter to ACP Padiachy who is presently in charge of the ADSU, as Mr Sooroojbally is abroad. ACP Padiachy, upon being informed of the matter, contacted the Attorney-General by phone and informed him that -

- (a) ACP Lablanche, who was not aware of the circumstances of the case, was not in a position to provide the information sought by the Attorney-General, and
- (b) Mr Joly had in fact been arrested and, at that particular point in time, a controlled delivery was in progress.

Thereupon, I understand that the Attorney-General realising the importance of the ADSU operation, at that point in time, decided to end the conversation with the Police officer.

The Commissioner of Police, who enquired from the two aforementioned Police officers, is of the view that the Attorney-General was, in fact, trying to inquire – and I have confirmed this with the Attorney-General – to the whereabouts of a Mauritian Citizen, that is, Mr Joly, who had just been taken into Police custody and there was concern in certain Headquarters regarding the place of his detention and also whether he was being brutalised by the Police.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the first part of my question, the hon. Prime Minister knows that the law, as it stands in the Dangerous Drugs Act, is useless in the case of Subutex, because no one can be prosecuted for importation or for trafficking, it is only for possession. More than a year ago, the hon. Prime Minister was categorical and he repeated it today. Granted that there were certain complications, but, in the meantime, certainly the case of importation and trafficking could have been included in the law whilst leaving the medical aspect of Subutex to be dealt with in due time. Why has this not been done? More than a year has gone by, and from what we see, several cases of illegal importation and trafficking in Subutex have taken place.

The Prime Minister: As I explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, there had to be consultations. Because, as I explained, I think I was quite clear, that there had been consultations; we had to talk to the WHO, to the different institutions and NGOs concerned before deciding. And I explained also that the Chief Pharmacist of the Government was opposed to that, because he thought it would be wrong to do it. We had to take all this into account, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I should also say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is not now that Subutex is being imported in large amount. This has been happening since 2000, increasing every year, sometimes quite drastically, but we had to make sure that we do it properly, that we agree to go against what other institutions are saying. As I said, we are signatory of these Conventions and, therefore, we decided on balance that this should be so. The law is actually being worked upon - not now - and the amendment is being ready to come in front of the House. That is the reason.

Mr Bérenger: The point is, pending the medical use being considered, we did not have to change schedule. We could have provided in the law, where there is a clear case of importation and trafficking of a given quantity of Subutex that that be dealt with differently from the law that deals with the medical use of Subutex. Why has this not been considered and done?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, then I can ask the question: why was this not done since 2000?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister just recognised that it has been increasing dramatically recently. We have never had this kind of case of Subutex.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order, I am on my feet. Please! Questions have been put, the Prime Minister has given the reasons why this could not be done earlier. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not satisfied with the answer, he will have some other time. Answer has been given.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the second part of my question, we have heard the hon. Prime Minister say that the Commissioner of Police has said that there is no evidence of a gang, as referred to, involving one Sada Curpen and close relatives, Police Officers, a Money Changer and a Bookmaker. And he referred to a document where certain precise information are provided, that the name of an officer who took part in the arrest of Sada Curpen, at a given point in time, is mentioned, later on, does not prove anything.

Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has asked the Commissioner of Police to look into the precise allegations made? The names are given and the precise allegations are made; four Policemen are concerned. In one case, it is alleged that he was supposedly attacked in Ste Croix early 2007. He said that it was because he was a 'Radhooa man', but, in fact, the suspicion is that because it is linked to Subutex. Then he was *soupçonné* of using Police vehicles to distribute Subutex and he has been transferred from where he was. A second case, he was transferred again, because he was caught on camera with Sada Curpen when there was disorder in the Caudan Casino in Port Louis. He was caught on camera. The two are relatives of his. The allegations are clear, the names are given.

All four officers show signs of wealth that do not tally at all with their revenues as Police officers. Apart from those four Police officers, the name of a money exchange dealer is given. The sums that have been money-laundered through him by Sada Curpen and the name of a

Bookmaker who has been involved in the past in illegal betting is also mentioned. All these details are given. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has requested the Commissioner of Police to carry out a complete enquiry on these allegations?

The Prime Minister: In fact, I can say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I did ask. But before I asked, the Commission of Police had already started enquiries. He has to get evidence whether this is true or not. As I say, one of the names is mentioned. The Inspector mentioned here was the person who arrested - it seems a bit odd that he should be the person. In fact, there are two of them. I think there is another one also who has been involved in some arrests and his name appears here. So, we have to ask the question: why? But, investigations are going on.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the next part of my question is concerned, Mr Sada Curpen himself - you will remember maybe, that from 05 December 2006, the issue was raised here in Parliament. We found it very strange that somebody arrested on given charges, that obtained bail later on, wanted to travel overseas and so on. And I remember my colleague, hon. Cuttaree, pressing the point: why did the Police not object to the release of that person even before the completion of inquiry? And the hon. Prime Minister told us: "I'll certainly look into it." Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has looked into it and what have been the results of the inquiry?

The Prime Minister: I have been told, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the DPP also objected to his objection to travel abroad being removed. The Court, unfortunately, on balance they decided that he should be able to travel abroad. So, we cannot do anything about this.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister said he would look into the arrest of 2006. Then, later on, he was found guilty in 2007. I am talking of what the Prime Minister said: "I'll look into it." Why, in 2006, he was arrested, he was allowed bail, and to travel overseas?

The Prime Minister: In 2006, he was also found guilty - I think I mentioned it earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir - and he underwent 18 months imprisonment afterwards.

Mr Bérenger: He appealed against that and he has been allowed to travel again on bail again. That's after 2007.

The Prime Minister: I should correct this. He was sentenced to undergo 18 months imprisonment and he has appealed against it. But, as I said, the Court has decided that he should be allowed to travel. But, in fact, as a matter of fact, he has come back because he has been arrested again, as we know.

Mr Bérenger: The Court will act on the stand which the State Law Office will take. Has the hon. Prime Minister looked into what stand the Attorney-General's Office took?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: It is not the Attorney-General's Office.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now!

The Prime Minister: It's not the Attorney-General's Office which took the stand, but the State Law Office.

Mr Bérenger: I think the State Law Office is under his control; he is the Minister in charge of the State Law Office.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please! Order! No provocative remarks! I am asking both sides of the House, please!

Mr Bérenger: On 05 December, 2006, Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning again the same person, the Prime Minister said –

“An application was made for a Prohibition Order and the freezing of assets of Mr Curpen. Another application was made for a Judge's Order to authorise the Police to have access to his bank deposit.”

Has this been done, and, if yes, what have been the results and, if not, why this statement has not been followed up upon?

The Prime Minister: I don't have the details of the actions that the Police took in 2006, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I must presume that it has been done.

Mr Bérenger: We are talking about inquiry into his bank deposit, freezing of his assets and so on and in such a serious case, the hon. Prime Minister tells me that he hasn't bothered to look into it. Well, can I request him?

The Prime Minister: I did not say that I did not bother to look into it. I said that I cannot confirm now; at this point, I don't have the details with me, it is 2006, Mr Speaker, Sir. But the presumption must be that all this has been done. Why would we ask for it if we have not done it?

Mr Bérenger: Well, the hon. Prime Minister should check and inform the House. I think this is such a serious matter that the hon. Prime Minister should double-check and inform the House what has been the follow-up on that.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I point out to the hon. Prime Minister, apart from the Sada Curpen's importation of Subutex, there was a case in May 2007 where a steward of Air France was caught with more than Rs40 m. of Subutex? Now, there seems to have been no follow-up here at the level of the Police, but from information that I have, I am given to understand that in France the inquiry revealed that –

« Début mai 2007, à l'île Maurice est arrêté un steward français d'Air France en possession de tant de comprimés pour une valeur de 1.2 millions d'euros (...) »

More than Rs40 m. !

« (...) ce qui relance la polémique en France. L'enquête aboutit rapidement à la mise en examen de 24 personnes impliquées dans ce trafic dont 6 médecins et 12 pharmaciens. »

Can I know whether any link has been established between the Sada Curpen gang and this steward, whether an inquiry has been carried out, whether there is any link, whether our Police has liaised with the Police in France and what has been the result?

The Prime Minister: In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is because our Police here locally have informed France that it decided to investigate. It is through our action that France initiated all the actions...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: It is not the other way round.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: The French Police did not start it by themselves, it was because we informed them; that is when they started and no link was found. But that is all what the hon. Leader of the Opposition said that we have.

Mr Bérenger: My question is: has any link between the Sada Curpen gang been established and is our Police collaborating with the French Police on this issue to see who was behind it?

The Prime Minister: I did say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, in fact, our Police are collaborating. They gave the information to the French Police and they started the inquiry. We are collaborating. No link has been found with this gang and these are the people – exactly what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has mentioned, this is also what our Police have.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, if we can come to the control delivery of 23 July, a few days ago only! Is the Prime Minister aware that the Attorney-General admitted on radio having interfered, having talked to ADSU? This, in itself, is shocking, absolutely unacceptable. But what is more shocking, is the Prime Minister aware that two versions were given by the Attorney-General within hours on the radio? The first one is that, supposedly, he was looking for this bouncer, he was trying to identify, and the second time on radio – and the recordings are there – he said that he had called to warn the Police “*pas batte ça piti là, don’t do ceci cela.*”

(Interruptions)

The records are there!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Let the question be put!

Mr Bérenger: How can this be acceptable?

The Prime Minister: I should say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, first of all, I would have thought that it is to his credit that the Attorney-General admits that he has phoned. He could have said that he never phoned. He has actually...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

The Prime Minister: Let’s not go into the merits, let’s look at the facts!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I said order!

The Prime Minister: It is a fact that he has admitted. He could have said he never spoke; he has admitted that he spoke. I, in fact, asked him for explanation. In fact, I should correct one thing, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think in my answer I said that he phoned at 9 o'clock, in fact, he phoned at 12 o'clock. Secondly, I asked him for explanations when I heard that he had phoned ADSU. He felt that he was being unfairly accused by the Opposition at that time and that I was, therefore, also questioning his motive and he sent his letter of resignation then. But I wanted an explanation as to why he had phoned ADSU.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Prime Minister answer now!

The Prime Minister: And this is the answer that has been given, Mr Speaker, Sir, and he is being collaborated, I must say. We must look at the facts, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order now!

The Prime Minister: Mr Joly's father came to see him.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I said order!

The Prime Minister: A person called Mr Gaëtan Sans Souci came to see him to say that his son has been arrested; he doesn't know where his son is; he has heard that his son is being beaten up by the Police and he had been arrested since Tuesday, that is, one day before and that he has been arrested...

(Interruptions)

But let us look at the facts!

Mr Speaker: A question has been put. The Prime Minister is answering the question...

(Interruptions)

Order! The Standing Order is clear. If any Member of this House feels that the Attorney-General has been at fault, he can come with a substantive motion against him.

(Interruptions)

Order! Order now! Order!

The Prime Minister: I wanted to finish. So, he was telling that his son had been arrested, that he didn't know where he was, that he has information that he was being beaten up by the Police and that he had been arrested since Tuesday for having stolen a motorcycle. This was the reason. He rang, Mr Speaker, Sir, on a purely human right.

(Interruptions)

He rang to find out whether that was true. There was no connection at that time with what was happening.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should say to the House that - perhaps some people don't realise it - the hon. Attorney-General is the Minister responsible for human rights. As such, the National Human Rights Commission has to report to him; by law, all the reports on alleged cases of Police brutality have to be sent to him. It is in his capacity as Minister of Human Rights that he rang up the Police regarding the whereabouts of the suspect, and whether he was being beaten up or not. He spoke to ASP Lablanche who said that he knew nothing about this and that he should verify. The Attorney-General then left his number - he would not have left his number if he wanted to hide anything. ASP Lablanche contacted ACP Padiachy, who happens to be in charge of ADSU in the absence of DCP Sooroojbally who is abroad. ACP Padiachy rang back the Attorney-General and confirmed that ASP Lablanche did not know anything about the case. In fact, he told him that a

control delivery was being carried out. When the Attorney-General heard that a control delivery was being carried out, he stopped the conversation, put the phone down and told Mr Joly's father that he should get a lawyer to defend his son and that he could not do anything for him. This has been confirmed by ACP Padiachy.

(Interruptions)

Is the Opposition saying that ACP Padiachy is lying? This has been confirmed by the father of Mr Joly. We must look at the facts as they are, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister himself said that there was talk of the Police looking for him for the theft of a motorcycle. How is it that he phones ADSU directly?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is because Mr Joly told him that his son has been arrested by ADSU as the motorbike...

(Interruptions)

No! I should say that he stole a motorcycle belonging to ADSU. That is why ADSU arrested him for the motorcycle.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, all this is supposed to be coincidence! The father calls on the Attorney-General, and they all cry together and so on! Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the father of that bouncer is himself an employee of Sada Curpen? He manages this so-called 'saloon', which is a cover up. It is no coincidence. The father is a recidivist. He knows the Attorney-General very well. It is no coincidence that it is an employee and colleague of Sada Curpen that goes through that. Was the hon. Prime Minister aware of that?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the father of whoever feels that his son is being beaten up by the Police, he has the right, like anybody else, to ask for help. You must look at the human rights aspect also.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister finds it acceptable that an Attorney-General phones ADSU directly, saying '*Pa batte sa pitit la*'! We can imagine what the conversation was. Should not the Attorney-General have been sacked on the spot?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Dr. Boolell, hon. Bhagwan, order please! I have said that there are provisions in our Standing Orders. If Members feel that they are unsatisfied with the answers that are being given, they can

come with a substantive motion. I have already said it, and I want hon. Members to understand this.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm whether Mrs Cindy Legallant has informed the Police that it was the fourth time that she was bringing in Subutex for the same gentleman, Mr Curpen? Is this being followed up, including the contacts of that lady in Paris and elsewhere? Is it confirmed that when she landed, her car, driven by a PPS's driver, was brought to her to take her away? The Police searched his house and let him free. Is that a fact?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no evidence that, in fact, the person is a driver. But, the Police are still inquiring. Let's look at the facts again. If all this were true, why is it that Mr Sada Curpen has been arrested twice by the Police when we were in Government? We are following up the contacts that they might have. I don't want to disclose in the Assembly what are the contacts that are being followed up. Mr Speaker, Sir, I said that there was a dramatic increase in Subutex trafficking. Since 2000, this has been increasing gradually. In 2004, it was nearly Rs1 m. worth, but before June 2005 it was nearly Rs7 m. So, this has been happening...

(Interruptions)

Yes, but that is increasing! It was already increasing! That is why I said that we must allow the inquiry to get on and find out who are the real culprits.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I insist again on my question? Can I know whether a PPS has been in contact in Paris with that lady and whether his driver drove the car of that lady to Plaisance airport to pick her up?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no evidence that any PPS has contacted any person in Paris.

(Interruptions)

There is no evidence! If somebody comes and says that the Leader of the Opposition has driven the car, there must be evidence!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot just give names like this in the National Assembly and throw mud on people! We must have evidence! Because it is on evidence that we can find whether people are guilty or not!

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that the hon. Attorney-General criticised the Police regarding the way the inquiry was being carried out as far as Sada Curpen is concerned, and as far as the search of his residence is concerned, and that he said so on radio?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we must allow the Police to do their work.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll come to the question just put by hon. Bodha. The Attorney-General criticised the Police on all radios concerning the way the Sada Curpen case was being handled. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of that? Can I know whether he has discussed with the Attorney-General on this question of interference in the affairs of the Police, and whether it has also been decided that, henceforth, the Attorney-General will not poke his nose in the affairs of the Police?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I did ask the Attorney-General for explanation, and he told me that he did it on humanitarian grounds, that it was a mistake and that it was not going to be done again.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether Mrs Cindy Legallant has, during her several trips, in the recent past, used VIP or been granted VIP facilities at the airport?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, does hon. Ganoo have evidence of this?

(Interruptions)

But, then, the hon. Member can throw any accusation! Anything can be said in the Assembly! If the hon. Member has evidence, he should show it to me!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll end up by a double-barrelled question to the Prime Minister. After all that we have heard, *pour l'honneur et la réputation de Maurice*, will he agree to two things? First, getting the

Attorney-General to resign forthwith; second, giving us the guarantee that the new Commissioner of Police will not be interfered with by the Attorney-General or any political figure, and will be given all latitude to carry a complete inquiry into this entire affair.

The Prime Minister: The Leader of the Opposition has a short memory, Mr Speaker, Sir. Why did he not resign concerning Toorab Bissessur case then?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order now!

Mr Bérenger: On a point of personal explanation. The hon. Prime Minister knows that when I was the Leader of the Opposition and he was Prime Minister, there was an *Escadron de la Mort*, this gentleman was a member thereof. He offered to testify and I approached the Prime Minister and it was even arranged that he would go to Madagascar and the Police...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now! This is a matter of personal explanation and I allowed it under the Standing Order. Order!

Mr Bérenger: And the Police, with the green light of the then Prime Minister, travelled to Madagascar to interview him - Mr Jokhoo who is now at the head of the NIU. Then, there was no follow-up. We had to wait for the 2000 election, Sir Anerood Jugnauth and myself, then *L'Escadron de la Mort* was done away with.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: This is absolute untruth. Part of it is true...

(Interruptions)

No, no! Part of it is true, Mr Speaker, Sir!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Yes, hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Part of it is true! It is true that, in fact, he came to see me and so on. It is not true that there was not follow-up. But, what we did not know was: who was paying for Mr Toorab Bissessur in Madagascar.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Order now! Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister! The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/1036 has been withdrawn.

(Interruptions)

Order! Order now! If there is any further provocative remark, I will take sanctions immediately, and hon. Members know what will be the sanctions!