

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### PAS GÉOMÉTRIQUES – BEL AIR SUGAR ESTATE AND COMPAGNIE MAURICIENNE DE TEXTILE LTÉE - APPLICATIONS

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*By Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the *Pas Géométriques* applied for by the Bel Air Sugar Estate in 2001 and the *Compagnie Mauricienne de Textile Ltée* in 2008, he will state –

- (a) if the 2001 application of the Bel Air Sugar Estate was processed up to 2006;
- (b) if the Ministry replied to a letter dated 03 July 2008 from the Bel Air Sugar Estate;
- (c) the dates on which the 2008 application of the *Compagnie Mauricienne de Textile Ltée* was received and approved by the Ministry, indicating the date the project was approved by the Board of Investment, and
- (d) the action initiated to get access to the said *Pas Géométriques*.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for giving me the opportunity in replying to the PNQ, to set records straight following my reply to both PQs B/853 and B/869 on 15 July 2008.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 1999, Government resumed possession of 104 *arpents* of PG in the Bel Air St Felix region which comprise 2 PGs namely PG *Rivière des Anguilles* 69A95P and PG *Bel Air* 34A50P. These were formerly leased for grazing purposes to the *Bel Air Sugar Estate Co. Ltd.*

In April 2001, Bel Air Sugar Estate Co. Ltd made an application for the renewal of the lease indicating its intention to carry out a feasibility study for a hotel project and an international 18 hole championship Golf course. Numerous meetings and consultations were held between Bel Air Sugar Estate Co. Ltd and with officers of the Ministry of Housing and Lands. In June 2003, the Bel Air Sugar Estate Co. Ltd expressed its intention of implementing a hotel and an Integrated Resort Project on the said PGs

and on its freehold land located as a rear on those PGs. The application was then not pursued further by the then Government. The request was thereafter examined in February 2006 by this Government.

With regard to part (b), the Ministry has, in fact, received a letter dated 03 July 2008 from Bel Air Sugar Estate Co. Ltd maintaining its interest in its hotel development project over the said *Pas Geometriques* at Bel Air.

With regard to part (c) of the question, on 29 April 2008, *Compagnie Mauricienne de Textile Ltée* applied for the lease of 109 *arpents* of State land at Bel Air for the construction of two hotels. On 30 May 2008, Government approved the grant of 104 *arpents* at Bel Air to the company. On 20 June 2008, a letter of reservation was issued to the company for the development of two hotel projects on the said PG.

I wish to inform the House that since the Business Facilitation Act has become effective in October 2006, the Board of Investment no longer approve projects, except for integrated Resort Scheme (IRS) and Real Estate Scheme (RES) and the Freeport. Thus, hotel development projects are no longer required to be approved by the Board of Investment.

In regard to part (d) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the two PGs of Bel Air Sugar Estate and *Rivière des Anguilles* are landlocked. Access to this State land is impossible to members of the public, except with authorisation of private owners of the adjacent land. Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that this Government has taken a policy decision to unlock all *Pas Géométriques* in order to permit access both by the public and to enable development thereon. 26 such sites have been identified and these *Pas Géométriques* are being unlocked depending on the priorities for development purposes.

The Ministry accordingly applied to Bel Air Sugar Estate on 03 July 2008 for permission to enter its land in order to have access for survey purposes. On the same date, the company gave a negative reply. My Ministry submitted a second application to the company on 4 July 2008 for permission again to accede to the *Pas Géométriques* which belong to the State through its land on 08 July 2008 and Government is investigating into the possibility of acquiring the necessary land for access to the *Pas Géométriques*.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, on 15 July, the hon. Minister stood before the House and said the following concerning the periods from 2001 to 2003 and then 2003 to the general election of July 2005 -

“In April 2001, the Bel Air Sugar Estate had made an application (...)”

Then, he said –

“However, the application was not pursued further by the then Government.”

Again he said that after 2003, the then Government did not do anything. Today, he says that there were numerous meetings between 2001 and 2003, contradicting what he said on 15 July. Can I ask him whether he will confirm the following? Between 2001 and 2003, on 06 February 2001, the then Minister of Housing and Lands and the then Minister of Agriculture, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, effected a site visit on 06 February 2001; on 18 December 2002, Bel Air Sugar Estate made a presentation to the Multi-Sectoral Technical Committee; on October 2004, Bel Air was informed by the Ministry that the project is under consideration; on 16 December 2004, there was a meeting between Bel Air and officers, including the Chief Technical Officer; on 08 February 2005, a power point presentation was made at the office of the Board of Investment, and a visit by the then Prime Minister, that is myself, was scheduled for 26 March 2003, but had to be called off due to a cyclone alert. As from that date to election, we left matters where they were. Will the hon. Minister confirm that all these meetings took place between 2001 and 2003? Then, I will move on to the period 2003 to elections.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I listened to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and he is quite right, but he did not listen to my answer. I said that numerous meetings were held with the officers during that period.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, order now!

**Mr Dulull:** I said they had meetings, but ....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Let the Minister answer!

**Mr Dulull:** I said in my answer that there were numerous meetings  
.....

*(Interruptions)*

In my answer of today I said that numerous meetings were held.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Carry on. Order! Let the Minister answer! Whatever he is saying will have to be taken into account.

**Mr Dulull:** When you look at the commitment and the dedication they had with the project, what was the result of their having so many meetings? Result zero! They could not take any decision.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, now!

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is making an allegation from a sitting position and he has to withdraw it.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I am calling both sides of the House to order.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has made baseless allegations from a sitting position and I will press on him to withdraw it.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** What is the point of order?

**Mr Dulull:** There has been unfounded allegation, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** What is the point of order?

**Mr Dulull:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition has made baseless and unfounded allegations from a sitting position.

**Mr Speaker:** Which allegation? I didn't get it.

**Mr Dulull:** Like Rs50 m.! The hon. Leader of the Opposition has to withdraw it.

**Mr Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Minister stands on a point of order to the effect that that you have referred to the hon. Member in the case which is before ICAC concerning Rs50 m. Is that so? If that is so, I would ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition to withdraw it.

**Mr Bérenger:** Of course, I made reference to the ... If the Speaker is standing up, I am sitting down.]

**Mr Speaker:** If the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said it, I would ask him to withdraw it.

**Mr Bérenger:** How can I withdraw a reference to a case which is before ICAC?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, there is an allegation before ICAC. I would refrain the hon. Leader of the Opposition from referring to this allegation because this concerns a Member of the House. ICAC is ICAC, this is the House! Any imputation of motive ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bérenger:** What is the Chair's ruling?

**Mr Speaker:** I would ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition to refrain from referring to this allegation.

**Mr Bérenger:** Yes, I refrain.

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. David:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir, you ruled that the hon. Leader of the Opposition should withdraw.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker :** Order ! Order! I have given my ruling. I have asked the hon. Leader of the Opposition not to refer to any allegation.

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard your ruling. Mr Speaker, Sir, your ruling was to withdraw. You said it at the beginning.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** My ruling was linked as to whether the hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to the hon. Minister in the said allegation.

*(Interruptions)*

I am not changing my ruling. The Leader of the Opposition only referred to an allegation without referring to the hon. Member. I am asking him now not to make any reference to any allegation which had been made.

*(Interruptions)*

I will not allow any reference to any allegation.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, ou are getting me tired to sit up and down like that!

**Mr Speaker:** I have to do my work.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if I can move on to the period between the last general election and today. Will the hon. Minister confirm the following? On the 24 October 2005, Bel Air S. E. met officers of the Multi-Sectoral Technical Committee to continue discussions, on 05 November 2005 following a ministerial visit by the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands, on 12 November 2005, a presentation was made to the Prime Minister's Fast Track Committee chaired by the hon. Prime Minister. Then on 28 December 2005, there was a meeting between Bel Air S. E. and the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands in his office; on 23 February 2006, Bel Air S. E. meets the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism and the Minister of Housing and Lands. When you look at all this, is it not clear that all discussions were ongoing until this allegation was made, namely, somebody claiming a commission of Rs50 m. then everything stopped?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot recall any meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Dr. R. Beebeejaun, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, hon. Xavier Luc Duval.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order now! Order!

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, on part (b) of my question, will the hon. Minister confirm that in a letter dated 03 July 2008 signed by Mr Patrick Rountree for Bel Air and addressed to the Permanent Secretary Bel Air informed the Ministry that they were still very keen to go ahead, their request for that *Pas Géométriques* was still on the table and he said: "I find it difficult to comprehend the current plans of Government to allocate a lease over the *Pas Géométriques* to a third party?"

**Mr Dulull:** What is the question?

**Mr Speaker:** If the hon. Minister follows, he will know what is the question. If the hon. Minister can confirm whether he has received that letter? Has he received a letter?

**Mr Dulull:** Bel Air found it strange, it is a matter of appreciation. What can I say? If Bel Air is saying that they find it strange that we

allocated the land to CMT, , it is a matter of appreciation and a state of mind. But what can the Ministry do about it? It is a question of opinion

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I ask the hon. Minister for exact dates. Last time we were told that the request was made in one month and approved the following month. Again reference was made to month. Can I ask precisely the date on which the application by CMT was made and the date on which it was approved in writing?

**Mr Dulhull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned in my answer clearly on 29 April 2008 the *Compagnie Textile Mauricien* applied for the lease and on 30 May 2008 Government approved the grant. A letter of reservation was issued on 20 June. How can I be more clear and precise?

**Mr Bérenger:** Very rapid! I must point out that this takes place in spite of the letter from Bel Air protesting and saying that there is no third party involved.

**Mr Dulull:** The Leader of the Opposition is confused. He said on 03 July Bel Air S. E. wrote to the Ministry, but we issued the letter of reservation on 20 June, which means few weeks before.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister through the hon. Minister ..

**Mr Speaker:** This is not allowed.

**Mr Bérenger:** Therefore, does anybody find it decent that whilst the case is at ICAC concerning exactly the *Pas Géométriques*, where an allegation has been made of commission of Rs50 m., at this speed the Minister approves to a third party?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think he should look after the commission on an Illovo deal...

*(Interruptions)*

... and let us know what has been going around....

*(Interruptions)*

...because we are in the process of examining and evaluating ...

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Dulull:** There is a mere and baseless allegation. The enquiry is on, but still economic development needs to be carried on. The country needs to create jobs, attracts FDI. We need to get the country moving.

**Mr Bérenger:** FDI with local investor, foreign development! *Bétises!* Can I ask the hon. Minister on what basis he gave figures of the investment to be made by Bel Air on the one hand, and CMT, and is he prepared to table those documents?

**Mr Dulull:** Based on the information submitted by both the Bel Air Sugar Estate and the *Compagnie Mauricienne de Textile Ltée*, I'll table all the documents pertaining to the level of the investment.

**Mr Bérenger:** Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would wish to put the question, again, to the hon. Prime Minister indirectly.

**Mr Speaker:** No, no! I am sorry, hon. Leader of the Opposition. This is not permitted by our Standing Orders.

**Mr Bérenger:** I have to put the question to the hon. Minister.

**Mr Speaker:** Yes, put the question!

**Mr Bérenger:** Being given that this thing stinks, being given the allegation of a *commission* of Rs50 m., being given all the facts that have been put forward today, and on the 15, will Government agree to stopping this thing and appointing a full-fledged Commission of Enquiry, chaired by a former Justice of the Supreme Court *pour faire toute la lumière sur cette malpropreté?*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Dulull:** I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition can tell us how many times did he meet Mr Rountree recently?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Dulull:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition should have initiated an enquiry on the Illovo deal so that we can know what were the in and out and the amount of commission which he got from those barons?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a point on which I am very perplexed. It concerns a reply made by a Minister who stated –

“I am informed that the investigation being carried out by ICAC into the matter has not yet been completed and, consequently, action is still pending on the allocation of *Pas Géométriques* for the implementation of the project.”

Can I ask the hon. Minister how is it that in the case of Gamma Civic, after only a few weeks ....

**Mr Speaker:** No, no! Gamma Civic is not related to the question!

**Mr Guimbeau:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I withdraw the words “Gamma Civic”, but I will refer to CMT. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister stated that action is still pending, because the case is in front of ICAC. How is it that now they put ICAC aside and they give a letter of reservation?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, these are two separate issues. The enquiry is on. We are cooperating, we are giving full information unlike what happened with the previous Government when there was allegation against a Minister, they did close the Economic Crime Office. I surrender myself to the MCIT, to the ICAC to get the enquiry on.

*(Interruptions)*

The enquiry is one thing, but allocation of land is something different. It is not linked with the enquiry.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister. The Table has been advised that PQ. No. B/963 has been withdrawn.

