ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

LAW & ORDER

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (By Private Notice) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs whether, in regard to law and order and the recent cases of criminal acts involving violence and of sexual aggression, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

(a) where matters stand in regard to the -

(i) riots at Ste Croix on Saturday 13 March and Triolet on Sunday 14 March 2010;
(ii) clashes between groups of bouncers in possession of illegal weapons;
(iii) aggressions against Police and Prison Officers;
(iv) Denis Fine case, and
(v) sexual assault on a 8-year-old child at Rose Hill on 15 March 2010.

(b) measures that are being taken for a better protection of the population.

The Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs (Dr. N. Ramgoolam): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission I shall reply to this
question as well as to Parliamentary Questions B/75, B/76, B/78 and B/84 as they relate to the same subject.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me start by saying that one of the priorities of my Government is our nation’s security. We want a safe and secure society, where people can walk the streets without fear of being mugged, or stabbed, where people can leave their homes at night without fear that it will be ransacked and they will be robbed of all their valuables, where people know that their children will not cross the path of drug pedlars round the corner street, where people know that those who engage in heinous crimes will be apprehended, brought to justice and punished.

That is why we are committed to investing in the Police so that they have the means and the powers to perform and make our country a safer place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Police reforms undertaken by my Government are yielding positive results. Lately, we have witnessed a new efficiency in the way the Police has resolved serious crimes.

For the year 2009, it is noted for the first time that the crime statistics have gone down from 49,111 in 2008 to 44,919, representing a decrease of 8.5 percent. We have noted that the overall crime rate has declined from 5.4 percent in 2007 to 4.9 percent this year.

Although these figures are encouraging we must not be complacent. I always say that one crime is one crime too many. We must ensure that this downward trend continues.
In regard to part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that in the early hours of 14 March 2010, the Police Information and Operations Room received a telephone call from an unknown caller requesting Police assistance as some persons were making noise at a bus stop along Nicolay Road near Abercrombie Police Quarters.

A team of 10 Police officers proceeded to the spot and a group of about 20 persons was found to be playing musical instruments loudly and apparently under the influence of alcohol. They were requested to stop playing music and to disperse, but, instead, they became hostile, and assaulted the Police officers and damaged one Police vehicle. Four Police officers were injured and were conveyed to Dr. Jeetoo hospital for treatment.

The other Police officers returned to Abercrombie Police station and sought reinforcement. In the meantime, the crowd increased in number and it obstructed Nicolay Road by placing metal barriers kept at Abercrombie market fair.

The Divisional Commander of the Metropolitan (North) together with Police Officers and SSU staff again proceeded to the spot. Warning was again given on two occasions to the crowd to disperse. Since they failed to do so, SSU personnel were ordered to fire tear gas in their direction, following which the crowd dispersed.

The Police initiated an enquiry into the incident. In the course of the enquiry, seven persons were arrested and one reported to the Abercrombie Police station accompanied by her counsel. Six were charged with a provisional charge of “assaulting Police causing effusion of blood and remaining in an unlawful assembly”. One was provisionally charged for “remaining in an unlawful assembly”. Another person was provisionally charged for “remaining in an
unlawful assembly with an offensive weapon”. They all appeared in court and they were granted bail, but one of them was remanded to jail as he was unable to furnish the required surety.

Police enquiry is still under way. On completion of the enquiry, the case file will be forwarded to the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

As for the incident at Triolet, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that authorisation was given to Light Ministries International for the holding of the National Gospel Festival 2010 from 12 to 14 March 2010 at Triolet. On the first two days, the ceremony was held from 16 00 hours to 19 00 hours and ended without any incident.

However, on the last day at about 17 45 hours, whilst the function was in progress, a group of persons who were inside the tent created disturbances. Following intervention by the Police, they left the tent and the Police cordoned off the tent. Afterwards they started throwing stones at the tent from an adjacent sugarcane field.

Police carried out an enquiry into the incident and on 15 March four persons were arrested. A provisional charge of “Disturbing Religious Ceremony” was lodged against them before Pamplemousses Court on 17 March, 2010.

They were released on the same day after furnishing a surety of Rs 3,000 and with condition to report at the nearest Police station of their residence on the last Saturday of each month. Enquiry into this incident is still under way and, upon completion, will be submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

Regarding part (a) (ii) of the question, I take it that, by bouncers, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to security guards as defined under the
Private Security Service Act, as well as persons employed by the owners of night clubs, discotheques, gaming houses, etc, to maintain security on the premises.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Police enquiry has been initiated in several cases where security guards have been found to be in possession of illegal weapons and the law has been stiffened for possession of illegal firearms, as I may remind the House, since May 2006.

As regards part (a) (iii) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 158 cases of assault on Police officers have been reported from December 2008 to 30 March 2010, including 19 cases involving offensive weapons.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during the past weeks, a number of assaults have been perpetrated on Police officers during the performance of their duties and this demonstrates a complete lack of respect for lawful authorities. Such behaviour, as I said to the House, is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Regarding Prison officers, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that from January 2009 to date, a total of eight cases of assaults on Prison officers have been reported to the Police, of whom seven were assaulted while on duty and one while off duty.

Out of the eight cases, two have been completed and one pending trial. Police enquiries are ongoing in the six other cases and as soon as they are completed, they will be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice.

I have already mentioned before in this august Assembly that those who commit such offences will have to bear the full consequences of their acts. In this regard, my Government has sent a strong signal by introducing last week, for First
Reading, the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill which provides for tougher penalties in cases of assault against an agent of the civil or military authorities or any person entrusted with a public duty.

In regard to part (a) (iv) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 15 persons have been arrested in connection with the murder of Denis Fine. Police enquiry is in progress and the advice of the DPP will be sought as soon as the enquiry is completed.

As regards part (a) (v) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 16 March 2010 at 13:45 hours, one Mrs M. S. H., aged 45, of no calling, residing at Flat Universal, reported that on the previous day, that is, 15 March, around 06:30 hours, she sent her 8 year old son, A. D. H., to buy bread. As the boy was late, at around 08:15 hours, she went to look for him and found him near Rose Hill Market. He did not relate anything to her immediately. However, around 14:00 hours on the same day, as A. D. H. was feeling unwell, she brought him to Victoria Hospital, where he then related to her that on his way to the shop, an unknown man brought him in a bush along Ollivier Avenue and sodomised him.

On 16 March 2010 at 16:00 hours, the victim was examined by a Police Medical Officer and he was admitted to Victoria Hospital.

On 17 March 2010 at 14:30 hours, the Police arrested the accused, one J. M. aged 65, no calling, habitual criminal of no fixed place of abode. He has confessed his guilt. He is detained in Police cell and will appear before Rose Hill Court on 01 April 2010.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (b) of the question, I should like to remind the House that a series of measures were initiated during my first mandate
and have been consolidated during my present mandate, culminating with the introduction and implementation of a National Policing Strategic Framework which I launched last February.

Let me now enumerate some of the measures we have implemented recently to combat criminality in general. These include -

- installation of the first CCTV Street Surveillance System in Flic-en-Flac in April last year. This is being extended to Grand’ Baie and Port Louis by May of this year. Another CCTV Street Surveillance System has been installed in Quatre Bornes, covering the region between St Jean and Candos. It is interesting to note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the crime rate at Flic-en-Flac went down by more than 80%. We have also managed to solve 2 criminal cases where there were no direct witnesses to the crime through reviewing the films from the CCTV cameras;

- commissioning of the twin-engine Advanced Light Helicopter “DHRUV” which has enhanced Search and Rescue capability and has an increased surveillance radius including at sea;

- use of modern techniques by the Police, computer-assisted identification of suspects, “photo-robots” which have been provided by France, video recording of interrogations, new fingerprint and body-fluids search tools;

- the implementation of the Crime Occurrence Tracking System (COTS) is well under way. The project consists of the automation of all processes and the computerisation of the functionalities of the Mauritius Police Force. It will connect all the Police stations of the island. The system will be an effective tool in Police investigation as it will provide a working interface
between the Police Force and other public sector institutions, namely the
Judiciary and the Prisons Services;

• the commissioning of a new Digital Radio Communication System with
more than 3,000 terminals to replace the old Analogue System which is now
25 years old;

• acquisition of a coastal Surveillance Radar System which will provide
round the island surveillance cover on a 24-hour basis off mainland
Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agaléga and St Brandon against any illegal activities
in our waters;

• the acquisition of the sophisticated Offshore Patrol Vessel will also
complement this action;

• the training of Police officers has been stepped up. Since 2005, over 700
Police officers have followed specialised training courses abroad in a wide
range of fields; namely investigative methods, combating drug trafficking,
terrorism, and money laundering, ballistics, graphology and cybercrime, and

• an Anti-Terrorist Cell has been set-up in my office which is exchanging
information with other anti-terrorist organisations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, despite the fact that crime statistics indicate clearly
that there is a downward trend in criminality, there is a perception that the law and
order situation is deteriorating in the country. This could well be due to the fact
that some crimes have been perpetuated in a most horrible manner and therefore
given a lot of publicity. However, these perceptions are often based on incomplete
and incorrect information. I also feel that there could be attempts to undermine the
Police Force. I would like, in unequivocal terms, reiterate my trust in the Commissioner of Police and my confidence in the Police Force. Those destabilising elements will, under no circumstances, be allowed to succeed in their nefarious intentions as they are playing with the security of our country.

I would like to seize this opportunity to enlighten our citizens both on the true law and order situation, and on blatant attempts persistently made over the past years to sap the morale of the Police, create disaffection within its ranks, and to erode public confidence in the Police.

We all know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the political hobby-horse of demagogues is to artificially create a semblance of an alarmingly chaotic law and order situation …

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

The Prime Minister: …with the sole aim of creating a psychosis in the population and subsequently leveraging on it for political mileage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I re-emphasise that in all genuinely democratic countries adherence to and reinforcement of law and order also require the collaboration of society at large. Mauritius is not an exception to that rule. Thus, while the Police has redoubled its vigilance in the fight against crime, and modernised its handling of the law and order situation, the active collaboration of all members of society has made it expedient for crime to be detected promptly after they have been committed. And the rapidity in crime detection in the
majority of cases has been coupled with effective police intelligence which has allowed crime prevention in many of the areas.


**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I take it that you will grant Members additional time as required, being given that the hon. Prime Minister has answered to the PNQ and half a dozen different PQs. Can I start by a general remark? The hon. Prime Minister has quoted figures that intend to be reassuring but, at the same time, he has pointed out that the population at large does not feel reassure at all; on the contrary, and that the nature of certain new types of crimes is causing a lot of worry across the country. Will the Prime Minister agree with me that a new situation requires new measures to better protect the population?

**The Prime Minister:** In all countries Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, criminals are people who want to offend against the law. They try to devise new ways of creating disorder and going on with the business. I was giving an example the other day in the House itself. For example, in the U.K., crimes with the knives have increased alarmingly. A crime with a knife is being committed every 12 seconds in the UK today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Naturally, we have to respond -
and I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition - with new measures, some of which I have enumerated, others will come up with new legislation, I hope shortly.

Mr Bérenge: I can begin with the riots at Ste Croix on Saturday 13 March. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that there has been a series of such riots, that in every case the instigated has been a political agent - a lady political agent - who keeps on saying that gouvernement dans nou la main and who is protected indeed and who has indeed political protection.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenge: Everybody knows it! Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the lady is married to a Police officer…

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenge: …who is under interdiction for rogue and vagabond and which case is before the court and who is still staying in the police quarters, narguant tout le monde and that the same lady who has political protection also got a piece of land from Government.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: First of all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would have thought that the facts speak for themselves. If that lady feels that she is a protected
agent, then why has she been arrested and why has she been provided with charge? Not only her, but also provisional charges have been led against members of her family?

Now, as for the Police officer, I must say that he was living in the quarters, he has been sued for the reasons that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said. The case went to court. We cannot take them out until he is proved guilty. He has won the case in court, but the DPP has appealed against the case. Another proof that there is no protection here! The DPP has - we agree …

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Exactly! But the way the Leader of the Opposition is implying that she is protected and all this, here is the case where the institutions are working. First of all she has been charged. Secondly, not only her, but also her children, I believe, have been charged. Thirdly, although the case was dismissed in court, the DPP has appealed against that. The other things that I must say to the House - perhaps the hon. Leader of the Opposition does not know - is that he was occupying the police quarters, they are married couples, and when they were given the police quarters, there were not cases against him or whatever.

Since there have been cases against her, they have been asked to vacate the police quarters. There is a procedure for vacation of police quarters, they are married couples. It is not just she only, there are plenty of Police officers who are not vacating quarters when they have been asked to vacate. When they do not vacate, they are given another letter or instructions that they have to vacate. If they continue not to vacate the quarter, then the Commissioner of Police goes to the
State Law Office and an eviction order is sent to the person. This is precisely what has happened in this case.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister if he has inquired as to how many times that political agent has been involved in such riots and other criminal cases?

**The Prime Minister:** Well, all I can say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that if every time, whoever it is thinks that they can break the law because they are political agent or whatever, they are sued and brought to justice. I believe that she also had an altercation at least – I am speaking from memory - where again she has been charged and sent to court.

**Mr Bérenger:** Let us move to the Triolet incidence. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he finds it acceptable that there was a number of Police officers on the spot, some 15 people came in and started misbehaving, violence and so on. No one was arrested on the spot. People were arrested after the event. How come the people who were there were not protected and there was no arrest on the spot?

**The Prime Minister:** The facts that I have don’t quite corroborate with this. The Police told me that there were so many people and if they started arresting people there and then they would have created a riot. What they did was to note who they were, but they did protect the people. They cordoned off the area and as I said these people went out and then they started throwing stones on the Police outside from a sugarcane field. But the next day the Police went on to arrest those whom they suspected of having created the trouble.

**Mr Bérenger:** Let us move on some of the bouncers. The hon. Prime Minister is aware that on 01 January, somebody was killed by bouncers amongst
The Prime Minister: Yes …

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! This is uncalled for!

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have noted that these are areas where people hang around, drink and all these things and they are involved also in drug taking and all that. Police are stepping up in those areas and also there is a committee that has been set up to look into all these questions of casinos and private clubs as well because some private clubs also are finding a way of avoiding the definition that we have for private clubs.

Mr Bérenger: On the same subject Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, clearly - the amount of illegal weapons, firearms and so on that are used in such incidents, I am sure the Prime Minister will agree with me, is a clear indication that there is a lot of illegal firearms and other illegal weapons across the country. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us in the presence of all these incidents, whether a new drive will be carried out by the Police under his instructions to bring in all these illegal firearms and weapons that are clearly all over the place?

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is precisely why we amended the Firearms Act in 2006. It was later proclaimed; it is precisely to stiffen the law. Then I asked - I thought it was a good policy - that the Commissioner of Police should advertised it, that people should be told that these
are the new penalties for possession of illegal arms. If they are caught with illegal arms, the penalties are much stiffer than they were. On discussion with him, they were also given a period of time for people to return the illegal arms if they wanted to.

The law is there, the penalties are stiffer, the Police are doing all that they can. Everybody who is actually found with an illegal weapon - sometimes they are just found just on a road block with illegal weapons - the case is being pursued in court and they are going to face the stiffer penalties that are there in the law.

**Mr Bérenger:** We can move on to the aggressions against Police officers and prison officers. The information that the hon. Prime Minister has given us is very disturbing. There are numerous instances of aggression against police officers and prison officers. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us whether the situation is not terrible inside the prisons themselves? Portable phones, drugs and weapons have been found inside the prison. It is alleged that drug trafficking is organised from inside the prison.

*(Interruption)*

Alleged and it is before the courts, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir! It is alleged that the aggression against the prison officers has been organised by drug barons from inside the prison. Has all this been investigated into and what tougher measures are going to be taken to rectify things?

**The Prime Minister:** All this have been investigated into. We have problems in the prisons, we must agree. We have a very good, efficient person in charge of the prisons.

*(Interruption)*
The Deputy Speaker: Order! The Prime Minister is replying.

The Prime Minister: We have a very efficient person in charge of the prisons. I must say to the House that I had talked to him, he says that sometimes there is no cooperation with the people working under him and it is difficult. That is why we have reinforced police presence in the prisons, that is why also we are bringing tougher penalties. We have already brought the first reading of the law concerning assault against police officers or prison officers. There have been some comments on this law, that is why I did not bring it for second reading yet, because there have been some comments, some people are saying that we are taking the discretion from the courts, but we need also, because very often, I must say this to the House also, that these people are not being punished severely enough. We must decide which way we want to go.

Mr Bérenger: We can move on to the Denis Fine assassination, Denis Fine affairs. I am sure the Prime Minister is aware of a statement made by the Chief of the MCIT, Superintendent of Police, before a court on 23 March when he said that the police know who killed Mr Denis Fine, that he is a Mauritian, but that he is at large. Can I ask the hon Prime Minister whether he does not find that shocking? What it means is that a murderer is at large, he can commit any other crime. What special measures have been taken after that statement to know where that person is? Road blocks, special police operations, intelligence information! It can’t be business as usual when the Chief of the MCIT says:”we know who killed, he is a Mauritian and he is at large”. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he was not shocked by that statement and what has happened since?

The Prime Minister: I believe he said he thinks he knows who is it, that is what I have been told but, in any case, the Police think they have actually caught
the person among the persons that they have caught, but they are still using road blocks, they are still looking for others who might be connected with that murder.

**Mr Bérenger:** We can move on to the case of the sexual assault on an eight-year old child at Rose-Hill. The hon. Prime Minister has not entered into detail, but I am sure he must be aware that that person has been sentenced by courts on 34 occasions. He has raped and murdered his young niece, he has raped a handicapped and I could go on and on. There have been repeated cases of sexual violence against youth and others, even a handicapped. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether in such cases, consideration has been given to introducing legislation to provide for – don’t panick - chemical castration, that is, the administration of medication designed to reduce libido and sexual activity in the hope of preventing rapists, child molesters and other sex offenders from repeating their crime.

*(Interrupt)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bérenger:** There are numerous countries, the U.K., France, the U.S, throughout the world, where cases have been repeated – this is the most serious subject, but you have honourable fools like that.

*(Interrupt)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Leader of Opposition, please put your question.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, therefore, being given that this is quite spread throughout the world, well legalised, provided for in legislation and well put into practice, whether consideration has been or will be given to introducing such legislation in the case of serial sexual abuses of children and others?
**The Prime Minister:** We have looked at that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Leader of the Opposition said himself that this person has not done it once, but many times. He has even murdered. We have recently had a case where a person, habitual criminal again, has been convicted in court many times, then committed a murder, because they always get out, they always manage to pay a fine; so many years they are supposed to be in jail and you find that for good behaviour they come out earlier. He has come out following charges of larceny with violence, murdered somebody, sent back to jail, has come out again and murdered again. That is why I know what position I took. That is why I definitely think that the death penalty is due in this country.

* (Interuption) *

Many people think that way. My position was different before and I am honestly saying that I have changed my views on this because this kind of things would not have happened had we had the death penalty and we must also think of the victims.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr Bérenger:** We should not enter into a debate on the death penalty on this occasion. As we know, throughout the world, reports have come out on whether the death penalty has an impact on crime or not, that’s another debate. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, in fact, what is required for the Police is to have the financial and material means to carry out its mission? I see from figures that as a percentage of total Government Expenditure from 2006/2007 to 2007/2008, in fact, as a percentage of total Government expenditure, expenditure on Police has gone down. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister how things have evolved since, as a percentage of Government Expenditure, and whether the time has not
come to put money where crime is and to give the Police all they need to combat
the law and order problems that this country knows these days?

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I saw this also in ‘L’Express’
this morning. This is not actually quite correct. I give you the figures, Mr Deputy
Speaker, Sir. The total spent on the Police department in 2000/2001 was Rs1.841
billion. That sum has increased materially every year since then. Except for
2006/2007 approximately it was the same. But compared to Rs1.841 billion in
2000/2001 it is now Rs5.203 billion, but if you look at the percentage of the total
expenditure - I will give these figures as well - in 2000/2001 it was 6% and today it
is 6.5%.

Mr Ganoo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware of the
fact that one of the fundamental problems of law and order here is that there is a
shortage of Police Officers in our Police stations of the CID department, and Police
officers tend to retire earlier today and the recruitment exercise has not been
carried out as regularly as it should have been so that today the Police force is
suffering from a lack of personnel and human resources and this one of the
problems of law and order?

The Prime Minister: No, I do not tend to agree. What we are doing, Mr
Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to make sure that the new recruits are properly, first of all,
selected, then they get the proper training and it is not quite true to say that there
has been no recruitment. There has been a recruitment of, I think, 700 Police
officers recently. They are being trained now. There is a new recruitment which is
being done now, I think, for about 550 Police officers. So, recruitment is going on.
It is also true to say that some Police officers retire earlier. That has always been
the case and they are being replaced.
The Deputy Speaker: I will allow one question each from the three hon. Members whose parliamentary questions have been answered - hon. Gunness, hon. Lesjongard and hon. Guimbeau and that will be the end of it because of time constraints.

Mr Gunness: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has received complaints from people of Bassin Road concerning a pool house where people play billard and on Fridays and Saturdays it is converted into a nightclub and very often there are troubles? Is the hon. Prime Minister aware of it? Has he received complaints and will he check whether this gentleman has a proper permit to run that nightclub?

The Prime Minister: In fact, we are aware of it and this is being looked into. It is a question of days. There is some confusion on what kind of permit they need but, obviously, some of the permits, from what information I have, have not been properly adhered to and they are being removed.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Over the past four years, all the riots at St. Croix seem to originate from the staff quarters which are found within the Police station and people in the vicinity believe that the problem originates from there. Does not the hon. Prime Minister feel that it is high time that we request that family at the origin of the problems to vacate the quarters at St. Croix?

The Prime Minister: That is what I said. I do not know whether the hon. Member is referring to the same case for vacation, but we need also the police quarters. How far we can move it from the Police station is another matter? It is a
question of acquiring land and all this. But I can assure the hon. Member that the Commissioner of Police is looking into all aspects of this.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Guimbeau!

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have a supplementary question concerning the riots at Triolet. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, vehicles were criminally damaged, criminal fire was put in the sugar fields, members of the assembly were threatened, the holy Bible was torn and thrown down, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and piétiné. (Interruptions)

Mr Guimbeau: This is the truth!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Guimbeau: I have got the video and the video is with the Police. Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all this was done in the presence of the Police. Will the hon. Prime Minister inquire with the Commissioner of Police, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if provisional charges of damaging properties by hand and arson have been laid and, if not, why not? Secondly will the hon. Prime Minister ensure the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there will be no cover-up on the Triolet riots, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Leader of the Opposition did ask the question. I have already mentioned that people have been charged. The hon. Member asked why not? People have been charged and the case is now going to court. We must also see to it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Police cannot be held responsible for the behaviour of citizens. If people go and tear Bibles there,
as the hon. Member is saying, that is not the problem of the Police. The Police are acting.

**Mr Guimbeau:** What about the charges?

**The Prime Minister:** The charges have been laid, I said that. I just mentioned it. Does the hon. Member want me to re-read the charges? Does he want to know exactly the charges? I have mentioned so many of the charges that have been laid, so many people have been arrested.

(*Interruptions*)

**Mr Bérenger:** The law and order situation is already very bad. Now we are entering a very ..

(*Interruptions*)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Oder!

**Mr Bérenger:** We are entering a very delicate period of time - *pré-électorale*, then elections and then post elections. Will the hon. Prime Minister, being given the already bad law and order situation, give the guarantee to the country that there will be no politicising of the Police, of any policeman or policewoman during that delicate period, that the Police will keep a close watch on the bouncers that have been involved in violent behaviour - not all - and that the Commissioner of Police, as per the Constitution, will be given full freedom to apply the law without political bias over that delicate period of time?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, I think the facts that I have mentioned in this House today speak for themselves. There has been no tolerance of anyone and I must categorically state the unflinching principle and
practice of zero tolerance for any intervention from any quarters, be it partial or not. The Police inquiry is going on into every case that has happened and action is being taken. I have mentioned that so many charges have been laid. I can quite understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the temptation of forces of some of the Opposition to make use of such themes as law and order in their campaign as the electoral campaign is coming because they have no other valid arguments against the numerous achievements of this Government.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! I cannot hear.

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in no country in the world - although in an ideal world we would have wished to have zero crime rate – this happens. But, I can assure the House that the Commissioner of Police has full independence, that is, the proof of the pudding is there and also he is acting where he should be. That is why I say I have full confidence in him and the Police force and I think they are doing a tremendous job.

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to the hon. Prime Minister. The table has been advised that Parliamentary Question No. B/74 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister will now be replied by the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications.