

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**ACP SUGAR PRICES - REDUCTION, COMPENSATION, ETC.**

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 and Outer Islands whether, in regard to -

- (a) proposals for a 39% reduction of ACP sugar prices and the 80% compensation of EU Sugar Producers;
- (a) the EU budget deadlock and the proposed new Global Adjustment Fund, and
- (a) the US and EU farms tariffs cuts offers at the WTO, he will state if -
 - (i) he has written or talked to the leaders of UK, France, Germany, Italy and the European Parliament, and
 - (i) he is cautiously optimistic that the EU Commission's proposal will be improved upon.

The Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Mr Speaker, Sir ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Shame! Shame!

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! It is for the Executive to decide who is going to answer the question.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have no lesson to learn. In fact, we have come here to dispense as much information as possible. If the Leader

of the Opposition wants to play politics, because he has lost all the political mileage, he should seek elsewhere. Shame on him!

I would at the very outset point out that trade issues and in particular those regarding sugar, textile and tuna are above party politics and indeed, I would like to recall, Sir, that you recently led a bipartisan delegation to the EU and Mauritius to lobby for our vital interests.

Regarding the specific issues raised, I would like to inform the House of the following -

Ever since July 2005, this Government has intensified action at all levels to counter the proposal of the Commission of 22 June 2005 which, *inter alia*, calls for a 39% reduction over four years with a 60% compensation for EU producers.

On 09 July, the Prime Minister had a working session with all the local stakeholders. In fact, that was the first working session of this Government, and I proceeded to the European Parliament to participate in a meeting on the EU Sugar Régime. The ACP point of view was very forcefully put across. Subsequently, I led a lobbying mission to the EU and in my capacity as ACP Ministerial spokesperson, I met Ministers from key EU member States. The Prime Minister had the opportunity on several occasions, in the course of his overseas missions, to actively canvass support for the ACP cause. My colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has written to Mrs Beckett, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of UK and chair of the EU Agriculture Council to put our case across. He also raised the matter in the presence of LDC delegates and ACP delegates in New York with Jack Straw and Mrs Beckett who holds the chair of the EU Agriculture Council.

The House would recall that the hon. Prime Minister raised the issue with President Chirac in Madagascar and the Prime Minister of Italy at the UN General Assembly. He also highlighted strongly the threats of the reforms of the EU Sugar Régime and the vulnerability of the small island States in his statement in New York.

The hon. Prime Minister also discussed lengthily with Mr Louis Michel, EU Commissioner for Development, underlining the need to support our social plans following the reform of the EU Sugar Régime. The Prime Minister gave the indicative figures for the accompanying measures to Mr Michel and President Chirac.

I wish to inform the House that during the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to be held in Malta from 25 to 27 November, the ACP Heads of States are expected to meet Prime Minister Tony Blair to discuss the issue of sugar reform.

Our Prime Minister has already sought an appointment with Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The ACP Ministers responsible for sugar met in Kisumu, Kenya and a course of action was charted out for sugar both at ACP and EU level.

Indeed, in Kisumu we agreed to the following -

- (i) intensive lobbying action in the EU vis-a-vis EU member States, EU Commission, European Parliament, NGOs and EU Producers;
- (i) intensive and effective participation in the WTO negotiations prior to and beyond the Hong Kong Ministerial meeting;
- (i) a detailed set of issues to defend at the WTO such as moderate tariff cuts, the maintenance of the Special Safeguard Clause, the categorisation of the sugar as a sensitive product.

From now till November, the following is planned -

- (i) lobbying mission from 14 November onwards to Germany, Spain and France are being planned. Appointments are being sought;
- (i) we would meet the Minister of Agriculture of France in early December. In fact, he is arriving on 02 December in Mauritius.

To this end we will optimise all our resources to ensure that our interests are best safeguarded to the best possible.

Regarding the accompanying measures, Mauritius has already in June 2005 submitted a copy of its action plan to the EU Commission and a copy of the Road Map has already been forwarded to the Commission.

It is a fact that talks on the financial perspectives have not been conclusive earlier this year. However, it is understood that all efforts are being made by the EU member States to secure a deal on the financial

perspectives as soon as possible either under the UK presidency or in the early days of the Austrian presidency.

At EU level, the state of play is as follows -

- (i) eleven member states are opposing the drastic nature of the reform, namely Poland which has a population of more than 32% involved in the agricultural sector, Hungary, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Greece, Italy and Slovenia, they hold a minority bloc and can exercise influence upon the proposal made in the legislative text of the Commission;
- (ii) most of the NGOs are against the depth of the cut and in particular their negative impact on ACP and LDC;
- (iii) the rapporteur of the European Parliament's Commission on Agriculture now calls for a moderate cut of 25%; this Commission is expected to meet on 29 November 2005 to consider the report of the rapporteur and the Parliament would meet in plenary session in January to adopt the report of the Commission on Agriculture;

All said and done, Mr Speaker, Sir, the WTO negotiations would determine the extent of price reductions in respect of sugar. Most of the trading partners have made proposals in the context of the WTO negotiations in agriculture wherever according to the Doha Mandate of 2001 and the Framework Agreement of 2004 there should be substantial improvement in market access.

Thus the US, the G20, the Commission, the G10 and the ACP have tabled proposals. Regarding the border protection for sugar in the EU i.e. the tariffs and the Special Safeguard Clause, the following is relevant -

- (i) US: 90% reduction in tariffs and the elimination of the Special Safeguard Clause;
- (ii) G 20: 75% tariff reduction and the elimination of the Special Safeguard Clause;
- (iii) the US and the G 20 call for severe restrictions in respect of the choice and treatment of sensitive products;

- (i) the Commission: 60% tariff reduction, maintenance of the Special Safeguard Clause for sugar. While the EU calls for flexibility in respect of sensitive products;
- (i) the G 10: 45% tariff reduction, maintenance of the Special Safeguard Clause, significant flexibility for sensitive products and sugar for the ACP to be treated as a sensitive product;
- (i) the ACP: 42% tariff reduction, sugar for the ACP being treated as a sensitive product.

Mr Speaker Sir, I have placed emphasis on the issue of sensitive products as categorisation of sugar, as such a product entails lower tariff cut, and consequently lower price cut.

The proposals of the G 20 and the US would purely and simply spell doomsday for us. That of the Commission, which is vehemently opposed by France, would be very damning for us as well as for the G 10.

However, the proposal of the Commission, albeit by a major trading bloc, is not an end in itself but is one among other proposals.

The ACP, Mauritius being the coordinator, and the G 10, as well as the G 33, a group of developing countries calling for flexibility on special products, are canvassing very strongly for lower ambition in the negotiations. Mr Speaker, Sir, lower ambitions in agriculture would mean lower ambitions in NAMA and services. The ACP have clearly spelt out their concerns and pointed out the conditions that would allow them to join a consensus, indeed. I quote -

“The issue of preference is vital for the ACP. The group will not be able to join the consensus on a modalities text that does not address its concerns on preference erosion in a meaningful and effective manner. Failing to do so would impose a disproportionate share of the costs of reform on some of the poorest and more vulnerable Members of the WTO”. Unquote

May we remind ourselves that Seattle and Cancun were failures because some majors tried to impose their view on the weak and the vulnerable?

We are as ACP planning to step up action through more direct participation and consolidation of our alliances with like-minded countries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as Spokesman of the ACP for sugar and as ACP coordinator in the WTO, Mauritius enjoys a high credibility and is vested with the trust and support of a large constituency and will act at all levels to safeguard our best interests. Eleven EU Member States are against the depth of the reform and they hold a minority bloc. We would canvass for our position in the forthcoming African Group and ACP Trade Ministers meeting. The European Parliament is calling for moderate price cuts.

In this regard, I would like to inform the House, that you, Sir, as well as I have been in touch with Mr Joseph Daul, Chairman of the Commission on Agriculture of the European Parliament. Furthermore, it would be useful to note that the European Parliament has a co-decision role in respect of accompanying measures and the proposals of Mr Lehideux, rapporteur of the Commission on Development of the European Parliament are useful moves in our direction.

Mr Speaker Sir, I have tried to present the facts in a non-partisan manner. I have appealed, but unfortunately our appeal has fallen on deaf ears, that on this particular we should rise above party politics.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have addressed my PNQ to the hon. Prime Minister because it is an issue of national importance these days.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Earlier I stated that it is for the Executive to decide who is the Minister who is going to answer the PNQ.

Mr Bérenger: I am saying why I put my question to the hon. Prime Minister. I have heard an appeal also, first because it is the national dossier these days; secondly, because it concerns more than agriculture and, thirdly, because there is now consensus that it is at Heads of Government level that things ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, hon. Leader of the Opposition. I have already stated that it is for the Executive to decide who is going to answer the question. It has been answered and I will ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition to proceed with the supplementary questions.

Mr Bérenger: I wish to put on record that I am shocked that the hon. Prime Minister should have handed over to the Minister of Agriculture to reply to this question ...

(Interruptions)

To get more information pending the Prime Minister being in control of the file, paragraph (a) of my question refers to an 80% compensation for European Union Sugar Producers. As the Prime Minister and the Minister know, the proposal is for 60%, but 80% is being considered by the European Parliament, by the special Committee and *rapporteurs*. Now, here, Mr Speaker, Sir, the attitude has been that if there is 80% instead of 60% compensation for the European Union Sugar Producers, this would automatically benefit us. Can I ask Government, therefore, whether it is confirmed that this Committee of the European Parliament is going to propose 80% instead of 60%? Has that been discussed in Government? And does Government, by this argument, which I don't, that if it is 80%, it will automatically benefit us?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as we are concerned, the matter has not yet been fully discussed by the European Parliament. We are monitoring the situation very closely. In fact, the Prime Minister raised the political profile and took the matter and discussed it with the President and the Prime Minister of France. Over and above that, in New York the matter was raised very forcefully.

We are monitoring the situation very closely. Our Ambassador in Brussels is supplying us with all the relevant information. Only yesterday we had a meeting in my office, precisely, to keep tag and to be updated in respect of the changes which are evolving very fast.

Mr Bérenger: My question is the following: will Government consider the following points: the attitude that if the European Union Sugar Producers get 80% compensation instead of 60% would automatically benefit us. I don't go for that because, of course, the European Union budget, the amount of money that there is to throw around is limited, it is not unlimited. Therefore, the danger is that the more is thrown, *tant mieux pour eux*, but the more is thrown after the European Union sugar producers, the less there will be for others including ACP sugar producers. Has this been discussed in Government and with the private sector?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that there have been proposals made by the Commission that

they are willing to table 40 m. euros. In fact, the British, which holds the UK Presidency has come up with a figure of 100 m. euros now, and then there is the proposal made by the *rapporteur* Lehideux which, unfortunately, has been set aside by the Parliament. We are saying in respect of commitments taken in Kisumu - and we have said it loud and clear - Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are going to fight for a competitiveness fund and we have indicative figures which are submitted by the Prime Minister in respect of shortfalls in revenue. So, we will cross the bridge when we reach there. We don't live in a hypothetical world, Mr Speaker, Sir, we live on facts and figures; and we come to grips with facts and figures.

Mr Bérenger: I think the Government will be well advised to consider the issue, to discuss it with the private sector and adopt a clear stand on the issue of whether an 80% compensation of European Union sugar producers would benefit us or not. But since the Minister has raised the issue – he is mixing up two issues – of the 40 m. euros supposedly to help ACP countries, can I ask the Minister whether he is aware that this new global adjustment fund which is being proposed by the European Commission, whereas for ACP countries 40 m. euros are being proposed for one year. In this case 3.5 billion euros a year are being proposed for that brand new fund to be set up supposedly to help European countries adjust to globalisation. Can I ask whether Government is indeed following very closely the right issue and putting forcefully across that this kind of double standard cannot hold?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, we have precisely impressed upon the Commission of the importance of longstanding preferential, the historical and political dimension and the reason as to why we need comparable level of accompanying measures as other EU countries.

Let me impress upon the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a proposal made by Commissioner Baroso. This proposal of setting up a Rs4 billion-plan to fund retraining of workers has run into trouble. None of the EU Head of States has agreed to it. It is neither here nor there.

(Interruptions)

I have downloaded the latest information with respect of this fund. It is a fund which is neither here nor there, Mr Speaker, Sir. Of course, we are making our point very forcefully. When we made a strong plea before the European Parliament, we talked of the commonality of interest, we talked of historical dimension. We appealed to them that we need to have comparable level of financial support as EU countries, Mr Speaker, Sir. Our message had been conveyed loud and clear to the point that today like-minded

countries and non-governmental organisations support our request, Mr Speaker, Sir, and if anything, the solidarity amongst ACP and LDC has been strengthened to enable us, as a quad, Mr Speaker, Sir, to put our case across very forcefully.

Mr Bérenger: As regards part (c) of the question, that is, the offers of tariffs cuts at the WTO, can I ask whether Government can tell us what is being proposed by the European Union exempt sugar as a sensitive product from any tariff cut or whether there will be a tariff cut lower than for other products and, in that case, whether there has been any study done by Government and the private sector together to measure what would be the impact on the sugar protocol price of the European Union proposal at the WTO?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that contrary to them, we have a select working group on sugar whereas they saw to it that this should disappear. Of course, we are monitoring the situation very closely on a day-to-day basis. Only yesterday, the International Trade Division met shortly after we met in my office to monitor the situation very closely. Of course, we are very concerned when it comes to the reduction of tariffs. In my reply, I stated, in no uncertain terms, that we have to see to it that there is a maintenance of the Safeguard Clause, that the sugar remains on the list of sensitive products. In fact, EU itself has said that sugar should be on the list of sensitive products. I grant the Leader of the Opposition that EU is under a lot of pressure, but mind you, we have seen the reaction of France, in fact, saying that perhaps the Trade Commissioner is acting outside its mandate. So, like-minded countries are watching the situation very closely, G33, G10, the alliance which is constantly being built, because we believe that longstanding trade preferences have to be maintained, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, my reference to asking the hon. Prime Minister what he has done as the Heads of State and Government level, did I hear that a request has been made for an appointment with Prime Minister Blair, UK chairing the European Union? Can I know whether any meeting between the ACP sugar producers at Heads of States and Government level and the European Union Troika is planned?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that there is a lot of repair that has to be done, because in trying to punch above his political weight, a lot of damage was done and relations between UK and Mauritius became sour, Mr Speaker, Sir!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: Let me remind him he failed and he failed abysmally on this issue whereas, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have painstakingly constructed that relationship, strengthened that relationship and we know the friendly relationship that exists between the Prime Minister and Tony Blair. It is mutual respect, but when we come to use our leverage, we shall do so. Yes, the Prime Minister has sought a meeting with Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Mr Bérenger: On the part where I referred to the European Parliament, can I ask how is it that Guyana has managed to bring hon. Mrs Kinnock, a lady very influential in the European Parliament, to their country and we have not? Have we tried? It is not too late and I know, Mr Speaker, it was publicly stated that Government will try to invite Mr Fruteau from Réunion Island, next door. So, can I know where matters stand as far as Mr Fruteau is concerned, and Mrs Kinnock is concerned after her trip to Guyana and whether we have extended an invitation to the Chairperson of the Agricultural Commission of the European Union, Mr Joseph Daul to visit Mauritius also?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have done better!

(Interruptions)

On 02 December, the French Minister of Agriculture is coming over. I was on the phone with Mr Joseph Daul in the light of statement made by Trade Commissioner Mandelson on the issue of tariff. In fact, he advised us, because there has been constant exchange of information. My good friend, hon. Minister Dulloo, has interacted with Pascal Lamy only yesterday. And, of course, there was also exchange of correspondence between hon. Mrs Beckett and our Minister of Foreign Affairs. Of course, we have invited hon. Mrs Kinnock, who is a friend of Mauritius. She has travelled to Mauritius several times and, in fact, she asked to keep her invitation in abeyance and she is coming.

Secondly, Mr Joseph Daul has been here several times unfortunately he is not enjoying too good a health, but when the opportunity arises he will do so. What is better, we talk to each other over the phone; and, my good friend, Mr Fruteau, when he travels to Réunion in December, he has said he will try to make time to come over. So, we are very friendly, Mr Speaker, but we have to safeguard our interest and we are not here to trade our interest. This is what they have done, Mr Speaker, Sir!

(Interruptions)

And you tell me that these people are patriots; they have put country down the drain. Mr Speaker, Sir! We stand for the people. We stand for the corporate sector! We stand for members of the planting community! We have overcome and we shall overcome, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Bérenger: I am more shocked by the tone that we are hearing.

(Interruptions)

Shame on the Minister!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, Order!

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he could confirm that when the by-partisan delegation was in Brussels they were told about Mrs Kinnock's stance being very different from that of the UK as a State? Can the hon. Minister confirm that this is the case?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! The hon. Minister is going to give the answer.

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

I said order, please. Is the hon. Minister going to reply?

Dr. Boolell: I have taken cognizance of this, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I will liaise with the hon. Member ...

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me first of all say that this issue of the Sugar Reform is indeed an issue, which is above party politics, and I am really shocked by the attitude which has been adopted by the Members on the other side.

Mr Speaker: Put the question, please!

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is a simple one. The hon. Minister has rightly said that the issue of Sugar Reform is closely linked to what is happening at the WTO and he also talked about the various

proposals which have been made. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the EU proposal...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Cuttaree: Stop cackling over there! I am making the case for the hon. Minister to understand.

Mr Speaker: Put the question, please!

Mr Cuttaree: The issue of the cuts in tariffs in the WTO for agriculture is closely linked to the demands of the EU for better market access for special products in the markets of the developing countries and in that issue there has been a carving up between, on the one hand, the EU and the US and, on the other hand, the G20. I would like to know whether the Minister does not realise that it is time now for Mauritius to take the lead, as we have done before, and to convene a meeting of the G90 to look closely into all these issues of special products, tariff cuts, linkages with non-agricultural market access before the Hong Kong Meeting, because this is crucial.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not going to comment on what they did and what they did not do. In fact, there is a meeting which is being held today in Geneva with all those countries. I have stated earlier that there have been several meetings to discuss this very sensitive issue. And what we have said and, rightly so, Mauritius has stated, as spokesperson for the ACP in Geneva, that there cannot be operationalisation of the Doha Development Round and, until and unless, our longstanding preferences are taken on board, and the issue of special and differential treatment is taken on board, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Time is over. A last question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, as you are aware the next Ministerial Meeting, under the chairmanship of Mrs Beckett, is on 22 to 24 November.

Mr Speaker: What is the question?

Mr Bodha: The Meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of State is on 25 to 27 November, which means after that Ministerial Meeting. My fear, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that...

Mr Speaker: What is the question, please!

Mr Bodha: My question is: When does the Minister believe a final decision will be taken on the level of the cut, the time span and on the accompanying measures?

Dr. Boolell: It is very difficult for anybody to reply. If course, UK wants a political decision to be taken during its mandate, but it is very difficult for anybody to reply in the light of ongoing discussions amongst the members, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

Mr Bérenger: Well, this is not the point at all. It's in January that Parliament is considering this, Mr Speaker, Sir. The UK is chairing the European Union until December, and then Parliament will consider the proposals in January. Therefore, I would like to put the same question differently. As far as Government is concerned...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: ...and following discussions with the private sector...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr Bérenger: According to Government's information, what is the time frame within which Government believes that a final decision will be taken on the quantum of the decrease, on the accompanying financial measures and on the period of time that it will be spread upon? Within which time frame, according to Government, will the final decision be taken?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I grant the hon. Leader of the Opposition that this is a fair question. But, I have not been gazing in a crystal ball; I wish I could say, but we are monitoring the situation very closely. We hope that a political decision will be taken under the UK mandate. And, of course, this has to be referred to Parliament for a decision to be taken, but it is not binding...

(Interruptions)

It is not binding. You know very well. We are monitoring the situation very closely. I would have liked to say. There have been proposals made by LDC, by like-minded countries, by all different groups, but it is very difficult to come and say this is the decision to be taken by the Ministerial Conference which will be held. We would have liked it to be to the advantage of ACP and to all partners concerned.

Mr Speaker: Time is over! Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister.

The House may wish to be informed that PQ No. I B/427 addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister has been transferred to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Co-operation. It will accordingly be answered at the end of Question Time, that is, after PQ No. I B/465, time permitting.

My second announcement is that there has been a misprint in PQ No. I B/425. Instead of the word 'Priests', it should read 'Jurists'.

AUTOMATIC TELLER MACHINES (ATM) – CASES OF AGGRESSION

(No. I B/424) Mr S. Naidu (Third 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 cases of aggression on people using Automatic Teller Machines (ATM) for banking transactions, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to (a) the number thereof reported since 01 July 2005 and the number of arrests effected in connection therewith and (b) the remedial measures being taken by the Police.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a), I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that since 01 July 2005, two cases

of assault on persons using Automatic Teller Machines (ATM) for banking transactions have been reported to the Police. Both cases occurred in the region of Port Louis.

The first case occurred on 29 September 2005, at 1850 hours, where a lady was assaulted at the MCB Branch at Madad Ul Islam Street, Plaine Verte. A person was arrested on the same day and was charged for offence of “Larceny” and “Possession of Stolen Property”. The case is before the Courts.

The second case occurred at the MCB Branch at Bell Village on 23 October 2005, at 2010 hours, where a couple came to make a deposit at the bank. The husband went to the ATM leaving his wife in the car. After the transaction, the husband was assaulted by two unknown persons and they drove away in his car together with his wife.

The car was later involved in a road accident and the lady was injured and hospitalised. The car was recovered and nothing was stolen. The enquiry is still under way.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that apart from the normal measures taken across the country to combat crimes, he is discussing with the Mauritius Bankers’ Association the proposal to put video cameras near each Automatic Teller Machine (ATM).

I would also like to inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that Government is going ahead with the Street Surveyance Systems, through the implementation of the Closed Circuit Television Project, which is being financed from the line of credit of the People’s Republic of China.

MUSLIM PERSONAL LAW – POLICY DECISIONS

(No. I B/425) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) 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 the Joint Committee of Muslim Jurists and Ulemas and the Muslims Family Council, in regard to the issue of Muslim Personal Law is still in operation and, if so, will he state how many times the Committee met since July 2005.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the decision to set up a Joint Committee of Muslim Lawyers and Muslim religious

personalities to consider whether there is need for regulations to be made under the Civil Status Act to better regulate the Muslim Family Council, or whether there is need to amend the Civil Code was taken by the previous Government in April 2005.

In July 2005, the Chairman on behalf of the Committee asked whether the works that the Committee had started should continue. He was requested to proceed with the exercise and to submit his report to Government, which will then decide on the policy decision to be taken. The Committee has met on three occasions since July 2005, that is, 18 July 2005, 25 July and 27 September 2005.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that the hon. Prime Minister has said that considerable progress has been made during the various sittings of the committee. Do we have roughly a time frame when the committee will submit its recommendations?

The Prime Minister: Sir, I am not in a position to say because they haven't given a time frame, but they have said that they will continue the work and then they will give the report.

QUATRE BORNES - CIVIL STATUS OFFICE – SERVICES OFFERED

(No. I B/426) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) 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 difficulties encountered by people in accessing the services of the Civil Status Officer of Quatre Bornes during weekends for the obtention of a death certificate.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the services for the registration of death and issue of burial permit are available during weekends while the services for the obtention of an official death certificate which is issued after burial are available during weekdays.

Services for the registration of deaths and the issue of a burial permit occurring during weekends in the district of Plaine Wilhems are available either at the Rose Hill Civil Status Office or at the Curepipe Civil Status Office between 9.00 a.m. and noon.

An on-call service is also available from noon to 1700 hours for cases of emergency requiring an early burial. A list of Civil Status Officers providing on-call services is available at the Police Station of each locality.

I have nonetheless requested my office to thoroughly examine the existing system with a view to providing an improved service. I would also invite any member of the public who faces any difficulty with regard to registration of death and issue of burial permit to make an official complaint to the appropriate Office so that action can be taken.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister to ensure that this kind of operation is actually in practice, not just in the district of Plaine Wilhems? Because other Members have told me that this problem is actually across Mauritius.

Mr Speaker: No, this is irrelevant because the question relates to Quatre Bornes.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to ensure that this is actually monitored in practice?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know why the hon. Member must have asked the question. It is probably because people have made suggestions. That is why I said that I have requested my office to re-look at the system with a view to providing an improved service. And I would also invite members of the public who face difficulties to make official complaints, because very often they have difficulties and they do not make an official complaint. If there is no official complaint, it is difficult for us to know and to act accordingly.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can consider the suggestion to make it at district level? I think the question is very pertinent.

Mr Speaker: I said that this question relates specifically to Quatre Bornes.

(Interruptions)

I am saying that the Prime Minister has already answered.

Mr Soodhun: Can he extend it?

Mr Speaker: It is in the Standing Orders. The hon. Member should come with an appropriate question. Next question, hon. Guinness!

(PQ No. I B/427 - See after PQ No. I B/465)

DIGITAL TERRESTRIAL TELEVISION - SET TOP BOXES

(No. I B/428) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) 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 Set Top Boxes for the free TV Channels, he will state if same are now available on the local market and, if so, will he give the names of the importers.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that inquiries carried out by the Consumer Protection Unit have revealed that set top boxes for digital terrestrial television are still not available on the local market.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister will agree that it is nearly one and a half months that the MBC launched these free channels and they are still not available. Can we know where matters stand exactly as at now?

The Prime Minister: Sir, I won't be able to say where matters stand because, as I said, I don't import any set top boxes. What we can do is to see whether they are available on the market, but I must stress again that those who have digital television don't have to buy the set top boxes.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is several years ago that I put a supplementary question. Has the hon. Prime Minister checked with the MBC as to why on this so-called soft launching the Chairperson and Director-General were categorical that there are thousands of such boxes already waiting at the Customs? At that time, he said he was not aware. Several weeks later, can I ask the Prime Minister whether he has checked with the MBC how come they could go so wrong on that issue, and what has happened since?

The Prime Minister: Sir, in fact, the MBC has told me that when they made the announcement on television and on radio, about 25 people - as far as I remember the list - asked and obtained the information and they said that they were going to import. So, they assume, therefore, that these people have imported, but, so far, none has come to the Customs.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the new Chairperson and the new Director-General appointed by the hon. Prime Minister have gone that wrong and have misled the country, informing the country that there are thousands of such boxes, can I ask him whether he has made any request for disciplinary action to be taken against these two gentlemen?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, they are perfectly entitled to think that these people have taken the information and they said to him that they are importing. It is perfectly logical that he thinks they are importing, but, as I say, if people are so dying, if the Leader of the Opposition is dying to see digital television, he should buy a digital television set.

**CIRCONSTANCE, ST PIERRE, L'AVENIR, ALMA, BONNE
VEINNE, QUARTIER MILITAIRE, VUILLEMIN AND
PROVIDENCE - WATER SUPPLY**

(No. I B/429) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware that the inhabitants of Circonstance, St Pierre, L'Avenir, Alma, Bonne Veinne, Quartier Militaire, Vuillemin, Providence and other regions in the vicinity thereof are not being provided with a regular water supply and, if so, will he state what remedial measures he proposes to take.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CWA that the inhabitants of the regions referred to by the hon. Member receive regular water supply except during periods when there are repair and maintenance works on the network or at the La Marie Treatment Plant.

I am also informed that there is a stretch of asbestos cement pipe along the Bois Cheri Road, from ex-cinema Naz to Roselyn Cottage, which often bursts, thus causing water disruption in the whole area including St. Pierre, Circonstance and L'Avenir. An immediate solution is being applied. The CWA is arranging to disuse that stretch of the pipeline and to connect all the households concerned to another existing ductile iron pipe on the other side of the road.

As regards the village of Providence, it is supplied with water from the Quartier Militaire reservoir. This system also supplies major localities in the East, including Montagne Blanche, Sebastopol, Quatre Soeurs and Grand Sable. In view of the inadequate capacity of the main pipeline, the village of Providence is being supplied at low pressure during peak hours. In fact, the

village receives some 12 hours of supply, that is, between 03.00 a.m. and 09.00 a.m. and 03.00 p.m. and 09.00 p.m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I already informed the House in reply to a previous Parliamentary Question, the CWA is currently implementing a major project to improve water supply in the East. In this connection, works have started in May this year and will be completed by mid 2006. With the completion of this project, water supply will improve significantly in these regions.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not heard anything regarding Alma and Vuillemin. The situation there is very catastrophic, Mr Speaker, Sir, and the problems get compounded during religious festivals like Divali and lately the Muslim festival, Eid-UI-Fitr, and also during the fasting periods. The problem at Alma and Vuillemin is that people have to have recourse to river water for drinking purposes. Will the hon. Minister look into this matter urgently and bring the necessary redress?

Dr. Kasenally: Most certainly, Sir, it is not acceptable that people use river water for drinking. And I must reassure the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir, that during the festive seasons of Durga Pooja, Divali, Ramadan and Eid, I constantly monitored the situation and, on many occasions, we requested the CWA to supplement water by tankers. I agree with him that this situation is not acceptable, but every effort is being made. As I said, once we improve the network, it will get better.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding St. Julien D'Hotman, the pipes are almost blocked. Can the Minister look into the matter?

Dr. Kasenally: Most certainly, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, Order!

Dr. Kasenally: These pipes cannot be deblocked, but, however, we are doing a bypass to ensure adequate supply and I am sure that the bypass is being done effectively and promptly.

MOKA DISTRICT COURT - REPAIRS

(No. I B/430) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether he is aware that the roof of the Moka District Court is leaking and is in a derelict state and, if so, will he state what remedial measures are envisaged.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware - and it is confirmed by the Master & Registrar of the Supreme Court - that the roof of the Moka District Court is in a poor condition and that it leaks. In fact, it has been leaking since three years. A general uplifting of the building is required.

In this respect, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping has been contacted. The staff of the Ministry is currently making a general survey of the building. The Judiciary is awaiting the conclusion of the survey before causing necessary repairs to be made.

L'ESPÉRANCE, QUARTIER MILITAIRE FOOTBALL GROUND - UPGRADING

(No. I B/431) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Youth & Sports whether he is aware that the football ground at l'Espérance, Quartier Militaire, is in an abandoned state and, if so, will he state what remedial measures are envisaged.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2003, the project for the upgrading of the football ground at l'Espérance, Quartier Militaire, was implemented by the NDU and comprises the construction of spectators' stand, French drains, cutting and filling to levels, boundary fence and turfing.

I am informed by the NDU that the commencement and completion date of the project were 10 March 2003 and 20 October 2003 respectively. However, I am advised that the contractor had subsequently asked for an extension of time due to bad weather conditions.

I am further informed that, as at 31 October 2005, all works have been completed and the contractor is proposing to proceed with the handing over of the football ground by December 2005. However, during a site visit

effected by officials of my Ministry, it has been observed that the play field is uneven and weeds have overgrown.

My Ministry is liaising with the NDU with a view to ensuring that urgent action is being taken by the contractor for the removal of the weeds, levelling and proper maintenance of the grass before the handing over.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree with me that this is too long a time? Can he mention the name of the contractor?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: The contractor is Sawmynaden Construction Co. Ltd.

AGRO-BUSINESS SECTOR - ENTREPRENEURSHIP

(No. I B/432) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether he will state the measures, if any, that are being taken to encourage entrepreneurship in the agro-business sector amongst small and medium entrepreneurs.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, with due respect to the hon. Member, the reply being quite lengthy, I am going to circulate it. **(Appendix I)**

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree with me that, to inculcate entrepreneurial values, we have to ensure that there is market access? Will the hon. Minister state to the House what is being done to tap new markets?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is right to say that we need to constantly tap new markets, and we have to create the market. But, at the same time, we have to encourage small entrepreneurs to move in areas where the market is also available, and they have to constantly add value to their product. We have set up the agro industry desk precisely to sensitise small and medium entrepreneurs, to dispense all the advice to them and to remind them constantly that information being available at the tip of their fingers, they can certainly widen the base and seek all over the place.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister say what has happened to the Market Intelligence Unit that had been set up? Is it still on?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is still there. In fact, we have strengthened the Unit with the relevant human resources, and it is working

perfectly well. We have to disseminate the right information in respect of facts and figures to the small entrepreneurs.

SSRN HOSPITAL CARDIAC CENTRE – ANGIOGRAPHIES, OPEN-HEART SURGERIES, WAITING LIST, ETC

(No. I B/433) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Cardiac Centre at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, he will state the number of –

- (a) coronary angiographies and open-heart surgeries performed respectively since July 2005, and
- (a) patients on the waiting list before and after July 2005.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that 329 angiographies and 188 open-heart surgeries have been performed at the Cardiac Centre from July 2005 to 31 October 2005.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am advised that the waiting list for angiography, which was 312 as at 30 June 2005, has been reduced to 195 as at 31 October 2005, whilst for cardiac surgeries the waiting list has gone down to 125 on 31 October compared to 305 as at 30 June 2005.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister what has been the main cause for the decrease in the waiting list?

Mr Faugoo: On the average, only eight to ten cases were performed before July. With the collaboration of cardiac surgeons from *Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève*, we are doing 12 to 14 cases weekly.

Mr Jugnauth: May I know from the hon. Minister whether there is a cardiac surgeon from Geneva who comes to Mauritius every month to perform cardiac surgery?

Mr Faugoo: This is an ongoing arrangement. We have made it more regular, so as to decrease the waiting list.

Mr Jugnauth: As far as the angiographies are concerned, may I know from the hon. Minister whether, with the introduction of the new

angiography machine at Victoria Hospital, this has helped to reduce the number of patients on the waiting list at the cardiac centre?

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of cases was on the increase. As I have said, this is why we have done extra sessions in some cases, so as to decrease the waiting list. In the case of cardiac surgeries, we have asked for the extra collaboration from doctors. This is the reason why the waiting list is decreasing.

Mr Jugnauth: My question is whether the introduction of the new angiography machine in Victoria Hospital has helped to reduce the number of patients on the waiting list.

Mr Faugoo: This goes without saying, Mr Speaker, Sir. If we buy two more machines, of course, the list will go down.

HOTEL-BASED TAXI OPERATORS

(No. I B/434) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he is aware that taxis based at various hotels in the eastern region are unduly disadvantaged by taxis based in other regions and which work for other operators in the tourism sector and, if so, will he state what remedial measures will be taken.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, representations have since long been made to my Ministry by hotel-based taxi operators to the effect that they are facing unfair competition from tour operators who are hiring outside based taxis for performing pre-arranged trips at hotels and the airport, and this is not just in the eastern region.

As soon as I was made aware of the problem, I set up a committee under my chairmanship, comprising the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications, the Minister of Environment & NDU and the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights to look after the whole issue.

A first meeting of the committee was held on 20 October 2005. A number of decisions, as follows, were taken –

- (i) The Ministry of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications would consider integrating airport-based taxis

in the system of pre-arranged trips. Independently, that Ministry would arrange for a meeting with managers of hotels with a view to providing a counter at each hotel for taxi operators. This counter would facilitate in overseeing that allocation of trips is not made to the detriment of concerned taxis.

At the same time, the management of the hotels would be requested to provide such basic facilities as a shelter and toilet for the welfare of taxi operators.

The Ministry of Tourism would also look into the training requirements of this sector.

(ii) The NTA was requested not to entertain any fresh application for PSV (taxi) licence in respect of new hotels, but to consider the redeployment of surplus taxis from existing hotels.

(3) existing hotels will be encouraged to avail themselves of the services of taxis based in the neighbouring hotels whenever the need for extra taxis is felt. In this connection, the NTA will circulate a list of taxis licensed to operate in the vicinity of each specific hotel, and

(4) the NTA will work out a package of measures which will satisfy both tour operators and taxis so that they could work in close collaboration.

The Ministerial Committee will closely monitor the implementation of the proposals.

CEB – SPARE PARTS – PURCHASE, IN STOCK, ETC

(No. I B/435) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to spare parts purchased during the last five years by the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board the value –

- (a) thereof;
- (a) of the stock as at the end of July 2005, and
- (a) of the items which are now obsolete.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the CEB operates a system which provides for the purchase and keeping in stocks of certain

critical and strategic spare parts and such other materials. Such spare parts and other stocks purchased by the Central Electricity Board during the financial years ending 31 December are as follows –

	<u>Value (Rs)</u>
Year 2000	546 million
Year 2001	553 million
Year 2002	617 million
Year 2003	670 million
Year 2004	841 million
Year 2005 (as at end July)	383 million

It is to be noted that the above figures include stock items such as power cables, electrical equipment, poles, switchgears, line fittings and transformers, but exclude heavy oil and lubricating oil.

As regards part (b), I am advised that the value of spare parts and other stocks as at end of July 2005 amounted to Rs721 m. Again, this figure excludes heavy oil and lubricating oil.

Regarding part (c), I am informed that the stocks of the CEB consist of items, which are considered as strategic spare parts which have to be kept in stock, often for several years, as faulty spares have to be replaced urgently thus ensuring prompt restoration of supply in case of outages. Hence, several spare parts may not have moved for a number of years, but still have economic value and can be required at any time. These cannot therefore be categorised as obsolete.

It must be pointed out that these spare parts are not available off-the-shelf and often have long procurement lead-time. The CEB, as an essential service provider operating on a 24-hour basis, cannot afford long response time in obtaining such spare parts.

It is common practice to assess the level of inventory at the various stores. In this perspective, the CEB shall carry out a thorough physical inventory of stocks, where particular attention will be given to high value and slow moving items. As a result of this exercise, a fresh and more responsive procurement policy shall be evolved.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there is any equipment in stock in the warehouse of the CEB which enables it to conduct live repairs and, if so, what is the value of this equipment?

Dr. Kasenally: The hon. Minister means when the current is on. Well, this is an ongoing procedure as far as possible and it is done with particular attention to the safety and security of the workers.

**SYSTEMS APPLICATION PRODUCTS (SAP) –
AMOUNT DISBURSED AND TRAINING**

(No. I B/436) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the System Application Products (SAP) acquired by the Central Electricity Board, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board –

- (a) the amount disbursed therefor, and
- (b) whether appropriate training has been given to the end users.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the Central Electricity Board implemented a project of putting into place a new Management Information System based on System Application Products, known as SAP. The project value was Rs150,453,098, exclusive of VAT.

As regards part (b), I am advised that appropriate training has been given to its end users to enable them to effectively use the new Information System with all its related sub-systems. The training started as early as March 2004 during the design phase of the project for users and other users during the period July-August 2004. At the completion of the project in September 2004, around 450 employees had completed training in the various SAP modules.

In addition, the CEB has sponsored over 700 members of its personnel to follow the Computer Proficiency Programme (CPP) of the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council, in order to complement the training offered on the SAP modules.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the CEB is fully satisfied with the new IT system?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that CEB is satisfied, but I am not totally satisfied because I think that the training should have been a bit more up to date and there has been a lot of money used. Rs150 m. have been used for consultancy services and, according to my calculation, this is a bit more expensive, but this was done previously by a certain Mrs Dona Leclair. Actually, the baby is born and I have to carry it.

Mr Bundhoo: Since the hon. Minister is carrying the baby, can he tell us what does he propose to do now with regard to the IT system and if he is prepared to set up an inquiry to look into the mess by the SAP system at the CEB?

Dr. Kasenally: The SAP system is a very good system.

(Interruptions)

But it has not been properly implemented. Had it been implemented properly we would have got all the benefits from it! I am, therefore, proposing incidentally to fine-tune the training and ensure that we get value for money, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether a proper tender exercise was carried out before the CEB actually decided upon who was the successful bidder for the system?

Dr. Kasenally: My information is that the tender procedure was marred by certain, what you call, 'zones d'ombre'.

(Interruptions)

I have no shame! I have just to say the truth and nothing but the truth. If the truth ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. Kasenally: I will say what I have to say without fear or favour. There was a certain ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, I said. Yes, hon. Minister.

(Interruptions)

Order! Order, I said.

Dr. Kasenally: After the tender procedure was issued, there was negotiation with Accenture to bring down its tender value and there appeared to have been some problems with it. But, however, at the end of the day, I repeat that the sum of Rs150 m. given for consultancy is, according to me, a bit high. We have not had all the benefits of it, but I hope we will fine-tune it and ensure that whatever we have spent we will have to recoup it in a way or other by further training our staff. Although 400 were trained, I feel that they were not adequately trained.

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask the hon. Minister whether Accenture was the lowest tenderer?

Dr. Kasenally: Actually, I have not got the proper figures, but it was a bit higher and because of the high fees, it was decided whether it could bring it down and that's why it was brought down from Rs160 m. to Rs140 m.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

Mr Speaker: No, I have said last question.

Mr Ganoo: Well, that's unfair, Mr Speaker, Sir, because I have caught your eye ...

Mr Speaker: In my view, the matter has been fully discussed. If the hon. Member wants to come back, he can come with a substantive question. Next question!

CAMP DE MASQUE PAVE - MOSQUE/MARKET FAIR - ROAD TARRING

(No. I B/437) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether he is aware of the bad state of the road adjacent to the Mosque and leading to the market fair in the village of Camp de

Masque Pavé in the Constituency of Montagne Blanche and Grand River South East and, if so, will he state when the road will be tarred and a proper water drainage system provided thereat.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that some patching works have recently been carried out along the said road.

It is proposed to carry out a comprehensive survey along the road for appropriate proposals and the cost estimate regarding the drainage system.

Subject to availability of funds, the National Development Unit would implement the project.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I make an appeal...

Mr Speaker: It should be a question, it can't be an appeal!

Mr Bundhoo: An appeal question then. Can the hon. Minister consider the matter urgently in order to remedy the situation as there is a mosque and a market fair along this road?

Mr Bachoo: Sir, the hon. Member is aware that next week we are having a site visit together with him and we'll take a decision.

MONTAGNE BLANCHE VILLAGE COUNCIL - VOLLEYBALL PITCH

(No. I B/438) Mr L. Bundhoo (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he is aware of the poor state of the volleyball pitch adjacent to the village hall of Montagne Blanche and, if so, will he state if appropriate works would be carried out to upgrade the pitch and to provide for proper lighting and for an adequate drainage system.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Moka/Flacq District Council has confirmed that the multi-purpose pitch found adjacent to the Montagne Blanche Village Council, used for volleyball, tennis and basketball disciplines is in a poor state.

There is a large cavity in the middle of the pitch, the fencing is partly damaged, the lighting system is out of order and the volleyball as well as the basketball posts are damaged since 2002. The District Council has informed

that repair works including the upgrading of drain network and levelling and resurfacing of pitch would cost around Rs450,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am utterly surprised that the district council has not earmarked any funds to carry out repair works during the past financial years and I am now informed that it is not in a position to effect the necessary repairs. This is a blatant case of poor management of its assets by the Moka/Flacq District Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the forthcoming village council elections and taking into consideration that these elections should be held in a free and fair manner, I have requested all the District Councils not to embark on any major project.

However, after the village council elections, I will ensure that the Moka/Flacq District Council assumes its responsibilities and have the pitch rehabilitated.

GOODLANDS - AREA HEALTH CENTRE

(No. I B/439) Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether he is aware that the area health centre of Goodlands is unable to cater for the needs of the inhabitants thereof and, if so, will he state if he proposes to have it replaced by a medi-clinic.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of representations which have been made regarding space problems at Goodlands Area Health Centre. It is not envisaged at this point in time to replace the Goodlands Area Health Centre by a medi-clinic.

As I mentioned in the reply I made to PQ I B/193 in August last, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure has already been given the green light to proceed with extension works to address the issue. I am informed that the works would be entrusted to the Development Works Corporation and would be completed within four months as from the date of the award of the contract.

DOORGACHAND HURRY GOVT SCHOOL, GOODLANDS - OVERFLOW PROBLEMS

(No. I B/440) Mr R. Guttee (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he is aware that the toilets of the Doorgachand Hurry Government School situated at Goodlands is in a deplorable state and, if so, will he state what remedial measures are envisaged.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, according to information given to me, there are two toilet blocks for the pupils of the school and these are around 50 years old.

Overflow problems in the toilets were resolved by the Wastewater Management Authority in April 2005. The discharge pipes were repaired and one pipe was replaced in October 2005.

Following a site visit carried out last week by the maintenance unit of my Ministry, a number of defects has been identified. A survey has subsequently been carried out and the scope of works is being finalised so that part of these works may be attended to during the November/December 2005 school vacation. The remaining works which are of a complex nature will be carried out in the early part of year 2006.

TROIS BOUTIQUES VILLAGE - UPGRADING WORKS

(No. B/441) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether, in regard to the village of Trois Boutiques in the Constituency of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, he is aware of a long-standing request for a *parcours de santé* and, if so, will he state what steps he proposes to take in relation thereto.

Mr Bachoo: Sir, during a clean-up campaign organised by my Ministry at Trois Boutiques in October 2004, verbal requests were made for upgrading and embellishment works and the creation of a *parcours de santé*.

The upgrading and embellishment works have already been undertaken. As regards the *parcours de santé*, the proposed track is not appropriate as it is found on private land belonging to Mon Trésor/Mon Désert Ltd. Sugar Estate, alongside the main road. Besides, a *parcours de santé* should be located in a place where there is good quality of air, which is

not the case at the proposed site, the adjoining main road being constantly busy with vehicles.

Mr Varma: Sir, the hon. Minister has just stated that the actual site is not appropriate. Can we know whether an alternative site is being proposed for the *parcours de santé*?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Housing has to proceed with compulsory acquisition; if any site is available, it is only then that my Ministry can go on.

MALAKOFF VILLAGE, LA GROTTÉ ROAD - RESURFACING WORKS

(No. I B/442) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Environment & National Development Unit whether he is aware of the bad state of the road adjacent to La Grotte in the village of Malakoff in the Constituency of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien and, if so, will he consider the advisability of having it tarred.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, works for the resurfacing of La Grotte Road in Malakoff Village was issued to General Construction Co. Ltd. on 10 October 2005 for the amount of Rs148,555.00 excluding VAT. Works started on 12 October 2005 and were completed on Tuesday 25 October 2005.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that only part of the road has been tarred and the other part has been left like that?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not have this information. I will try to check.

TROIS BOUTIQUES VILLAGE HALL - RENOVATION WORKS

(No. I B/443) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether he is aware of the deplorable state of the Village Council Hall in the village of Trois Boutiques in the Constituency of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien and, if so, when the hall will be renovated.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that the Village Hall of Trois Boutiques which was constructed some 25 years ago is subject to leakage during rainfall.

The District Council has already made necessary arrangements to carry out some urgent renovation works, namely repair of leaking roof, slab, screeding and application of fresh paint. Works undertaken in-house since 07 November will be completed within two weeks.

PLAINE MAGNIEN - FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. I B/444) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will state if it is proposed to renovate the football ground in the village of Plaine Magnien and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that it is not in a position to upgrade and provide lighting facilities to the football playground in the village of Plaine Magnien due to financial constraints during this financial year.

However, I have requested the District Council to explore the possibility of including this project in the next financial year and I have already referred this matter to the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit to consider whether this project could be implemented from their funds during this financial year.

STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS - DEAN - POST

(No. I B/445) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will state if, in the wake of reforms in the education sector and following recommendation No. 17 of the last Pay Research Bureau Report, he will consider the advisability of creating a grade of Dean to inculcate a new work culture in secondary schools and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, in June 2003, the Pay Research Bureau (PRB) recommended the creation, in State Secondary Schools, of a new grade of Dean "who would be responsible for the introduction of pedagogical programmes for quality enhancement in student and teachers performance". In pursuance of that recommendation, one post of Dean, with token provision, was created in the 2004/2005 Estimates in July 2004 and the scheme of service for the post was prescribed on 20 April 2005. In the

meantime, the detailed requirements of the Ministry in terms of the number of posts of Dean to be created was worked out and it was found that, on the basis of the clustering of subjects recommended by the PRB, 248 posts of Dean would be required for the different clusters which are as follows –

- (i) Arts;
- (ii) Science and Mathematics;
- (iii) Economics, Social Studies and Accounts, and
- (iv) Technical Subjects.

My Ministry has already obtained establishment clearance from the Ministry of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms for the creation and filling of the 248 posts of Dean and is closely following up with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development regarding financial implications and the related clearance. Once financial clearance is obtained, the vacancies will be reported to the Public Service Commission for filling.

As regards the private secondary schools, the PRB has, in its report on “Errors, Omission and Clarifications” published in May 2004, recommended that “the Ministry, in conjunction with the Private Secondary Schools Authority, may consider the advisability of extending the recommendation concerning the creation of a grade of Dean wherever the need is felt”. In this respect, my Ministry has, since 09 August 2005, requested the Private Secondary Schools Authority to examine the proposals for the State sector and see to what extent same could be implemented in the private secondary schools in consultation with the Federation of Union of Managers and the unions of the private secondary schools. I have been informed that, at this stage, there is no consensus among the stakeholders concerned. The PSSA, the Federation of Unions of Managers and the trade unions of the private secondary schools have, however, been requested to pursue discussions with a view to reaching an agreed formula for the private secondary schools. My Ministry is following up the matter closely and if the need arises, my Ministry will refer the matter to the PRB for advice as to the way forward.

CAMP CAVAL, CUREPIPE - ROAD RESURFACING

(No. I B/446) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if the National Development Unit proposes to undertake the resurfacing of the following lanes situated at Camp Caval, Curepipe, namely, Kestrel Lane, Combes Lane, Bowen Lane

and Reservoir Lane, once the laying of pipes by the Central Water Authority is completed.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand from the CWA that the contractor, Ragavoodoo Bros & Co. Ltd would resurface half width of the excavated roads.

As the works are due to be completed by mid-February 2006, it is premature for the National Development Unit to commit on the resurfacing of the said lanes.

Subject to availability of funds, the NDU would consider the proposal of the hon. Member in case the lanes would still require resurfacing after the CWA would have completed the works.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to find out whether scope of works and budget allocation were already earmarked for the resurfacing of these roads, once the CWA work is completed?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the laying of the pipes are concerned, of course, the scope of work has already been defined, but it is only after the completion of the work that the second part is undertaken. We cannot quantify the amount that is to be utilised for the resurfacing of the roads. It is only when part of the work is over that the engineers come in the field.

NATReSA – RUNGEN, MR C. - DISMISSAL

(No. I B/447) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the NATReSA, the reasons for the dismissal of Mr C. R. from the National Prevention Unit.

The Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Mrs Bappoo is away, I am replying to the question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the authority from the PSC for Mr Rungen's third year of service at the NATReSA lapsed on 10 October 2005 and he has reverted to his substantive post of Senior Hospital Officer at the Prisons Department.

Therefore, the question of dismissal does not arise.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the Minister say on what date the contract expired and on what date his services were terminated?

Dr. Boolell: From the information available, he was posted to the NATReSA on 11 October 2002 for a period of one year, which was further subsequently renewed for two consecutive years.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can we know the date the contract expired and the date at which the services of Mr Rungen were terminated?

Dr. Boolell: I don't have the information, but certainly I'll seek and convey the relevant information to the hon. Member.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the Minister state whether Mr Rungen was convened for a meeting with the hon. Minister of Social Security and the Attorney-General and, if so, what has been the outcome of that meeting?

Dr. Boolell: Well, let us wait for the substantive Minister to come and then the hon. Member can put the relevant question.

RIVIÈRE DES GALETS/ST FELIX – ROAD SAFETY

(No. I B/448) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that vehicles travel at high speed between the roundabout at Rivière des Galets and St Félix and, if so, will he state what remedial measures will be taken, especially for the safety of children attending the pre-primary school in the vicinity.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Sir, I am informed that last April the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit (TMRSU) of my Ministry carried out a Road Safety Assessment along the whole stretch of the Black River – Savanne Coast Road (B9) between Riambel and Rivière des Galets, which also includes the leg referred to by the hon. Member.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit has made the following observations with regard to the stretch of the main road at Rivière des Galets –

- (a) adequate and appropriate road markings are provided;
- (b) footpath exists on one side of the carriageway to segregate pedestrians from vehicular traffic, and
- (c) street lighting is available for the safety of road users during hours of darkness.

However, although the prevailing speed limit is 50 km per hour throughout the built-up area, vehicles have a tendency to overspeed.

Hence, with a view to addressing this problem, it is proposed to construct two road humps at Rivière des Galets. I wish to point out that these humps will be located along a classified road although it is usually not the policy of my Ministry to put this type of traffic calming device along such roads.

It is expected that the construction of the two road humps will be completed during this month after the installation of sodium lamps at the proposed sites.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Minister has made reference to a visit of the Traffic Management Unit in April of this year. I thank him for the information he has given. May I request him also to look into the possibility of setting up a pedestrian crossing opposite the Rivière des Galets Community Centre where there are a lot of children who have to cross over the road for the pre-primary school, please?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Certainly we will do that. There are a number of proposals along the whole stretch of that road and this will be included.

Mr Ganoo: I make this request in view of the developments that will be taking place at St. Félix and also during the crop season when the heavy lorries frequently use the St. Félix main road.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Certainly we will look into the matter.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.30 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair

**VOILE D'OR HOTEL PROJECT- SMALL PLANTERS -
NUMBER, RELOCATION, ETC**

(No. 1 B/449) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to small planters who were previously occupying land on which the Voile d'Or Hotel has been erected in the context of the Master Plan for the development of the Bel Ombre region, he will state -

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the number which has been relocated;
- (c) whether a new lease has been granted to them by the Bel Ombre Sugar Estate, and
- (d) the area of the land now being occupied by each of the planters.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, as regards to part (a), five planters were previously occupying the land on which the Voile d'Or Hotel has been constructed. This land covered an area of 4A02 perches and formed part of the Bel Ombre Land Settlement.

As regards part (b), it was decided at a meeting chaired by the then Deputy Prime Minister in November 2001, that the 5 planters would be relocated so as to provide an extension of the frontage of the hotel from 242m to 500m. In 2003, an alternative site was identified at Bel Ombre Sugar Estate. The new site was proclaimed as being part of the Bel Ombre Land Settlement on 16 December 2003, by the then Minister of Housing and Lands. The new site is of an extent of 4A02, but the net cultivable area is 3A85 as there is an access road. Each planter has been allocated plots as follows -

<u>Planters</u>	-	<u>Acreage</u>
Titrasen Lutchman	-	1A02
Mahendranath Chetty	-	0A98
Rajendra Choytan	-	0A59
Pradeep Choytan	-	0A60
Vinay Kumar Prayag	-	0A66

As regards part (c), the lease agreements of these planters in respect of the plots allocated to them is being finalised.

SCHOLARSHIPS - AWARD

(No. I B/450) Mr C. Sayed-Hossen (Fourth Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the award of scholarships to secondary school leavers, he will consider the advisability of awarding same directly on the basis of the results obtained at the HSC examinations instead of having recourse to interviews.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two categories of scholarships awarded to secondary school leavers, namely the State funded ones and those provided by friendly donor countries.

The award of funded scholarships to secondary school leavers is made on the basis of ranking as communicated by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate through the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate and as such no interviews are held.

As regards scholarships offered by donor/friendly countries, the High Powered Scholarships Committee chaired by the Chief Technical Officer of my Ministry and comprising representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Tertiary Education Commission, the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate has always based itself on qualifications as well as performance at interview.

My Ministry is currently reviewing the selection criteria for the following types of scholarships -

- (i) State funded (postgraduate) and
- (ii) Open (undergraduate and postgraduate).

The concern of the hon. Member will be taken on board in the review exercise. However, in respect of open scholarships granted by friendly countries, should they not be agreeable to selection done on the basis of qualifications only, my Ministry will have to comply with their terms and conditions.

It is to be noted that certain donor countries spell out that results of school leavers should not date back to more than five years and, moreover, they do not restrict themselves to HSC, but also accept a London GCE 'A' level certificate or a *'Baccalauréat'* as alternatives.

NHDC - CASTING OF SLAB GRANT SCHEME

(No. I B/451) Mr C. Sayed-Hossen (Fourth Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the grant for casting of slabs, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the NHDC, information as to when the qualifying limit of 150m² for the grant was introduced and whether applications made before that date are treated according to the new regulation.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that, when the Casting of Slab Grant Scheme was introduced in August 1997, under the visionary Prime Ministership of Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam with a strong determination to consolidate the welfare State and people empowerment, it was decided that the slab's area should not exceed 100 m² and that the payment of the grant for smaller slabs would be made on a *pro rata* basis. Administratively, it was subsequently decided in March 2000 that owners casting slabs of more than 100 m² would also be eligible under the scheme. However, applicants having their slab areas exceeding 150 m² were to be called for interview by the NHDC for verification purposes as to their means and eligibility. In June 2002, it was further decided that the applications of those having slab areas exceeding 200 m² were to be rejected.

In March 2005, the National Audit Bureau drew the attention of the Ministry of Housing and Lands that the administrative decisions taken to entertain applications for roof slab areas exceeding 100 m² were not in line and in tune with the criteria approved by Government in 1997.

I am further advised that the scheme has been devised to assist those low income earners who are most in need of this grant. However, it has been observed from applications received that there is a marked tendency for Mauritian families to aim at having a bigger house. In the light of this observation, a policy decision has been taken to the effect that people who propose to cast slabs areas of up to 150 m² and subject to their satisfying the established criteria, would also be eligible to apply for the grant. The maximum grant payable would, however, be for an area of 100 m² only. It was also decided that people constructing with slab areas above 150 m² would not be eligible to apply for grants under this scheme. This measure is effective with effect from 04 April 2005.

Insofar as the second part of the question is concerned, Sir, I am also advised that all applications made, though the slab areas were more than 100m², but were not exceeding 200 m² and provided that they were

satisfying the prevailing criteria, were being entertained prior to 04 April 2005. There are, however, a few cases which have not been processed for lack of relevant documents, or because the documents are incomplete. Now that a cut-off date has been determined, that is, the 04 April 2005, processing of applications is being made according to the new policy in force since that date.

Sir, I am proposing to have the scheme revisited for the following main reasons -

- (a) to ensure that the scheme is not mismanaged as in the case of the previous Government;
- (b) only those for whose benefit the scheme has been designed, do benefit fully from it;
- (c) the scheme is not discriminatory;
- (d) to consider any such existing cases as, for example, three or more members of the same family, each earning not more than Rs8,500, applying under the scheme to construct, each, his or her house laterally or vertically on the same plot of land which is commonly owned, and
- (e) to have the scheme consolidated.

CITE LA CURE ZEP SCHOOL – PTA - COMPLAINTS

(No. I B/452) Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he has received any complaints from the Parent Teachers Association of the ZEP school of Cité La Cure regarding mismanagement and misconduct of the staff and, if so, will he state what remedial measures are envisaged.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, on Tuesday 11 October, a group of parents of Marcel Cabon Government School reported to the zone directorate to discuss problems existing at the level of the school. The main problems raised related to lateness, absenteeism and the poor performance of teachers.

The parents requested for the transfer of a number of teachers including the Head Teacher who allegedly is unable to cope with the load of work.

It was explained to the parents that it is not proper, at this time of the year, to attend to their request for the transfer of those teachers and the Head Teacher, and such request will be considered in the forthcoming transfer exercise to ensure a smooth resumption of studies in January 2006. The parents agreed to the proposal.

On Thursday 13 October 2005, the Head Teacher reported that a group of 30 parents called at the school. The same issues as reported to the directorate on Tuesday 11 October were raised. Parents also added that upgrading works such as levelling of the ground and construction of a shelter for use by the pupils during rainy weather were not attended to. The parents were informed that consideration would be given to their requests and needful would be done wherever possible before the resumption of studies in January 2006.

A further meeting was held with the stakeholders on 25 October 2005, where the grievances of the parents were discussed for possible solutions. The parent mediator attached to the school was requested to ensure follow up on the pending issues and keep parents informed on remedial actions taken.

The following actions have been taken to remedy the situation –

- (i) the Head Teacher has been requested to press upon the teachers on the importance of punctuality and to report to the directorate any abuse on late arrivals and absenteeism;
- (ii) the Head Teacher has been requested to lay emphasis on customer care and courtesy to pupils and members of the public;
- (iii) teachers reckoning late arrivals and who are regularly absent from duty have been requested to submit their explanations for their lateness/absences.

My Ministry is closely monitoring the situation and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against those teachers who do not have valid reasons for their lateness and absences.

Mrs Virahsawmy: Will the Minister also tell the House whether he is aware that there is no filtered water at the said school?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that there are problems with regard to non-availability of water, but the Head Teacher has been instructed to ensure that these problems are remedied and also the quality of water is monitored.

RODRIGUES – COTTON BAY HOTEL – SIC - SHARES

(No. I B/453) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Cotton Bay Hotel in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation, information as to whether the Corporation which holds 28.5 per cent of the shares has any say in the management of the hotel and, if so, will he give details thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, the State Investment Corporation (SIC) holds 28.54% of the shareholdings of Cotton Bay Hotel in Rodrigues. However, Air Mauritius is the majority shareholder with 54.19% of the shares. As a shareholder, SIC appoints, together with other shareholders, the Board of Directors which takes strategic and major decisions in relation to the company. However, the day-to-day management of the company is the responsibility of the Resident Manager.

RODRIGUES – COTTON BAY HOTEL – GENERAL MANAGER - POST

(No. I B/454) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Cotton Bay Hotel in Rodrigues, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Corporation, information as to whether a vacancy for the post of General Manager of the hotel was advertised around April 2000 and, if so, the name of the agency/company to which the recruitment exercise was entrusted, the amount paid and the outcome of the exercise.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the post of General Manager of Cotton Bay Hotel in Rodrigues was advertised in April 2000. De Chazal Du Mée carried out the recruitment exercise for which a sum of Rs28,083 was paid.

Thirteen applications were received and after examining the applications, nine candidates were retained for interview. I am informed that no candidate was found to be of the required standard and the post of General Manager was not filled. Instead the Sales Manager was entrusted the responsibility to act as Officer in Charge since April 2000. In April 2003, he was appointed as Resident Manager.

AIR MAURITIUS FLIGHTS – POSTPONEMENT - FEES

(No. I B/455) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to flights to and from Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Air Mauritius Ltd., information as to whether –

- (a) a fee of Rs500 is charged for any postponement in the flight details of a passenger and, if so, the reasons therefor;
- (b) fuel tax is included in the price of an air ticket and, if so, the percentage it represents, and
- (c) a transfer fee of Rs500 is payable by all passengers travelling to Rodrigues via mainland Mauritius and by Rodriguans travelling overseas via mainland Mauritius.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X.L.Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed as follows –

With regard to part (a), a rebooking fee of Rs500 is charged by Air Mauritius on the Mauritius/Rodrigues route and vice versa whenever a passenger holding a firm reservation and a valid air ticket on a given flight alters his date of travel.

As regards part (b), since June 2004 all airlines levy a fuel surcharge on every flight coupon to mitigate the impact of the soaring costs of fuel. The surcharge applicable on the Mauritius/Rodrigues sector is currently 9 euros, i.e approximately Rs330. This represents around 14% of the fare for flights originating from Mauritius and around 16% vice versa. This rate has remained unchanged in spite of a second round of increases in fuel surcharges effective as from yesterday.

Regarding part (c), as a result of an amendment which I made to the Civil Aviation (Passenger Service Charge) Regulations, all passengers, including foreigners travelling to Rodrigues via mainland Mauritius are, as from 01 November 2005, exempted from payment of the passenger service

charge of Rs250 at SSR Airport, previously charged on all tickets to Rodrigues.

However, there does exist a passenger service charge for all passengers using the SSR Airport for international flights and this amounts to Rs500. This charge, therefore, also applies to foreign passengers transiting to Rodrigues as well as Rodriguans travelling overseas.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry is giving special attention to the development of passenger traffic to and from Rodrigues as an effective way of ensuring competitive fares. In this regard, in addition to the waiver of passenger service charge from Mauritius to Rodrigues, which is estimated to cost Airports of Mauritius Ltd some Rs11 m., a second airline has been licensed to operate to Rodrigues, in line with Government policy to introduce competition on that route. At the request of Government, that airline has agreed to bring down the price of air tickets by some 10%. As I also mentioned above, the second round of fuel surcharges has not been applied on the Rodrigues/Mauritius route. These measures, together with the mere trebling in the budget of the MTPA from Rs700,000 under the previous Government to Rs2 m. for this financial year 2005/2006 and the added visibility that this allows, will I hope go a long way in inducing traffic to and from Rodrigues.

Mr Spéville: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the second airline which is now operating in Rodrigues, competitors are not charging Rs500 as cancellation fees. Can I ask the Minister why can't Air Mauritius do the same?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, Air Mauritius is operating on a competitive route as a commercial airline. It would not be right for me to divulge it here in Parliament because there is a commercial reason for it. However, the very idea of putting competition in the route is to ensure that market forces dictate policies of airlines.

Mr Spéville: The Minister just said that Rs250 for the passenger charges from Mauritius to Rodrigues have been cancelled. What about the others?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are very willing to also annul the Rs150 service charge charged by Airports of Rodrigues, but this would require some consultations with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

(No. I B/456) Mr J. R. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Mauritius Telecom

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- (a) the reasons as to why
 - (i) users of the GSM-Cell-Oh cards do not have access to full SMS service in mainland Mauritius, and
 - (ii) such prepaid cards are not sold in mainland Mauritius, and
- (b) state what remedial measures are envisaged.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by Mauritius Telecom that users of GSM-Cell-Oh Cards do have access to SMS service in mainland Mauritius through the GSM roaming facilities.

However, those users are able to receive SMS while in Mauritius but are unable to sent any SMS. This is due to the fact that the system used currently and which is known as CAMEL 2 does not permit billing of originating and terminating SMSs while the customer is roaming in Mauritius. Access to full SMS service can only be provided upon implementation of CAMEL phase 3 by Cellplus. This would require an investment of some Rs30 m. – Rs50 m. on the network both in Mauritius and Rodrigues. I am informed that Cellplus will carry out a cost benefit analysis in this regard.

With regard to part (ii) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that initially owing to the limited demand for Cell-Oh Cards, these were sold only in the Customer Service Centre of Mauritius Telecom at Rose-Hill. I am informed that Cellplus is taking the necessary measures to ensure that these cards are available at all other Customer Service Centres of Mauritius Telecom.

**PLAINE VERTE GARDEN -
'ANOU DIBOUTE POU NOU L'ENDROIT' EVENT**

(No. I B/457) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she will state if the National Prevention Unit with the collaboration of the Forces Vives of Plaine verte organised the event '*Anou diboute pou nou l'endroit*' over a period of three days at the Plaine Verte garden and, if so, will she give details thereof.

The Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries (Dr. A. Boolell): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that NATReSA with assistance from the '*Forces Vives*' of Plaine Verte organised the event '*Anou diboute pou nou l'endroit*' over a period of three days at the Plaine Verte Garden from 01 to 03 August 2003 in collaborate with -

- (a) Municipality of Port Louis;
- (b) Dr. Idrice Goomany Treatment Centre;
- (c) Korom Zénès Madad;
- (d) Comité Quartier la Rue La Paix, and
- (e) Comité Zénès Vallée Pitot

The details of the activities organised during the three days are being tabled in the National Assembly.

16EME MILLE, FOREST SIDE - NEW VILLAGE COUNCIL AREA

(No. I B/458) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the forthcoming village council elections, he will consider the advisability of defining a new village council area for the village of 16ème Mille, Forest Side.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the locality of 16ème Mille, Forest Side forms part of the village council area of Midlands, which falls within the boundary of Grand Port/Savanne District Council.

I am informed by the Electoral Commissioner's Office that a new village council area for 16ème Mille will entail the alteration of the village of the village council area of Midlands.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at any rate, the creation of a new village area for the forthcoming village council elections cannot be entertained as the said election will be conducted on the basis of the register of electors in force, that is the 2004 register.

The conduct of village council elections for any new village council area can only be made on the basis of a new register of electors for the said area.

Mr Dowarkasing: Will the Minister consider the possibility, maybe after the election, of having a new village council area for that region? Because the village of Midlands is about 2 kms from 16eme Mille.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, we shall look into all possibilities with all partners concerned.

'JUGE D'INSTRUCTION' SYSTEM - SETTING UP

(No. I B/459) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether he will state if it is proposed to introduce the system of '*Juge d'Instruction*' in our accusatorial criminal justice system and, if so, whether a *Code d'Instruction Criminelle* is under preparation to that effect.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has already announced its intention of putting in place a system of "*Juge d'Instruction*" in order to ensure greater transparency and professionalism in the conduct of criminal investigations.

Every effort will be made for this system of "*Juge d'Instruction*" to fit in well within our existing adversarial criminal justice system. To that end, the observations in the paper produced by the Law Reform Commission will be borne in mind.

In addition, my Office will look closely into the actual functioning of the system of "*Juge d'Instruction*" in France and, more particularly, in Réunion Island with a view to devising a system of "*Juge d'Instruction*" "*à la mauricienne*". The French Embassy recently facilitated a visit of a team of lawyers from Réunion Island, comprising two lecturers from the University of the Indian Ocean and one "*Juge d'Instruction*" from St. Pierre. The team met with my officers and also took part in a Conference/Brainstorming Session organised by the University of Mauritius and my Office.

My Office will, in the light of the Law Reform Commission Paper and of further consultation with the French judicial authorities, cause a Policy Paper to be prepared on the putting in place of the system of "*Juge d'Instruction*" in Mauritius. The Policy Paper will form the basis for wider consultation with all stakeholders, including members of the legal profession and of the Judiciary, in the light of which a decision will be taken regarding the means of putting in place of the system of "*Juge d'Instruction*" '*à la*

Mauricienne' and the introduction of a “*Code d’Instruction Criminelle*”, if required.

Mr Ganoo: I can understand the motivation of the hon. Attorney-General to set up this project, Mr Speaker, Sir. But this is a non-partisan issue and we must rid this issue of any political content. The question I want to ask the Attorney-General is: does he not agree that this setting up of this '*Juge d’Instruction*' system is alien to our legal system, to our democratic landscape being given that our Constitution provides for certain fundamental rights, entrenches certain fundamental guarantees, for example, the right to silence, the right against forced interrogation and, therefore, the whole concept of '*Juge d’Instruction*' is against our Constitution. I am sure the hon. Attorney-General knows the case of Mr Heeralal v/s the Commissioner of Prison, the 1992 case which dealt with an extradition case, in which remarks were made along those lines. If you will bear with me, I'll quote two lines from this famous decision of the Supreme Court -

"it would seem to us that if a question is raised as to whether a person who is proposed to be extradited by the Court in Mauritius to be deprived of the guarantees against forced interrogation and his right to silence, then our Court will be bound by the provisions of our Constitution not to extradite him since our Court would not be in a position to protect that person to ensure that those guarantees are made available to him."

I am just drawing the attention of the Attorney-General on this contradiction between these entrenched rights in our Constitution and this new concept of '*Juge d’Instruction*'.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, without pre-empting the debate, it is clear that we already have a degree of '*Juge d’Instruction*' in our system for the judicial inquiry, but I will then ask my hon. friend from the Opposition to wait till the report is published and then there will be a real debate with all parties really informed of what is the real issue.

Mr Ganoo: I think the Attorney-General must also be aware what Mr Justice Eddy Balancy said: "*Je vois difficilement comment l'on pourrait l'intégrer ...*"

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, the hon. Member has been a Speaker of this House. He is making a statement, which he is not allowed to do at Question time. He can raise this matter at Adjournment time.

Mr Ganoo: I am drawing the attention of the Attorney-General to the opinion given by Mr Justice Balancy.

SENIOR CITIZENS & DISABLED PERSONS - SEXUAL OFFENCES CASES

(No. I B/460) Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanely & Rose Hill) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether he will consider the advisability of introducing in our legislation, measures whereby sexual offences involving senior citizens and physically and mentally disabled persons as victims, be dealt with expeditiously by our judicial system.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that our Courts are already well alive to the desirability of giving priority to cases involving not only senior citizens and physically and mentally disabled persons, but also young children. It would not be advisable therefore to impose any statutory obligation on Courts to hear such cases expeditiously or within specified time limits.

I must, however, add that, in view of the constitutional right of an accused to be represented by a legal representative of his choice, our Courts often have no choice other than to fix cases on dates convenient to defence counsel rather than on the earliest dates. However, the Bar Council and all stakeholders will be urged to consider the matter.

EBENE AREA - PEDESTRIAN PATHWAY

(No. I B/461) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will consider the advisability of having a pedestrian pathway constructed for the benefit of the residents of Ebène so that they can access the nearby supermarket without having to make lengthy *detours* around the new morcellement.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that land use in the region of Ebène will drastically change with the full implementation of residential and commercial developments which are being implemented by Mon Désert Mon Trésor Ltd. Accordingly, residents of that region will have safe accesses to the commercial complexes within that development. For example, as part of the project an underground pedestrian facility is now being constructed at Ebène in the vicinity of the IVTB Hotel School.

However, after the completion of all the infrastructural works, my Ministry will closely monitor the situation in the Ebène area and will take whatever appropriate actions, which are warranted to enhance road safety there.

QUATRE BORNES - ST JEAN ROAD/SURAT AVENUE - GATEWAY BUILDING

(No. I B/462) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the building 'The Gateway' situated at the corner of St Jean Road and Surat Avenue, Quatre Bornes, he will state what action has been taken so far following the notice for demolition of part of the structure, issued by the Municipality of Quatre Bornes.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the developer has complied with the requirements of the notice served upon him on 30 August 2005 by the Municipality of Quatre Bornes and that he has already pulled down the concrete block wall enclosure put along Surat Avenue contrary to approved plans.

The House would wish to note that in a letter dated 13 October 2005, the Municipality of Quatre Bornes has admitted that it had, I quote, "erroneously issued" a development permit on 28 October 2003 and a building permit on 28 May 2004 to Sir Kailash Ramdane for the construction of a commercial and residential building at corner of Surat Avenue and St Jean Road, part of which is at less than the statutory distance from Surat Avenue and St Jean Road.

The House would also wish to note that well before the issue of the building permit, the Senior Building Inspector of the Municipality of Quatre Bornes had, in a report dated 23 January 2004, also signed by Mr Jean Michel D'Unienville, Architect of the promoter, drew the attention of the Council to the effect that, I quote, -

“Three columns found on Surat Avenue within 4.5 mts setback to be cancelled”.

It is noted with great concern that the Council chose to ignore this recommendation and the building permit was issued without amendment to the plans. Worst still, the Senior Building Inspector was arbitrarily transferred to another Local Authority.

According to legal advice obtained by the Municipal Council, I quote –

“It may not now evoke its own error to either revoke the permits or seek an injunction to prevent the construction of the building as it may be exposed to damages and legal actions.”

In view of the fact that the advice tendered by the Legal Adviser of the Municipal Council has failed to situate responsibilities, my Ministry is seeking a second opinion from the State Law Office.

The Council has further been advised by its Legal Adviser to refer the matter to the Town and Country Planning Board. It has, accordingly, sent all particulars of the development to the Town and Country Planning Board for appropriate action on 22 September 2005.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will recall that in my reply to PQ No. I B/186, I had stated that I would initiate appropriate action against the officers of the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes and former Municipal Councillors.

I, therefore, wish to inform the House that I have already referred the case to both the Commissioner of Police and the Director of ICAC on 14 October 2005, requesting them to conduct an enquiry in the matter and to take action as appropriate in the light of their findings.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request the hon. Minister to really closely monitor the situation? Because I am being solicited by a number of my constituents who are very upset ...

Mr Speaker: Put your question, please.

Miss Deerpalsing: I am asking the hon. Minister to follow the situation very closely because it would seem there is *‘justice à deux vitesses’*.

Dr. David: The hon. Member can rest assured, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am following the situation very, very closely.

CIVIL CASES (PENDING) – NUMBER, DATE, ETC.

(No. I B/463) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether, in regard to civil cases pending before the courts, he will state –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the date of their lodging before the respective courts, and
- (c) the reasons for the delay in their disposal.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court that, as at 30 September 2005, there are in all 22,015 civil cases pending before the courts.

I am further informed by the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court that it will take some time to compile the information regarding items (b) and (c) of the question. Once ready, it will be laid on the Table of the National Assembly.

**TRUST FUND FOR THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF
VULNERABLE GROUPS – FIELD OFFICERS –
APPOINTMENT, NUMBER, ETC.**

(No. I B/464) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to field officers employed by the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups, he will state –

- (a) the date of their appointment;
- (b) the number thereof who have recently been laid off, and
- (c) the reasons for their dismissal.

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker Sir, field officers are employed on a one-year contract basis with possibility of renewal by the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups. A list giving the date of employment of such field officers on the establishment of the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups and the date of expiry of their contract of employment is being tabled.

As the officers are on a one-year contract, the question of being laid off does not arise. The Management Committee of the Trust Fund has decided not to renew the contract of employment which has lapsed as from 14 July 2005 and thereafter. For the sake of transparency and in order to give a fair opportunity to all interested parties, the Trust Fund has also decided to advertise these positions. Invitations for applications for these posts have been advertised in the press.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether in at least six cases, after expiry of contract, applications for renewal have not been approved by the Board, and this had been confirmed at the next Board meeting?

Mr Sithanen: This is not the information I have, Mr Speaker, Sir. Basically, it is a one-year renewable contract and the contract has expired as from 14 July 2005, and has not been renewed afterwards. And, in order to be fair, equitable and transparent they have invited applications for such posts.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am afraid, again, that it may be as in the case of Mr Allet, where the Minister learned about it in the press. Is the hon. Minister aware that these six employees have put the date on which they made their application for renewal of their contract and the Board approved, and then ratified? They have also written to the Secretary of the Board. Is the hon. Minister aware of such a letter?

Mr Sithanen: I am not aware. If the hon. Member will give me the information, I'll look into it. I'll be obliged to the hon. Member if the letter, which was sent to the Secretary of the Board, could be tabled.

Mr Guinness: I'll table it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, the nature of the work that these workers are doing is very delicate and very risky, because they go in very high-risk regions. The previous Government invested a lot in their training. Can I have the stand of the hon. Minister that, in the forthcoming recruitment exercise, experience in this type of work will be given due consideration?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, they are free to submit their applications and the Board will decide in its best judgement whether they should be given a second chance. But, we need to be fair to other people also.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, a last question. The Minister is saying that the Board will take a decision. In case the Minister enquires and finds that the Board has already renewed the contract of these six workers, will he see to it that the termination of contract be cancelled?

Mr Sithanen: We have got a cut-off date. I don't know whether these people were given their letters prior to the cut-off date or after. So, I'll have to look into it.

CPE EXAMS 2005 – HINDI PAPER - MISTAKES

(No. I B/465) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the CPE Examinations 2005, he is aware that there have been mistakes in the Hindi Paper and, if so, will he state if an inquiry has been carried out in connection therewith and, if so the outcome thereof.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, on Thursday 20 October 2005, pupils of Standard VI sat for the Hindi Paper for the CPE Examinations 2005. On the same day, I was informed by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) that the Hindi Paper contained mistakes and this was subsequently reported in various press articles. It was alleged that there were seven (7) mistakes in the paper.

On Tuesday 25 October 2005, following the press articles, the MES had set up a Technical Committee to, *inter alia*, scrutinize the mistakes in the Question Paper, assess the impact on the performance of candidates, and to provide guidelines to the Chief Examiners in connection with the briefing of markers.

At its meeting of 28 October 2005, the Technical Committee noted that there were seven mistakes in the paper. After scrutinizing the mistakes, the Technical Committee concluded that the nature of six of the seven mistakes is such that it will not impact the performance of candidates.

As regards the seventh mistake, which emanated from a problem with the software in use, and which related to a dot not being printed legibly, the Committee considered that both singular and plural forms of the answer should be accepted as correct. Thus, no students will be penalised for this mistake.

In order to avoid the problem of mistakes in Question Papers in future, the following measures are being envisaged by the MES –

- (i) setting-up of a panel of at least three persons for the setting and moderation of Question Papers (i.e. one Paper Setter and two Moderators);
- (ii) developing an Item Bank/Question Paper Bank, with moderated items stored in the bank which can be picked up and used;
- (iii) making use of the “latest” software which would detect spelling and grammatical errors, for Asian Language/Arabic Question Papers, and
- (iv) looking into the whole process of appointment of Setters and Moderators for CPE Examinations, 2006 onwards.

The hon. Member may rest assured that all necessary adjustments will be made to the Marking Scheme so that candidates are not unduly penalised.

**CRAIG, MR PETER - TRADE COMMISSIONER IN WASHINGTON
- TERMINATION OF CONTRACT**

(No. I B/427) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) 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 Trade Commissioner, Mr Peter Craig, he will state -

- (a) his date of appointment;
- (b) if there has been any adverse report against him, and
- (c) the date of his dismissal and the reasons thereof.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Cooperation (Mr M. Dulloo): Yes, Sir. As regards part (a) of the question, Mr Peter Craig was first employed as Trade Adviser at the Mauritius Embassy in Washington on contract for a period of three years as from 06 November 1991. His contract was renewed for another term of three years up to 05 November 1997. Since then, his services were retained on a month to month basis up to 28 February 2002 when he was given a yearly contract. On 02 August 2002, the former Ambassador, Mrs Jeetah, in Washington was informed that, I quote -

“Government has today decided that Mr Peter Craig, Trade Commissioner be exclusively responsible for all AGOA matters and should you in the course of your contact come across any information related to AGOA, you are called upon to communicate such information to Mr Craig.”

That was in August 2002.

As regards part (b), Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that it is not considered proper in the public interest nor in the interest of the person concerned to disclose matters pertaining to the personal file of an officer or adviser. However, it has been reported that there were strained relationships between Mr Craig and the former Ambassador, Mrs Jeetah and this was not in the best interest of the country. In January 2003, the former Ambassador, Mrs Jeetah, had recommended that the Ministry arranged to send a Trade Officer to our Mission in Washington to assume appropriate responsibilities.

In February 2003, when his contract was renewed, Mr Craig was informed of the decision of the then Government to post a Trade Officer to take over the relevant responsibilities. However, this decision was not implemented by the former Government in spite of repeated requests from the former Ambassador, Mrs Jeetah. In January 2004, Mr Peter Craig was informed by the then Secretary for Foreign Affairs that his contract was being renewed for a final period of one year as from 01 March 2004 to expire on 28 February 2005.

As regards part (c), on 22 October 2005, Mr Craig was notified that his contract as Trade Adviser was being terminated in accordance with paragraph (a) Clause (xiv) of the said contract which provides for one month notice. However, it was agreed that he could remain in office until 31 December 2005.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should inform the House that Government is at present implementing an overall restructuring process at the level of the Ministry and its overseas missions in the context of a thorough review of our economic diplomacy. This process entails review of posting of staff in the diplomatic service as well as contractual appointments at all levels including Ambassadors and Advisers.