

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**COMOROS DONORS' CONFERENCE**

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*By Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the Comoros Donors' Conference scheduled to be held on 25 November 2005 in Mauritius and to his recent meetings with President Azhali of the Comoros and President Mbeki of South Africa in Madagascar and Botswana respectively he will say if -

- (i) President Mbeki, the World Bank and the European Union have agreed thereto, and
- (ii) free and fair election, with international observers, to be held in early 2006 in the three islands and in the Union to elect a President of the Union from Anjouan Island are on target.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker Sir, in 2001, there was agreement to the proposal that a Donors' meeting for the Comoros be convened by the World Bank and hosted by Mauritius.

The meeting could not be held in November 2004, as initially scheduled as the Comoros were not ready for this meeting.

However, Mauritius has maintained its offer to host the Donors' meeting.

With regard to the first part of the Question, I should like to inform the House that all the stakeholders have agreed to the holding of the Donors' meeting in Mauritius at a mutually convenient date subject to Comoros meeting the necessary conditions to the satisfaction of the Donors' Community.

From 18 to 22 January 2005, a mission from the African Union comprising South Africa and Mauritius visited Comoros to evaluate progress on the process of the national reconciliation following the Transitional Agreement of 20 December 2003.

The mission concluded,

I quote-

“The necessary and sufficient conditions for the Donors’ Round Table in Mauritius later this year are being gradually put in place. The delegation noted the positive evolution of the national reconciliation process but highlighted the pending issues on which attention need to be given. Progress on the resolution of the issues or initiatives towards their early resolution will need to be correctly monitored. This applies in particular to the strengthening of the National Assembly and the Constitutional Court well ahead of the Presidential elections due early next year.

The Donors’ Round Table can be organised during the second half of the 2005. By that time, the Bretton Wood institutions would have studied the PRSP (Poverty Reduction Support Programme) document prepared by the Comoros stakeholders and propositions for an assistance programme under the HIPC initiative would be at an advanced stage. The organic law on sharing of competencies and Article 9 will have to be adopted by the National Assembly, endorsed by the Constitutional Court and promulgated.

The Comoros authorities will also be in a position to show the budget out-turn and the economic outlook compared to the forecast in the 2005 budget.

The Comoros stakeholders have high expectations of the Donors’ Round Table and urge the international community to respond positively to it.

The success of the Donor’s Round Table in Mauritius will add impetus to the national reconciliation, deepening of democracy

and promotion of economic growth and development”.  
Unquote.

The International Community, in particular the African Union, South Africa, and Mauritius as coordinator of the preparations of the Donor Round Table for the Comoros, has encouraged continued negotiation over the outstanding political, fiscal and security issues in the archipelago.

In May 2005, at the Fourth Meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the countries of the Region and the AU Troika on the Comoros, the “Committee undertook to reactivate AU efforts towards the convening of the Donors Round Table for Comoros in Mauritius and encouraged the AU Commission to work closely with the Governments of the Union of Comoros and of Mauritius and other stakeholders towards convening a preparatory meeting as soon as possible”.

The “Preparatory Meeting” at Ministerial level is scheduled in Moroni in early September 2005.

During the visit of a Ministerial delegation of the Union of Comoros led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation, H.E. Mr Aboudou Soefo from 03 to 05 August 2005, the Comorian side apprised the Mauritian side that President Mbeki had agreed to the Donors’ meeting being held in Mauritius on 25 November 2005.

I immediately informed the Comorian delegation that the date proposed would clash with the Commonwealth Heads of State/Government Meeting scheduled to be held in Malta from 25 to 27 November 2005.

Furthermore, I had a conversation with President Azhali on 03 August 2005 and he proposed a tentative date of 07 to 08 December 2005 subject to the concurrence of all stakeholders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, the Union of Comoros has designated Anjouan to assume the Presidency of the archipelago after Grande Comore in 2006. A legislation adopted on 03 June 2005 by the Assembly of the Union of the Comoros stipulates that the Presidency of the Union will rotate among the islands of Grande Comore, Anjouan, Mohéli and Mayotte. In 2006, the Union of the Comoros will have to elect a President and two Vice-Presidents.

The Ministerial Meeting to be held in Moroni in September this year will review progress as regards the electoral process for the election of the President and the two Vice-Presidents of the Union of the Comoros.

Mauritius will follow up closely the electoral process in collaboration with the regional and international community and will provide all possible assistance to contribute to the smooth conduct of free and fair elections in the Comoros.

**Mr Bérenger:** I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his answer, Mr Speaker, Sir. Clearly, there is a good amount of confusion still. Being given that after the Comoros side made an official statement on Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, stating that the Donors' Conference would be held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November, two Ministers from the Comoros were here at the beginning of August, as the hon. Prime Minister has just said, and referred again to this date. Can I inform the hon. Prime Minister – and I am sure he is aware of it – that although he has spoken to President Azhali, there is clearly confusion still hanging over the whole issue since last Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> of August, President Azhali, in a speech in the Comoros, referred again to that same date of 25<sup>th</sup> November? Can I, therefore, suggest to the hon. Prime Minister that there is need to talk again to President Azhali and clarify that point that new dates are now proposed?

**The Prime Minister:** As I said, I talked to him on the phone on the 03 August 2005 and told him that the dates that have been proposed will clash with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta. He thanked me for it and he said he would propose new dates and these are the dates that he actually proposed to check whether it was OK with us, the 07 and 08 of December, which I agreed to. I am surprised that he made that statement perhaps inadvertently, but I will remind him again that the dates have now been changed.

**Mr Bérenger:** Although I heard the hon. Prime Minister say that the Comoros side have informed us that President Mbeki of South Africa has agreed to chair the Donors' Meeting and we have no reason to doubt that at all, but can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has had the opportunity to talk to President Mbeki and that this is confirmed, that President Mbeki has agreed to chair that Donors' Meeting?

**The Prime Minister:** My understanding is that - I talked to him during the last meeting at Botswana - he has not confirmed the date yet. He said his office is looking at the dates and he will confirm whether the date is agreeable to him. And also we are looking at the other stakeholders. These dates of the 07 and 08 of December 2005 are at the request of President Azhali himself. I told him, as far as I am concerned, the dates are OK with me, but he is waiting for the answer. There will be this Ministerial Meeting in September, I suppose and this is where they will confirm the dates.

**Mr Bérenger:** Well, Mr Speaker, since President Mbeki has confirmed to the hon. Prime Minister that he will be chairing the Donors' Conference, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, at this stage, any other Head of State or of Government and whether Commissioner Michel from the European Union Commission have confirmed their participation?

**The Prime Minister:** I must say to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that President Mbeki was approached to chair the meeting and from, at present, President Azhali said he has agreed to chair the meeting. When I talked to him, he said that he was not able to say whether the dates are agreeable, he would look at the dates. Also the European Commissioner Michel had mentioned to me at the Indian Ocean Commission Meeting that he will be at the Donors' Meeting. Obviously the dates have now been changed. I don't know whether this still stands.

**Mr Bérenger:** Apart from the Heads of States/Government, World Bank, European Union and IMF, who else will be invited - does the hon. Prime Minister have the information? Which other stakeholders will be invited?

**The Prime Minister:** I am not yet in a position to say which other stakeholders will be present, but I know that the Director of the Regional World Bank, Mr Bond, is arriving in Mauritius, I think, at the end of this week or early next week. And I suppose all this will be mentioned to him.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there are any indications at this stage of the amount of funds the Comoros will be likely to target and whether there are any indications, at this stage, from the European Union and the World Bank of what kind of fresh commitments we can expect from them?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we don't have this information. I don't have it at least, but I know that there is a preparatory meeting, as I said, which will be held at the ministerial level in Moroni in early September 2005 and these issues are going to be addressed.

**Mr Bérenger:** With regard to the second part of my question, Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he has had the occasion to discuss with President Azhali and President Mbeki of the situation in Anjouan Island, especially in regard to the security forces in that island?

**The Prime Minister:** I mentioned it to President Azhali when we met last time, but he said that he is looking into the matter and things will be taken up. He is going to monitor the situation and I suppose that things will have to be thrashed out at this Ministerial Meeting which is going to be held in Moroni in September of this year.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister was kind enough to inform the House earlier on that the Comoros Constitution provides that the President of the Union of Comoros will be rotating from, at present, the Grande Comore to Anjouan then to Mohéli, then back to Grande Comore. So, early next year, as the hon. Prime Minister informed the House, it is expected that a President from Anjouan Island is to be elected after primary elections would have taken place in each of the three islands, then there will be the election over the whole of the Union for that President from Anjouan Island. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that there is a very disturbing negative mood developing in Grande Comore, where, according to my information, more and more Grand *Comoriens* tend to say that Anjouan should not be allowed to take the rotating Presidency because of the situation there. In that context, can I quote what President Azhali has been reported as saying only last Wednesday, I quote –

*“La réussite de la tournante suppose un travail particulier à Anjouan où des primaires doivent être organisées car c’est de là que la crise est venue. Les primaires doivent se dérouler dans la transparence et l’équité. Si tout se passe bien à Anjouan, pas de raison alors que le processus ne se passe pas bien dans l’ensemble des Comores”.*

Can I therefore ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware of that mood developing in Grande Comore and, if not, whether he will see to it that we get all the required information?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, when I talked to President Azhali, I mentioned that to him. He said that the decision has been made and it would have to be that way. Of course, he hadn't made that statement that he has made, but I take it that he seemed to be very determined that this should follow what has been agreed should take place. I can also mention it again if the hon. Leader of the Opposition so wishes. But my impression was with him that he is very determined that this should be done properly and that it will have to be as agreed.

**Mr Bérenger:** I thank the hon. Prime Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Prime Minister would have understood that I am very, very concerned that all this progress that we have made and the perspective of the Donors' Conference can be threatened in the days to come if, both in Anjouan and in *Grande Comore*, the situation does not get back on track. Can I request the hon. Prime Minister whether, in the interest of the Comoros, friendship between Mauritius and the Comoros and also being given that we have taken this responsibility of organising this Donors' Conference, he does not feel that a delegation from Mauritius should visit not only *Grande Comore*, the main island, but also Anjouan and Mohéli for consultations, being given the concerns that I have just expressed?

**The Prime Minister:** I have no objection to that. In fact, I know this Ministerial meeting is going to be held in September. But, in the meantime, this could be addressed.

### **GOODLANDS - POLICE STATION - BUILDING**

**(No. I B/80) Mr N. Guttee (Third Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or)** 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 that the Police station in Goodlands is located in an old rented building and, if so, whether he proposes to arrange for that building to be renovated and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the building previously housing the Goodlands Police Station was seriously damaged following the passage of cyclone Dina in January 2002 and that the building had to be vacated as it was considered structurally unsound for occupation.

As from the 01 November 2002, the Police Station was temporarily shifted to a rented building at Kashmir Road, Goodlands, pending the construction of a new building. A two-storeyed building situated at Kashmir Road, Goodlands, was rented for that purpose as from 01 November 2002 after tendering procedures. A monthly rent of Rs20,000 is being paid. The lease agreement was initially for a period of two years starting from 01 November 2002. It was renewed for a further period of two years starting from 01 November 2004. It will expire on 31 October 2006.

As the site where the previous Police station was located is not considered suitable to meet all the functional requirements of a modern Police station, a plot of land of an extent of 1760 square metres has been identified along Royal Road, Goodlands adjacent to the Government Primary School.

The Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping is preparing the preliminary drawings of the project.

### **PLAINE VERTE, ROCHE BOIS & VALLEE PITOT - DRUG TRAFFICKING**

**(No. I B/81) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second 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 ascertain if drug trafficking has increased since the last 5 years in the regions of Plaine Verte, Roche Bois and Vallée Pitot and that at certain times these areas are unsafe and, if so, will he state what measures he proposes to take to address the issue and in particular, whether he will consider posting officers of the ADSU and the Flying Squad on a permanent basis in these areas.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, according to statistics provided by the Commissioner of Police, the number of cases related to drug



in the regions of Plaine Verte, Roche Bois and Vallée Pitôt has increased from 164 in 2000 to 262 in 2004. The number of drug cases recorded in respect of these regions for this year as at 16 August is 165.

The number of arrests in these regions has also increased from 205 in 2000 to 309 in 2004. The number of arrests for this year as at 16 August is 189.

Special attention is being given by ADSU, Flying Squad, Alpha Squad, local CID, regular Police and other adjuncts of the Force to these regions.

With a view to fighting this scourge, a series of measures has been taken by the Police. These include -

- (a) regular mobile patrols by the local Police, ERS, DSU and other specially-tasked mobile teams;
- (b) regular foot patrol by local Police and CID personnel;
- (c) crime prevention awareness campaign by the Crime Prevention Unit;
- (d) regular meetings with the *Force Vives*;
- (e) rapid intervention of the Police following requests emanating from the public and
- (f) regular enlistment of resources from the Special Mobile Force and the Special Support Unit to reinforce other field Units deployed as a deterrent.

However, it is not appropriate to disclose the manpower directly deployed in the concerned areas for very obvious reasons.

We are conscious of the necessity of establishing a network for repression and prevention in our fight against drug trafficking. As announced in the Government Programme 2005-10, Government will appoint a Drug Tsar to oversee all action undertaken by the Government Departments and other agencies and institutions to combat drug use and

trafficking. We believe that institutional cohesiveness will enhance our national effort to combat drug addiction and trafficking.

**SICOM - MUSLIM FAITH EMPLOYEES –  
FRIDAY PRAYERS**

**(No. I B/82) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac)** 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 that employees of the Muslim faith at SICOM have in a recent past been facing difficulties to accomplish their Friday prayers (Jummah) and, if so, will he use his good offices to see to it that all such employees no longer face any difficulties.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that SICOM initiated a review of the conditions of service in September 2003 so as to boost productivity. As a motivating measure, a comprehensive salary package was included in this exercise.

I am advised that, faced with numerous requests for “time-off” during working hours, the company has decided that no such permission will be granted to members of staff, but that in certain circumstances, and subject to the exigencies of the service, the grant of “time-off” will be considered and will be reckoned against annual leave entitlement.

This decision was conveyed to members of staff through a Circular Note dated 04 May 2004.

I am further informed that following the issue of the Circular Note, although there has been no formal complaint or representation it seems there has been a misunderstanding that “time-off” would no longer be granted for Friday prayers.

The Managing Director of SICOM Ltd has confirmed that the misunderstanding has now been cleared and that, employees of Muslim faith should have no difficulty to accomplish their Friday prayers.

**PARLIAMENTARY PRIVATE SECRETARY –  
ARREST ON 21.03.01**

**(No. I B/83) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, ascertain from the Commissioner of Police if a Parliamentary Private Secretary presently in office was arrested on 21 March 2001 on a charge of receiving stolen goods (*recel*) and, if so, whether -

- (a) he was released on bail and the amount of recognizance, if any;
- (b) the goods were found at his residence and, if so, whether these goods were a computer, a pair of loudspeakers, a pressure cleaning machine make 'Karcher' and an adaptor, and
- (c) if the case has been disposed of.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that 12 persons including the person referred to in the question were arrested on 26 March 2001.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am advised that the person referred to in the question was given bail on 27 March 2001 after entering a recognizance of Rs10,000.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the reply is in the affirmative.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police, that after completion of the inquiry, the case file was referred to the DPP. On 11 February 2003, the latter advised prosecution against six of the persons arrested on 26 March 2001 before the Intermediate Court for "Larceny made by more than two individuals" and "Possession of stolen property". One of the persons arrested on 26 March 2001 escaped from Grand River North West Prison on 03 September 2002 and is still untraceable. No case has been lodged against him as yet.

I am also informed by the Commissioner of Police that the DPP advised on the 08 August 2005 that the provisional charge against the persons referred to in the question along with four other persons was struck out.

Subsequently, the provisional charge against these five persons were struck out.

### **GOVERNMENT - ADVISERS & PRESS ATTACHES - RECRUITMENT - JULY 2005**

**(I B/84) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether in regard to advisers and press attachés, recruited by Government since July 2005, he will give their names, respective salaries, other benefits and conditions of service.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I am laying on the Table of the National Assembly a statement giving the information requested.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Will the Prime Minister, therefore, state what is the policy of the Government in regard to the recruitment of advisers and press attachés?

**The Prime Minister:** The same policy that has always prevailed, Mr Speaker, Sir. But what I can tell the hon. Member is that we are looking particularly at the number of advisers and, as I said during the electoral campaign, we feel that there have been more advisers than needed during the last regime and this will not be the case.

### **MINISTRIES/DEPARTMENTS - DECENTRALISATION**

**(No. I B/85) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, having regard to problems faced by the public in Port Louis resulting from -

(a) the lack of office space;

(b) traffic jams, and

(c) non-availability of parking, he will consider shifting some Ministries or departments elsewhere.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me assure the hon. Member that indeed, relocation of Government Offices is one of the options being envisaged by Government for the decongestion of Port Louis.

### **DRUG TRAFFICKING, CORRUPTION & MONEY LAUNDERING - IMMUNITY FROM PROSECUTION**

**(No. I B/86) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, with a view to fighting drug trafficking, corruption and money laundering, he will consider introducing legislation with a view to granting immunity from prosecution to persons who have unlawfully acquired wealth and who are willing to declare and return same to the State.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the decision as to whether to prosecute or not and to grant immunity from prosecution rests with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I am advised that the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions to grant immunity is made on a case-to-case basis, in the light of all relevant factors, including the strength of the evidence available, the extent of the participation of the various parties, and especially the public interest.

### **PASSPORTS (NEW) - NUMBER, PRICE, ETC**

**(No. I B/87) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the new passports, he will state -

(a) the total number ordered and the price paid per passport;

- (b) the CIF cost of one passport, and
- (c) the duty, if any, paid on each passport.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Passport and Immigration Office that as regards to part (a), on 03 May 2004, a contract was awarded to Messrs Global Technologies, U.S.A for the supply of 250,000 passports. A first batch of 160,000 passports was received on 05 July 2005.

As regards part (b), the total CIF cost of one passport is Rs29.47.

In regard to part (c), the duty paid per passport, (including VAT) amounts to Rs6.40.

The price paid per passport, inclusive of insurance, freight, VAT and customs duty amounts to Rs97.80.

Mr Speaker, Sir, section 11 of the Passport Regulations 1969 makes provision for the issue of a Mauritian passport with a validity period of ten years. However, in January 2005, speculations grew that passport fees would be increased.

Consequently, the Passport and Immigration Office received many requests for passports and was unable to cope with the demand. To address this situation, the Passport Regulations were amended, *inter alia*, to limit the validity of passports to June 2007 to curb demand for passports.

It has been brought to my attention that there has been massive under evaluation on the value at the passports, passport personalisation system and consumables, and the finger print reach and passport reader scanner, and which could involve fraudulent practice. It could involve a total amount of nearly Rs12 m. I have, therefore, asked the Commissioner of Police to start a criminal investigation.

Several complaints have been received against the decision to limit the validity of passports to two years as applicants for a new passport have been made to pay the fees normally applicable for a passport having a validity period of ten years for a passport that would expire within two

years. I have instructed that the Passport Regulations be amended for payment of passport be reverted back to Rs700 instead of Rs1,500.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister that, when the investigation is being carried out to have the documents checked, to see whether the contract was made to a company in the USA, whether the passports were declared as coming from United Arab Emirates on the Customs Declaration Form and, whether, actually, the passports came from Vienna?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, what I gather from the information, the hon. Member seems to be correct, but the investigation will establish all this.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that the passport is a very confidential document, and that security measures should have been taken when these documents, and the accompanied personalisation system came along with it, shouldn't it have been wiser for the Government to have this cargo consigned directly to the Commissioner of Police and got it cleared by the State's Clearing Office rather than going through a private company?

**The Prime Minister:** That seems to be the case. I have checked with what pertained in the previous period, Mr Speaker, Sir, and this is something that, obviously, has to be looked at, because there is a danger then if other people get involved in the passports. We never know, we have seen fake passports and trafficking has taken place. So, this is going to be looked into to make sure that this does not happen. I can say, as of today, I know that all the documents and computer software have been taken over by the Commissioner of Police.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, at this stage, he can confirm that all tender procedures were followed in that case, and that the whole process remained under the overall control of the Commissioner of Police throughout?

**The Prime Minister:** As far as I can see the tendering procedure was done - the investigation will tell us - but the only thing is that evaluation seems to be the fraudulent practice and it involves a total sum of nearly Rs12 m.

**Mr Bérenger:** Will the hon. Prime Minister confirm that whatever under evaluation has been made by anybody, has been done through the tender procedures and under the control and supervision of the Central Tender Board?

**The Prime Minister:** It seems that there has been a fraudulent practice that has taken place, and they have been undervalued. It is when the Customs re-looked at the papers, that they found out that there is an alleged loss to the Government here of nearly Rs12m.

**Mr Bérenger:** Pending the inquiry being completed, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the alleged fraudulent practice would have taken place at the Police or where else?

**The Prime Minister:** It appears that the fraudulent practice had taken place at the Customs when the passports arrived.

## **MAURITIAN STUDENTS – PAKISTAN – MADRASSAHS**

**(No. I B/88) 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, Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he will state the measures, if any, taken to avoid the repatriation of Mauritian students presently studying in madrassahs in Pakistan with a view to becoming maulanas, halims and halimas, following the recent decision of H.E Mr Parwez Musharraf, President of the Republic of Pakistan to send back to their respective countries all foreign students studying in madrassahs in Pakistan.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, an announcement was made by President Parvez Musharraf while addressing the International Media on 29 July 2005 for foreign students attending Madrassas in Pakistan to leave the country within a month.

Government, upon taking cognizance of the announcement, contacted our High Commission in Islamabad and our Honorary Consul General in Karachi to follow up and monitor the situation with regard to all Mauritian



students attending Madrassas in Pakistan and to extend all possible assistance and support and to keep us informed of the developments.

Moreover, Government has taken a number of measures so as to ensure that Mauritian students, presently studying in Madrassas in Pakistan, suffer no undue hardship. The Minister of Foreign Affairs had an urgent meeting with the High Commissioner of Pakistan in Mauritius and he was requested to follow up the situation and to keep us informed of any development.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation has formally requested the Pakistani authorities, through the Pakistan High Commission in Mauritius, that special consideration be given to Mauritian students while underscoring the strong bilateral ties that exist between Mauritius and Pakistan. The High Commission of Pakistan has notified us in writing that our request is under consideration by the relevant Pakistani authorities.

So far, the Government of Pakistan has not yet informed of the measures to be put in place to implement the announcement made by President Musharraf.

Our High Commissioner in Pakistan, His Excellency, Mr Janhangeer, has met the Pakistani Federal Minister of Religious Affairs, and the Minister of State for Interior, on 13 August and 16 August 2005 respectively. During the meetings, our High Commissioner has pleaded the case of our students, while bringing home to the Pakistani Ministers the special ties, founded on solid cultural and historical affinities, that bind Mauritius, and he undertook to follow up and intercede for special consideration to be given to Mauritian students. On 19 August 2005, our High Commissioner met the Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, to present a special case for the Mauritian students and to inform him of the case of our nationals, of the request made by the Government for special consideration to be given to our students in Pakistan.

Our High Commissioner in Pakistan was instructed on 10 August 2005 to proceed to Karachi to see how best to assist the Mauritian students. As per the diplomatic practice in Pakistan, the required authorisation for our envoy to move out of Islamabad has been obtained this week and our High Commissioner will be proceeding to Karachi on 25 August 2005.

I have also personally written to President Musharraf, requesting him to allow our students to complete their studies and to take into consideration the special links that exist between our two countries.

**Mr Lauthan:** My information, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that there are two categories of Mauritian students studying. Some are studying in recognised Madrassas, others in unrecognised Madrassas. As we know, our Mauritian Ulemas have studied in recognised Madrassas, we have not had any problem with them. Could I suggest to the Prime Minister that during future deliberation, we concentrate on those who might be in problem, those who are presently in unrecognised Madrassas?

**The Prime Minister:** I must say that the statement made by President Musharraf talks of foreign students attending Madrassas in Pakistan, without making the difference between either they are proper Madrassas or not. And our instructions to our High Commissioner has been to look at all students, especially those who have problems and are asking for help.

**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (FORMER) –  
WTO DIRECTOR - CANDIDATURE**

**(No. I B/89) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Co-operation whether he will state if the immediate former Minister of Foreign Affairs was nominated by Government for the post of Director of the World Trade Organisation and, if so -

- (a) when;
- (b) the reasons therefor,
- (c) the number of missions undertaken by him to gather support for his election, indicating the countries he visited;
- (d) the amount, if any, spent on each mission, and
- (e) what other facilities were extended to him by the Government then.

**Mr Dullo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a), I am advised that, as per records available, the proposal for the submission of the candidature of Mr J. K. Cuttaree, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Cooperation to the post of Director General, WTO was raised formally as from 10 September 2004 at Government level. The immediate former Prime Minister had, on 03 December 2004, informed Government that Mr J. K. Cuttaree had presented his candidature for the post of Director General of the World Trade Organisation. The former Prime Minister had on 03 December 2004 personally written to the Chairman of the General Council of the WTO to nominate, on behalf of the Government, Mr J. K. Cuttaree as candidate to the post of Director General, WTO.

Regarding part (b), the reasons put forward by the then Prime Minister, in his letter dated 03 December 2004 to the Chairman of the General Council of the World Trade Organisation, were the following, I quote -

“During his long political career, hon. Jaya Krishna Cuttaree has held several high-level Ministerial functions. In his capacity as Minister responsible of the International Trade since 2000, he has been closely associated with the process that led to the launching of the Doha Development Round and has been actively involved in the WTO negotiations.

Hon. Jaya Krishna Cuttaree staunchly believes that the WTO should be institutionally all-inclusive and built on the effective participation of its members. He also shares the widely-held view that the outcome of the WTO negotiations should incorporate provisions for differential and more favourable treatment for developing economies, including special attention to the situation of the LDCs.

The hon. Minister is well-known for his strong commitment to a rule-based multilateral trading system geared towards the liberalisation of trade and a progressively more open world trading environment, while at the same time providing for fairness and equity in international trade.

It is the firm resolve of Minister Cuttaree to seek, in close consultation with the WTO membership, greater global coherence of policies in the fields of trade and finance through, *inter-alia*, enhanced cooperation between the WTO and other relevant international institutions.

The Government of Mauritius is confident that, in view of his outstanding credentials and personal qualities, hon. Jaya Krishna Cuttaree will provide the WTO with the required leadership and steer the Organisation in a manner that meets the legitimate expectations of the entire WTO membership.”

With regard to parts (c), (d) and (e), I am informed that apart from the former Minister, various special envoys, officials and embassies were involved in the lobbying campaign to gather support for his election.

All the information are being compiled and will be circulated as soon as they are ready.

However, from information readily available at the Ministry, it appears that Mr Cuttaree, Officials, and special envoys undertook 19 missions between September 2004 to May 2005 and visited countries as follows: U.S.A (New York, Washington), U.K, France, Switzerland, Belgium, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Netherlands, Madagascar, Réunion Island, Nigeria, Zambia, Egypt, Malaysia, Brunei, Oman, Qatar, Ethiopia, Guyana, Port of Spain, Indonesia and Philippines.

As per information provided to me so far and on the basis of records available, the expenses covering International travel, *per diem* and local transport for those missions including those of Minister Cuttaree and facilities for the campaign amount to about Rs7.4 m.

As I already stated, this information is not complete and all information are being compiled from different sources and will be circulated as soon as they are ready.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether, before nominating the former Minister of Foreign Affairs to the post of Director General of WTO, applications were invited before that nomination?

**Mr Dulloo:** I cannot say from information I have. That was a decision of Government and the former Minister submitted his candidature accordingly.

**Mr Varma:** May I also know, Mr Speaker, Sir, from the hon. Minister, the date of the first trip undertaken by the former Minister and the cost of that trip?

**Mr Dulloo:** From records available, Mr Speaker, Sir, the first trip that I have on my list here is dated between 22 September to 04 October 2004 and the itinerary being Mauritius/Geneva/Paris/Washington/New York and then Washington/London/Mauritius. The total cost for the Minister's mission along with the officials is Rs1,090,964.

**Mr Varma:** Sir, the hon. Minister has stated that officials were involved in the trips undertaken by the former Minister. Can we know the names of the officials who accompanied him?

**Mr Dulloo:** I do not have a complete list, Mr Speaker, right now, but I know that Mr V. S. Makhan, the Foreign Secretary, participated in most of the missions and that he even led certain missions, the details of which will be forthcoming. There were also other officers including Mr Phokeer, Deputy Director Regional Co-operation and other officers in the international trade division.

**Mr Varma:** May I know, Mr Speaker, Sir, from the hon. Minister, whether any official conducted any trip on his own in connection with the campaign for the election and the cost of that trip?

**Mr Dulloo:** As I indicated, Mr Speaker, Sir, the former Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr V. S. Makhan, conducted at least two missions as stated on the list that is available right now.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Minister referred to a number of missions and to sums of money, will he confirm that in only very few cases were missions dedicated solely to this issue and that in all the great majority of missions, the Minister and officials were on mission and, at the same time, lobbying for the post of Director-General?

**Mr Dulloo:** I have to check on the report for each and every mission and I will come back to Parliament, if necessary.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Minister will confirm that, at that point in time, Mr Vijay Makhan was the only Secretary for Foreign Affairs of

Mauritius. Will he therefore confirm that there is nothing abnormal in his accompanying his Minister or going on mission himself in his capacity as Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Mauritius?

**Mr Dullo:** As I indicated already, Mr Speaker, Sir, under the question just asked, the former Secretary for Foreign Affairs did accompany the former Minister on some of the missions and he also led certain of the missions himself.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, does the Minister agree that it is a very real matter the amount of prestige that all this lobbying brought to Mauritius and the fact that we ended up being the candidate of SADC, the African Union and the whole ACP group and India also, and that this indeed brought a lot of prestige and credibility to Mauritius which cannot be quantified the way the Minister has chosen to quantify this issue?

**Mr Dullo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will prefer not to comment on the performance of my predecessor in this very high office; and as and when I will be meeting people at various international and regional level, I will be able to assess *les retombées* of such candidature.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will agree with me that in fact, whatever efforts little Mauritius put in for a lot of prestige, whatever funds we did spend for a good cause, not just for Mauritius, but for developed countries as a whole, comparing that to the expenditure made by our main competitor, that is, former Commissioner Lamy of Europe who benefited from the backing of the European Union massively and spent massive sums in his lobbying campaign, will he agree with me that what has been spent by small Mauritius, and well spent, was peanuts compared to what was spent by the candidate from the European Union?

**Mr Dullo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very important information; I think we should have known this in advance before we fielded a candidate and we should have assessed the outcome thereof.

**Mr Cuttaree:** The hon. Minister has been referring to the mission that I led in New York - the first mission on which the hon. Member chose to ask question. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether this was not a mission which I had to undertake, as the then Foreign Minister, to attend the General Assembly of the United Nations? In fact, on the way I stopped to

discuss meetings involving the negotiations of the Doha Round in Geneva, and from there I stopped over in Paris and then went to New York.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has said that he is trying to compile the information. The hon. Member can come with a substantive question if he wants to do so.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, the hon. Minister has said that he is trying to get all the available information. He does not have the information insofar as a particular mission is concerned - if I have understood what he said. As I said, the hon. Member can come with a substantive question on the specific matter he is raising.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't want to challenge the Chair, but a specific question was asked regarding a specific mission in September and to which the hon. Minister gave a specific reply. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether when he talks about the various missions which were undertaken, whether these missions did not include the SADC Trade Ministers Meeting in Zambia, the OAU Heads of States Meeting, the AU Council of Ministers' Meeting, the COMESA Ministers of Trade Meeting, the Council of Ministers' Meeting of the ACP and the *Sommet de la Francophonie*, where the main issues taken had nothing to do with the WTO and that, in any case, I would have had to attend these meetings whether I was a candidate to WTO, or not?

**Mr Dulloo:** I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the intervention just now. As I indicated, I am asking for a report for each and every mission in the light of which I can comment and respond to the question later on.

*(Interruptions)*

## **ABORTION – GOVERNMENT POLICY**

**(No. I B/90) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection whether she will make a statement on Government policy regarding abortion.

**Mrs Seebun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member will certainly agree that the question of abortion is a highly complex one. My Ministry is, therefore, proposing to have consultations with all stakeholders before devising any policy. Arrangements have already been made by my Ministry for a first meeting with social and religious groups.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** In a recent statement the hon. Minister said that she is in favour of abortion in exceptional circumstances, such as rape and incest. Will she confirm whether it is proposed to amend the legislation to that effect?

**Mrs Seebun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I suppose I made it very clear that it was a personal opinion.

### **UNIVERSITIES/INSTITUTIONS - MEDICAL COUNCIL - RECOGNITION**

**(No. I B/91) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will ascertain if the degrees awarded by the University of Ukraine are recognised by the Medical Council in Mauritius.

**The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that there is no University of Ukraine *per se* which provides degrees/diplomas in medicine.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Medical Council of Mauritius that according to the Medical Council (Medical Institutions) Regulations 2004, the following Universities and Institutions in Ukraine are recognised by the Medical Council of Mauritius as being medical institutions which provide diploma/degree in medicine –

- (i) Crimean Medical Institute
- (ii) Donetsk Medical Institute
- (iii) Kharkov Medical Institute
- (iv) Kiev Medical Institute
- (v) Lvov Medical Institute



- (vi) Odessa Medical Institute
- (vii) Vinnitsa Medical Institute
- (viii) Zaporozhye Medical Institute

## **UNIVERSITY OF UKRAINE – STUDENTS – PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED**

**(No. I B/92) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware of the problems faced by the students in medicine in Ukraine and, if so, will he state the measures taken in relation thereto.

**The Minister of Education & Human Resources (Mr D. Gokhool):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will answer this question. I am informed that Mauritian students who proceed to Ukraine for further studies do so through recruitment agencies/individuals or on their own. My Ministry does not keep a record of students effecting studies in Ukraine or elsewhere at their own expense. However, no formal complaints have been received from the students in Ukraine. Should such cases be brought to the attention of my Ministry, appropriate action will be taken to come to their assistance.

Moreover, with a view to safeguarding the interest of these students, it is proposed to introduce appropriate legislation to regulate the activities of recruitment agencies/individuals involved in the recruitment of students for tertiary studies overseas.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister state what is the policy of the Government with regard to the *agents recruteurs* who are sending students to study medicine in Ukraine?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered the question. We will introduce legislation to regulate the activities of these organisations.

## HENRIETTA – STATE LAND

(No. I B/93) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether in regard to the parcelling of State land at Henrietta for the purpose of housing squatters, he will state –

- (a) the extent of land earmarked, and
- (b) whether the land was identified for the low-cost housing projects and whether electricity and water supplies are available.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are two plots of land at Henrietta and its vicinity. The first one is at La Marie and was initially earmarked for granting building leases to families in the vulnerable groups, including deserving families who illegally occupied the NHDC housing units.

This plot is vested in the Ministry of Finance for the purpose of relay housing project by the Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups. The second plot at Henrietta is earmarked for a housing project. The site adjoins existing residential development where electricity and water supply are available.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the purpose of relocating squatters it is not proposed to make use of land at La Marie.

**Mr Bérenger:** The Minister made reference to relay housing project. Can I ask the Minister whether he is saying that, on that piece of land at Henrietta there is a new project that is going to be set up, or whether it is going to be the ongoing Trust Fund for Integration of Vulnerable Groups Project - they provide some Rs50,000 of building materials for units to be set up through self-help and so on - or are we talking about a new project?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, actually the relay housing project is temporary shelters which the Trust Fund proposes to the vulnerable groups and, as and when their economic conditions improve they will be encouraged to move into Firinga-type houses.

## FIRINGA-TYPE HOUSES – GOVERNMENT POLICY

**(No. I B/94) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, having regard to the new policy of Government relating to the housing sector, he will state if his Ministry is contemplating not to proceed with the construction of the 2000 Firinga-type houses.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply is in the negative.

May I also invite the hon. Member to refer to paragraph 186 of the Government Programme 2005-2010, where it is clearly mentioned that construction of low-cost housing will be a priority of this Government in line with our firm commitment to bring more social justice and our strong determination to alleviate poverty in its broadest form and its deepest roots.

However, I am having a fresh look at the sites which have been identified for the project and shall give priority to constructing low-cost housing where the demand is high. This includes identification of new sites, for example, in Port Louis and lower Plaines Wilhems where there is high demand.

### **INTEGRATED RESORT SCHEME PROJECTS – GOVERNMENT POLICY**

**(No. I B/95) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will make a statement on Government policy regarding the Integrated Resort Scheme projects.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

The Integrated Resort Scheme, known as IRS was introduced by the previous Government in August 2002 through the Investment Promotion (Integrated Resort Scheme) Regulations and the Finance Act 2002. As the House is aware, the Scheme aims at attracting high net-worth non-citizens by allowing them to acquire property in specific, approved resorts in Mauritius. It provides for the development of luxury villas of international standing as well as extensive and high-class leisure and recreational

facilities. These may include golf course, marina, individual swimming pool, catering, nautical and other sport facilities. Day-to-day management services such as security, maintenance, gardening, solid waste disposal and household services are to be provided to the beneficiaries.

Since then, the Scheme has evolved. In 2004, the Scheme was amended to provide for the resale and rental of villas as well as for granting land conversion tax exemption and 10% capital allowance under Income Tax for golf course development. These changes were implemented by way of the Finance Act 2004 and amendments to the IRS Regulations in February 2005. Moreover, acting upon a request made by a major international developer, the previous Government was actively considering further modifications to the scope and features of the Scheme as well as the granting of additional facilities.

Sir, in its Programme, the present Government has stated that the Integrated Resort Scheme would be reviewed. We have also received various representations and views from stakeholders, including from some IRS promoters. A Ministerial Committee has accordingly been set up under my chairmanship to probe into the Scheme, its objectives and features, the facilities and incentives granted and the conditions imposed. The work of the Committee is still ongoing. The Committee expects to submit its conclusions and recommendations to Cabinet very soon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not Government's intention to freeze the Integrated Resort Scheme or stifle private sector development in IRS projects. On the contrary, we want these projects to be rapidly implemented. The Board of Investment continues to devaluate IRS projects that have been submitted by promoters. It should be noted that up to now only one application has obtained an Investment Certificate. Another one is very advanced and has received a Letter of Intent and is likely to obtain its Investment Certificate soon.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with reference to the fact that one promoter has obtained its Investment Certificate, can I know what is going to happen in this case pending that committee, which the hon. Minister chairs, completing its work and how many promoters have received Letters of Intent?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the two are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to let the scheme function and, at the same time, to bring some changes. We are actively reviewing some of the conditions and, in fact, we will probably borrow from what exists in other countries in terms of the concept of planning obligations. We are working *sur quatre pistes*.

The first one, Mr Speaker, Sir, is about how we can further implicate the community where the project is being developed, in the benefits of these projects which could be in terms of employment, in terms of spatial development for the community and also in terms of providing services.

The second one is basically what I would call the competitiveness of the scheme itself. As the hon. Member is aware, there are many countries competing to attract such types of projects. So, we are trying to benchmark how competitive we are, compared to countries like Spain, Portugal, South Africa, Hawaii and in the Caribbean.

The third *piste de réflexion* is the concept of flexibility. I personally believe that we need flexibility in working out the scheme for the simple reason that the needs and requirements of the promoters vary from scheme to scheme. As the hon. Member knows that in some cases they ask for rezoning, in other cases they ask for tax exemption on land conversion and in other cases they ask for land swap from the State and in yet other cases they ask for some development that have to be undertaken by the State in respect of the provision on infrastructure. So, there is no one size fits all. I am in favour of flexibility as opposed to having a fixed tariff for everybody.

And the fourth *piste de réflexion*, Mr Speaker, Sir, is basically how we can broaden the circle of opportunities so that other people who don't have a huge plot of land can also participate and promote such projects.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Minister has gone off on *quatre différentes pistes* that has left *la piste dessinée* by my supplementary question unanswered. My question was one promoter has a Certificate of Investment, what is going to happen to that promoter and I asked the Minister how many Letters of Intent have been issued, if he has the information.

**Mr Sithanen:** There is one promoter. I think it is Medine, Mr Speaker, Sir, that has been issued with an Investment Certificate. In fact, I am being told that they have already sold some of the villas. Then, there is

the Letter of Intent that has been issued to one promoter. That also, I understand, is in an advanced stage of negotiation with the BOI and they are likely to be issued with their Investment Certificate.

Then, there are two other categories, what I would call, Letter of Comfort and then those that are under processing. So, according to the figures I have, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are four promoters that have been issued Letters of Comfort. One has been issued with Letter of Intent, one has got an Investment Certificate and the remaining ones are under processing.

### **MILK POWDER - MAXIMUM MARK-UP REGIME**

**(No. I B/96) Mr K. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether following the recent decrease in the price of milk, he will state if he intends to extend the price review and control to milk-based products, breakfast cereals, skimmed milk, Hi-calcium milk and wheat-based cereals and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for raising this issue. The House will be aware that this Government is people's Government and as a Government we have promised to put people first and this we will.

The Government, the business community in general and the country at large, all together, we should keep in mind the fact that unless our people enjoy the fruits of growth and development, most particularly to be able to afford basic human necessities, be that food or shelter, then only we can say that we are on the right track.

Government's decision to put milk powder under the maximum mark-up regime is in line with this policy. It is not the intention of Government to have recourse to price control at large as a policy matter, but we will surely check on any abuse, collusive tendencies or profiteering when such is the case, mostly so when it comes to basic food items.

The Management Audit Bureau has been requested to conduct a study to determine a list of essential commodities with details of mark-up and price increases.

I need here to add that the business community, following discussions we had, is not insensitive to this issue. I thank them for that and this has clearly been demonstrated after milk powder was put under the maximum mark-up regime.

Regarding the specific items raised by the hon. Member for Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière, I wish to point out that my Ministry is closely monitoring the trend in prices, and in case it is strongly felt that any product mentioned in the question should be put under price review, the hon. Member can rest assured that we will do so without hesitation. Right now, this is not the case.

As regards skimmed milk and high calcium milk, I wish to inform the House that both fall under the maximum mark-up regime.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state to the House whether all brands of milk have witnessed a decrease in price?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Unless the hon. Member has some specific information, I can answer that. I have got a whole list here. Would the hon. Member like me to go through that?

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Is the Minister aware that the brand "Nido" has not witnessed a decrease in price?

**Dr. Jeetah:** As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have allowed a maximum mark-up of 14% and this is the case. As I said, unless the hon. Member has some specific information, I can answer that.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry! The Minister has already replied. The hon. Member must come with a substantive question.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if you will allow me, just to clarify this issue. May I inform the hon. Minister that the brand "Nido" has, in fact, witnessed an increase in price instead of a decrease? This is what I wanted to say.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member should be quite clear when he puts questions.

**Dr. Jeetah:** If the hon. Member is willing to come with a substantive question, I will gladly answer.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister confirm *qu'il n'y a pas un certain manque de lait sur le marché?*

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I knew they were going to come with this, but I have got the total value in terms of weight of milk available as at 11 August 2005 and it is more than a million kgs of milk which is much more than what we normally require for the month. So, we don't have to worry. We have enough milk supply in Mauritius at the moment.

**Mr Nancy:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to freight and the complexity of the price fixing mechanism in Rodrigues, I would like to know how the Minister intends to monitor the decrease in price of milk in Rodrigues?

**Dr. Jeetah:** As I said, if the hon. Member has anything specific for Rodrigues, I am going to consider that. The hon. Member should give notice.

## CITÉ HIBISCUS, FLACQ – DREDGING WORKS

**(No. I B/97) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware that the Cité Hibiscus along rivulet Céré at Central Flacq is a flood-prone area and, if so, whether the Land & Drainage



Committee of his Ministry has considered dredging works thereat, indicating

—

- (a) the outcome thereof, and
- (b) when works are likely to start.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, Cité Hibiscus at Flacq is listed as a flood-prone area in the report of the study of the Land Drainage System of the Island of Mauritius, which was conducted by GIBB (Mtius) Ltd during the period July 2001 and February 2003.

The Technical Sub Committee of the Land Drainage Co-ordination Committee of my Ministry in June 2004 approved the dredging of River Céré by the Moka/Flacq District Council for the sum of Rs700,000.

From information available, the Moka/Flacq District Council had signed an agreement with GNJ Co. Ltd for the dredging of River Céré on 05 December 2003, that is, six months before the approval of the Technical Sub Committee of the Land Drainage Co-ordination Committee.

I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that the dredging works along 455 metres of the river had not completely solved the problem.

I have instructed the Land Drainage Co-ordination Committee of my Ministry to review the project immediately.

### **CENTRAL FLACQ – MARKET FAIR**

**(No. I B/98) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will ascertain the state of the market fair at Central Flacq and state if there is any project for the construction of a new market fair thereat and, if so, when works are likely to start.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed that the present market fair at Central Flacq does not meet the basic standard, as it is a temporary one.

A tender exercise was launched on a design and build basis on 27 July 2005 by the CTB for the construction of a new market fair. The closing date for the receipt of proposals is Wednesday 14 September 2005.

The Moka/Flacq District Council is making necessary arrangements for the funding of the project and construction will start soon after.

### **MINISTRY OF HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE – MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENTS - VACANCIES**

**(No. I B/99) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to medical superintendents, he will give the number of posts on the establishment of his Ministry and the number of vacancies to date, indicating when such vacancies will be filled.

**The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou):** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are 11 posts of medical superintendent on the establishment of the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life and there are presently seven vacancies. The number of posts was reduced from 13 to 11, as reflected in the Estimates for the year 2004/2005, but the Civil Establishment Order has yet to be amended.

I am informed that this exercise is under way. The filling of these vacancies will be effected as soon as the scheme of service, which is being amended, is finalised.

I am, however, informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the exercise to amend the scheme of service started as far back as 09 July 2002, but has not been completed for three years now.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government will see to it that it is finalised within the shortest possible delay and the vacancies filled.

### **CAMP MARCELIN, FLACQ – FOOTBALL GROUND**

**(No. I B/100) Dr. R. Mungur (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit

whether there is any project for the construction of a football ground at Camp Marcelin, Flacq.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I fully appreciate the concern of the hon. Member for a football ground at Camp Marcelin, Flacq.

My Ministry is presently working on a 5-year development plan to assess the needs of the population and to rationalise the setting up of additional community facilities.

The hon. Member will, however, be pleased to learn that a volleyball pitch at a cost of Rs2,309,142.50 has just been completed at Camp Marcelin, which comprises around 125 households.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister if any decision was taken in 1999 for the construction of Camp Marcelin football ground?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware that such a decision has been taken.

## SIC – RETURN ON EQUITY & RETURN ON CAPITAL

(No. I B/101) Miss K.R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the State Investment Corporation, he will state the return of equity and the return on capital employed for the period 2000 to 2004 inclusive.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker Sir, the Return of Equity (ROE), excluding profit/loss on disposal of investment of State Investment Corporation for the period 2000 to 2004, has been as follows -

Year	%
2000	4.7
2001	4.0
2002	4.6
2003	3.7
2004	3.2

The Return on capital Employed (ROCE), excluding profit/loss on disposal of investment during the same period, has been as follows -

Year	%
2000	5.3
2001	4.7
2002	5.2
2003	4.6
2004	3.9

It may thus be noted that the Return on Equity and Return on Capital Employed have dropped by 31.9% and 26.4% respectively over the 2000-2004 period. One reason for this drop is that the profits of the company have remained the same in absolute terms, whereas the asset base has increased by revaluation of investments in the year 2003.

**Miss Deerpalsing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister to confirm that, comparatively with the SEMDEX performance in the same period, which has been over 13% and Government bonds being at 8%, the performance noted by the SIC is very pathetic indeed? Being given that this is public stakeholders' money, I would like to ask him what actions he will take to ensure that the performance is better than this.

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is right as far as the figures are concerned. The return from the Stock Exchange is significantly higher; so is the return on bonds. I think it is unfair to compare with the SIC, because the objective of the SIC is different in terms of being the strategic investor of Government. Having said that, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are many lame duck companies being managed by the SIC. The SIC has sometimes shifted from being a strategic investor to being a manager of some enterprises. I think that all hon. Members will agree that this was not the original objective of the SIC. It was basically to invest strategically, and then to move out. But, in fact, they have been landed with many companies that are not functioning at all. So, I have asked for a review of the strategy of the SIC, with a view to concentrating on the investment aspect as opposed to managing enterprises.

## **BALANCE OF PAYMENTS – MACRO-ECONOMIC SITUATION**

**(No. I B/102) Miss K.R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether, in regard to the Balance of Payment (BOP), he will state the reasons for the present macro-economic situation.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker Sir, the overall balance of payments recorded a deficit of Rs3.1 billion during fiscal year 2004/05, compared to a surplus of Rs3.2 billion in 2003/04. This resulted from a sharp deterioration in the current account, which registered a deficit of Rs2.1 billion in 2004/05, compared to a surplus of Rs1.34 billion in 2003/04. It should be noted that the current account fostered a deficit after having registered surpluses during four consecutive previous fiscal years. As regards the capital and financial account, a net outflow of Rs2 billion was recorded.

The deficit on the current account stemmed from a deterioration in the merchandise account, reflecting the faster growth of imports relative to exports. The deficit on the merchandise account increased substantially by Rs6.5 billion to reach a record of Rs17 billion in 2004/05. While total exports increased by only 5.7% to Rs57 billion in 2004/05, imports went up by almost 15% to reach Rs74.5 billion in that year. The lower export growth was largely attributable to the poor performance of the EPZ sector, which contracted during four consecutive years. It was further aggravated by a slow growth of an average of only 2.4% in the tourism sector and a sharp decline in the financial services sector.

The high deficit on the merchandise account also resulted from unfavourable terms of trade. During 2004, the import price index went up by 16% as compared to a rise of only 8.7% in the export price index. Consequently, the terms of trade deteriorated from 100 in the fourth quarter of 2003 to 94 in the last quarter of 2004.

The capital and financial account recorded a net outflow of almost Rs2 billion in 2004/05 compared to an outflow of Rs1.168 billion in 2003/04. Gross FDI flows to Mauritius, mainly in the banking and ICT sectors, amounted to Rs1.5 billion in 2004/05. However, there were substantial and massive disinvestment amounting to Rs1.561 billion by non-residents, mainly in the textile and tourism sectors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the situation will worsen, unfortunately, in 2005/2006, based on preliminary estimates from the Bank of Mauritius. The deficit on the balance of trade will be staggering Rs24 billion for the financial year 2005/2006, while the deficit on the current account will rise to Rs7 billion, which means that the overall balance of payments deficit for the fiscal year 2005/2006 will grow to around Rs8.6 billion.

**Miss Deerpalsing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether this has cropped up as a total surprise or whether this could have been predicted, and why the country has not been informed of the projections of the really dire balance of payments situation? I would also like to ask the hon. Minister to state whether the supposedly winning formula of duty free paradise project would have significantly worsened the balance of payments situation. Can the hon. Minister enlighten the House on this subject?

/...

**Mr Sithanen:** I shall try, Mr Speaker, Sir. As the hon. Member knows, the balance of payments is made up of three balances. For a long time, the balance of trade was in deficit, but it was compensated by a positive balance of invisibles, which is primarily the income that we receive from tourism and services. As I stated in my reply, for the first time, all three balances are, in fact, in deficit. The balance of trade is in deficit, the balance of invisible is in deficit, and because of the massive outflow of capital movement, which more than offset the FDI inflows, we have three deficits. And unfortunately, this year the deficit would be aggravated for a series of reasons. First, there are increases in the price of petroleum products. This will impact obviously on the balance of trade. The rate of growth in the EPZ is going to be significantly lower than what was forecast initially. On sugar also, the export earnings would be much less than what was initially forecast. Most people believe that tourism will grow 5 per cent. If it is 5 per cent the receipts from the invisible account would be less than what was initially forecast. So, that's why the deficit will be significantly higher than what was initially forecast.

**Mr Boodhoo:** May I know the reasons why the balance of invisible trade is quite negative, which is quite surprising?

**Mr Sithanen:** I think it's a combination of lower growth in the tourism sector and lower inflow on the financial sector. So, these are the two main reasons here. I presume also - I'm just talking from memory - I think freight charges have increased and the freight charges are probably accounted for in the balance of invisible. I have to check that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

## **MAURITIUS DUTY FREE PARADISE LTD - ACTIVITIES**

**(No. I B/103) Mr N. Guttee (Third Member for Grand’Baie and Poudre d’Or)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Ltd, he will state -

- (a) when it came into operation;
- (b) whether it has been wound up and, if not, why not, and
- (c) whether he will give details of the expenses incurred on the staff and the Executive Chairman as from September 2000 to date.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Ltd came into operation on 27 March 2002 and it took over all the activities and business rights of Mauritius Shopping Paradise Company Ltd (MSP) when the latter ceased business upon the termination of the Strategic Alliance Agreement with World Duty Free (Europe) Ltd.

As regards part (b) of the question the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Ltd (MDFP) is running the duty free shop at the airport and is not in the process of winding up. In fact, it is Mauritius Shopping Paradise Company Ltd (MSP) that should have been in the process of winding up since March 2002. It is only on 08 July this year that the process of winding up the company has started. I am given to understand that the reason put forward for not winding up the company earlier was that there were some outstanding legal cases to be cleared relating to discrepancies noted following stock analysis.

Regarding part (c) of the question, the Executive Chairman assumed duty in December 2000 on the following terms and conditions:

- monthly salary of Rs45,000, plus monthly entertainment allowance of Rs5,000;
- gratuity of 25% of annual salary on completion of every 12 months;
- a chauffeur driven car, and
- 2 air tickets (Mauritius-London-Mauritius) during the subsistence of the contract or its equivalent in cash.



He was further provided with security services at his residence on a 24-hour basis as from September 2001. This involved a monthly payment of Rs33,000.

Though the MSP ceased its operations as from March 2002, the Executive Chairman remained in office on the same terms and conditions until February 2005. He was then offered the post of Centre Manager of Lakepoint Ltd while remaining in office as Chairman of MSP until 10 August 2005, but did not receive any remuneration from the company.

The expenses incurred on the Executive Chairman, as from December 2000 to date amount to Rs5.7 m. plus telephone facilities.

In regard to staff, five officers were employed by MSP until cessation of business. Three employees were then transferred to World Duty Free (Europe) Limited. There are still one driver and one shop assistant in employment at MSP. The gross remuneration paid to the staff members for the period September 2000 to date amounts to Rs 2.5m.

### **BOIS D'OISEAUX, POUFRE D'OR VILLAGE - BUS SERVICE**

**(No. I B/104) Mr N. Guttee (Third Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the people of Bois d'Oiseaux, Poudre d'Or Village have to walk over a long distance to the bus stops and, if so, will he use his good offices to have a bus service diverted to Bois d'Oiseaux and, if not, why not.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, following complaints received in the past by the inhabitants of Bois d'Oiseaux, road tests were carried out in 2002 and 2005 jointly by the National Transport Authority and the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry in order to examine the possibility of extending existing bus services to serve the village of Bois d'Oiseaux.

The road tests revealed that the road along Bois d'Oiseaux was narrow and the turning radii at junctions are inadequate for safe maneuvering of buses. Moreover, it was found that buses and trunks could not cross or overtake each other along the road.

A survey has already been carried out along the itinerary to be used by buses in order to find out the extent of land that would be required for the widening of the road and the construction of a footpath along at least one side of the road.

The survey revealed that at certain locations, the enlargement of the road would entail either partial demolition of existing buildings, gates or other structures. At some places there were virtually no road reserves between the buildings and the road edge.

I wish to point out that the absence of a “buffer zone” between buildings and road is not acceptable from a road safety point of view.

I am proposing to arrange for a site visit with hon. Members of the Constituency, the National Transport Authority and the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit to examine other options in order to give satisfaction to the residents of Bois d’Oiseaux.

*At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

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

### **PLAINE VERTE - WATER SUPPLY**

**(No. I B/105) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will -

- (a) ascertain if the water supply in the region of Plaine Verte is irregular and, if so, will he ensure that a regular water supply be provided in the short term to the above area, especially on Fridays and on public holidays, and
- (b) state what remedial measures he proposes to take in the long term.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, indeed there has been an acute problem in the supply of water in the region of Plaine Verte recently to the extent of causing some hardship to the inhabitants of the region. I am informed that this was due to a technical problem arising from the replacement of a large feeder pipe. It has been reported that some plastic

material had embolised in the distribution network causing intermittent obstruction of certain valves. The CWA engineers worked round-the-clock to establish the supply of water. Besides, I arranged for the affected areas to be supplied by water tanks. In fact, there is a real problem with the water supply for the whole of the Port Louis region with insufficient amount of water to cope with the ever-increasing demand.

I am informed by the Central Water Authority that potable water is supplied to the region of Plaine Verte from Diego Garcia and Priest Peak reservoirs which in turn are fed from Pailles Treatment Works.

The major part of Plaine Verte is supplied from Diego Garcia reservoir and the hours of supply are normally between 4 a.m. and 8.30 p.m. The remaining part of Plaine Verte mainly along Route Militaire, Route des Pamplemousses, Paul Toureau and the adjacent roads are supplied from Priest Peak reservoir. Under normal conditions, the supply in these areas are from 4 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.

As one can well understand, any problem in the reticular network will invariably disrupt the schedule as indicated previously.

As far as supply for Fridays is concerned, I have arranged with the CWA for supply to run up to 2 p.m. to enable the inhabitants to prepare for their midday mandatory prayers.

As regards the long term remedial measures, I wish to inform the House that the CWA is in the process of implementing the northern Port Louis water supply project to transfer surplus of potable water from La Nicolière Treatment Plant with a view to supplementing water resources in the Port Louis system. This project which will improve reliability of supply in the northern region of Port Louis is expected to start in October 2005 and will be completed hopefully by mid 2006.

The definite solution to the problems of water cuts in Port Louis will be the Bagatelle Dam project. In fact, the Bagatelle reservoir will supply water all year round while, at the same time, boosting the water supply in the lower Plaines Wilhems region.

The construction of the dam is scheduled to start by end of 2007 or 2008. The project also includes the construction of a water treatment plant and water transmission mains and is estimated to cost about Rs2 billion.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Presidential Address it has been mentioned that in order to overcome the shortage of water in the region of Port Louis, Government is contemplating the idea of using the surplus of water of Midlands Dam. Is the Minister still envisaging this measure?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Sir, in fact, when I say La Nicolière, it goes down from the Midlands Dam by the canals and goes to La Nicolière from where it is treated. Then it goes back to Calebasses and from there, this is the main track coming to Port Louis.

### **PLAINE VERTE/ROCHE BOIS - SEWERAGE SYSTEM - OVERFLOW**

**(No. I B/106) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware that there is a regular overflow in the sewerage system in the Plaine Verte/Roche Bois area and, if so, will he arrange for a survey to be carried out to ascertain if the present system can cater for the needs of the population.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of sewerage overflows in the Plaine Verte/Roche Bois areas.

I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) that overflows from sewerage manholes in the region are mainly due to obstructions caused by misuse of the system, namely the discharge of solid materials and ingress of storm and run-off water. The system for the discharge of domestic water does not cater for ingress or disposal of storm water. This results in surcharge of the system leading to overflows in certain low-lying areas.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed that certain sections of the sewerline in the wastewater system are prone to silting as a result of low velocity flow especially during the drought season when there are cuts in the water supply.

The WMA regularly carries out preventive maintenance in the affected locations using jetting facilities to remove the silting so as to make the sewer system hydraulically more effective.

I have requested the WMA to monitor closely the situation and I have been keeping in touch with the inhabitants of the affected areas. Should the circumstances so warrant, consideration will be given to upgrade the system before the problems become more chronic.

### **GAME LINK LTD. - SLOT MACHINES – OPERATION**

**(No. I B/107) Mr V. Mardemootoo (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the slot machines in operation at the Game Link Ltd, he will state –

- (a) if any control is exercised thereon and, if so, the nature of the control, and
- (b) the number thereof, the date on which they were purchased, their respective costs and the number presently being used, and say whether they are in proper running condition.

**The Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, at the time Game Link Ltd, a private company, was authorised to operate slot machines, the Gaming Control Board made visits to the premises where the machines were installed to check whether the number of machines being operated was in accordance with the number authorised by the licences issued to the company. Furthermore, the Value Added Tax Department, which is responsible for the collection of gaming tax, made checks to ensure that the correct amount of gaming tax was paid to Government.

As regards part (b) of the question, the company purchased 54 slot machines in April 2000. I am given to understand the cost of one slot machine was Rs400,000.

The company applied to the Gaming Control Board for licences to operate 30 machines at La Plantation Hotel and 24 machines at Ambre

Hotel. The Board approved the issue of the licences on 26 November 2001. The company paid the licence fees for one year on 29 March 2002 and started operating the machines at La Plantation Hotel on 30 March 2002 and at Ambre Hotel on 02 April 2002. On expiry of the licences, the company did not renew the licences and removed the machines.

Subsequently on 14 May 2002, the company applied for licence to operate 10 machines at Plaisance Airport and the application was approved on 13 June 2002. The company paid for the licence fees for one year on 28 July 2003 but started operation on 28 November 2003. Again on expiry, the company did not renew the licences and removed the machines from the premises as they were in bad state. Obviously the equipment are not in proper running condition.

I would like to point out that the whole system of the direct investment of SIC and its failure resulted in substantial loss to the company estimated at around Rs30 m.

**Mr Mardemootoo:** Would the hon. Minister confirm that the initial objective of Game Link Ltd, to operate an online system attached to a router, will continue to function or will these machines be replaced by a manual system?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that no proper market research was carried with a view to ascertaining whether there was a business case for such type of machines. I am further informed that the machines will now be converted into coin operated machines and will be sold to casinos, which have expressed an interest to purchase them at a heavy discount.

**Mr Mardemootoo:** With the conversion of these machines, would the Minister agree with me that it is like buying a beautiful LCD TV and again spending money to convert it into a black and white TV? Will the Minister take disciplinary action against this gross negligence?

**Mr Sithanen:** It is a fact that the SIC will lose massively from this investment. I also understand that when the machines will be converted into coin operated machines, they will be sold at a substantial discount to the casinos. So, obviously the remark that has been made by the hon. Member could be construed as being a fair picture of what has happened. And I have

asked for an inquiry to be carried out in order to determine who was responsible for such mismanagement.

**LADY BARKLY STREET, SOUILLAC  
– VRS BENEFICIARIES – LAND EARMARKED**

**(No. I B/108) Mr V. Mardemootoo (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will ascertain if land earmarked at Lady Barkly Street, Souillac under the Voluntary Retirement Scheme has already been allocated to former employees and, if so, will he state the number of beneficiaries thereof and, if not, the reason therefor and the remedial measures he proposes to take.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Mauritius Sugar Authority that 265 workers opted for the VRS at Union Sugar Estate. They retired on 25 October 2001 and are still waiting for their plot of land.

A plot of 25 arpents of land to be allocated to the workers has, in fact, been identified by Union Sugar Estate at Lady Barkly Street, Souillac. However, on 27 December 2001, at the time of payment of cash compensation, the VRS beneficiaries expressed their apprehensions about the slopy nature of the land and possible risks of flooding.

Subsequently, the sugar estate conducted an assessment of the land with the assistance of the University of Mauritius. At a meeting held with a former Minister on 03 May 2005, Union Sugar Estate proposed to carry out compaction works in order to remedy the problem of slopiness, though it was made aware of the unwillingness of the workers to accept the land. The sugar estate is also carrying out infrastructural works as regards road and other utilities.

Sir, since the last meeting there has been hardly any follow up by the Mauritius Sugar Authority on the works being carried out and identification of new sites. I am informed that the workers are still not satisfied with the plots of land. The Mauritius Sugar Authority has been requested to discuss with the sugar estate for alternative sites to be put at the disposal of workers, including sites reserved for sale by the sugar estate in order to recoup costs of the VRS.

Sir, I have to express serious concerns about the implementation and management of the VRS Scheme by the Mauritius Sugar Authority especially as regards the distribution of lands to workers, who are still waiting for their plot of land for 3 or 4 years. The situation is chaotic and workers are paying the price of administrative delays and bottlenecks. I am setting up a steering committee to make an assessment of the situation and to establish appropriate monitoring mechanism.

### **LA FLORA VILLAGE HALL – UPGRADING WORKS**

**(No. I B/109) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will ascertain the physical state of the La Flora village hall and state –

- (a) what steps have been taken between years 2000 and 2005 to improve the said village hall, and
- (b) indicate what steps his Ministry proposes to take for the upgrading of the village hall or for the construction of a new one.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed that the La Flora village hall which houses the Grand Bois Village Council is located in a very old rented premise belonging to a co-operative society.

As regards part (a) of the question, I am advised that minor maintenance works namely repainting have been undertaken by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council during the period 2000 to 2005.

As far as part (b) is concerned, the question of upgrading does not arise being given that the building does not belong to the District Council. I am liaising with the National Development Unit to look into the possibility of constructing a new village hall.



## **RIVIÈRE DES ANGUILLES – SWIMMING POOL & MARKET PLACE**

**(No. I B/110) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether between the years 2000 and 2005 there were projects to put up a swimming pool and a covered market place in Rivière des Anguilles and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that a plot of land was vested in the NDU in May 2001 for the construction of a market fair at Rivière des Anguilles. Procedures for the construction of the market fair had reached letter of intent stage in November 2004.

The swimming pool project, which was to be constructed on a plot of land adjacent to the market fair, had reached award of Consultancy Contract for the design of the project in August 2003.

Following representations received, from the Parish of Rivière des Anguilles, to the effect that the market fair would cause disturbance to those attending church, the implementation of both projects was put on hold in December 2004.

Subsequently, the Ministry of Housing and Lands has been requested to identify land in the region for both projects.

## **RIVIÈRE DES ANGUILLES & SOUILLAC HEALTH CENTRES – OPENING HOURS**

**(No. I B/111) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware that the Rivière des Anguilles and the Souillac health centres are closed by 16 hours and, if so, will he arrange for them to be open after normal working hours for the provision of health services.

**The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that health services in respect of the localities of Rivière des Anguilles and

Souillac are extended by the Area Health Centre of Tyack, adjoining to Rivière des Anguilles and the District Hospital of Souillac.

Following the recent Government decision for all Area Health Centres to be opened after normal working hours, it is necessary to point out that the Area Health Centre of Tyack, in the proximity of Rivière des Anguilles, will soon be opened on weekdays up to 6.00 p.m. and on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays up to noon. Such a measure, Mr Speaker, Sir, is meant to extend health facilities to the working population on return from work rather than having to attend hospital for health care. It also brings health services closer to the people, avoids the need for the patient to travel a long way to hospital and unduly increase the workload at hospital level.

With regard to the Souillac region, there is a district hospital extending a wide range of health services round the clock to inhabitants of Souillac and neighbouring localities.

### **VILLE NOIRE, MAHEBOURG - SEWERAGE SYSTEM**

**(No. I B/112) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if the sewerage system in Ville Noire, Mahebourg is defective thereby resulting in inconvenience to the inhabitants of the locality and is also having adverse effects on the environment and, if so, will he state what remedial measures are envisaged.

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Dr. A. Kasenally):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I'll answer this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Wastewater Management Authority that there is no public sewerage system in Ville Noire, Mahebourg. I am further informed that there are 156 housing units at the Ville Noire housing estate (ex CHA estate) which have on-site wastewater disposal facilities, namely cesspits.

Owing to an increase in the number of persons occupying these housing units, the capacity of these cesspits is presently proving to be

inadequate. Besides, with time, the soil has clogged resulting in poor permeability. As a result, some of the inhabitants are facing overflow problems, particularly in the rainy season.

To address these overflow problems, the assistance of the WMA has been enlisted. Although it is not the responsibility of the WMA to

attend to the emptying of cesspools, it intervenes by arranging for private cesspool emptying contractors to carry out the work. For the purpose of determining eligibility of such assistance, the Ministry of Housing and Lands has made available to the WMA an approved list of ex-CHA estates.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that resorting to the services of cesspool emptying contractors is very costly and it is an immediate and temporary solution. In parallel, there is an ongoing programme for the rehabilitation of sewerage infrastructure on ex-CHA estates. My Ministry will give consideration to the inclusion of Ville Noire ex-CHA estates in the next phase of the programme.

### **SPEED MONITORING EQUIPMENT - COMPLAINTS**

**(No. B/113) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he has received any complaints regarding the speed monitoring equipment in use currently and, if so, whether it is proposed -

- (a) to have same replaced, and
- (b) to review the actual speed monitoring.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has not received any complaint regarding speed monitoring equipment in use currently.

However, my attention has been drawn to the judgement delivered by the Pamplémousses District Court in a case where a motorist charged with speeding was found not guilty.

In fact, the Court retained the version of the driver who denied driving over and above the posted speed limit of 70 KMph whilst for the Police, as per speed radar reading, the speed of the vehicle was 83 KMph.

The Court did not conclusively say that the speed radar was defective or prone to interference while acquitting the accused.

I wish to point out that the most current device being used for road side speed checks is the Falcon model, from a USA firm. This instrument uses the Doppler frequency to determine the relative motions between the radar and the target vehicle. As radio frequency is used, the results can be affected by Radio Frequency Interference (RFI). However, a RFI detector is incorporated in the radar so that the user is aware of the presence of such interference and in this circumstance no reading appears on the display.

The accuracy of the instrument is traceable with the National Institute of Standard and Technology of the USA and it is further tested with a tuning fork to ensure functionality and accuracy before use. It is to be pointed out that the tuning fork has also been calibrated by the Institute.

I am also given to understand that the Police Officers are well versed and are aware of the basic precautions to be taken when using these equipments.

Since the Falcon radar combines the latest engineering expertise with ease of operation and yield satisfactory results the need to replace is not felt.

My Ministry is also purchasing four modern speed laser radars, which will be handed over to the Police.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister for how many years is the equipment in use?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** I am not aware of it, Sir. But I do know that for generations now this technique has been in use all over the world.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether it is good practice that the Police officers who monitor the speed hide behind bushes?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** This practice is worldwide.

**Mr Varma:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is envisaged to have speed cameras on our routes?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** It will be looked into it.

**FLOOD & CYCLONE VICTIMS & DESTITUTES - FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, INQUIRY, ETC**

**(No. I B/114) Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to financial assistance approved for flood and cyclone victims and destitutes by the National Solidarity Fund, she will -

- (a) give the amount disbursed for the months of May, June and July 2005;
- (b) state if any prior inquiry was carried out in relation thereto, and
- (c) whether the approval of the Minister was obtained in respect thereof.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regard part (a), financial assistance approved for flood and cyclone victims and destitutes by the National Solidarity Fund Board is as follows -

	May 2005 Rs	June 2005 Rs	July 2005 Rs
Flood	Nil	45,000 (9 cases)	Nil
Cyclone Victims	Nil	Nil	Nil
Destitutes	423,935.00 (67 cases)	1,151,328.00 (140 cases)	480,350.00 (57cases)

As regards part (b), a social inquiry was carried out in all cases.

As regards part (c), the Minister's covering approval was obtained after the disbursement of funds for the months of May and June 2005 effected.

As for the month of July, payments to beneficiaries have already been effected and the covering approval of the Minister has not been obtained as I am still looking into the matter.

**Mrs Virsahsawmy:** Mr Speaker, Sir, would the Minister state for the benefit of the House whether the claims entertained under the National Solidarity Fund pertaining to floods were cases registered during the months of May, June, July and, if so, will she state which floods she is referring to? Can the Minister say whether covering approval from the Minister after this disbursement for payment is a normal practice in accordance with the National Solidarity Fund Act of 1991?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there were nine cases of flood victims, out of which seven cases were from Pailles in respect of floods which occurred on 07 March 2005. It seemed that they were cases referred by the office of the Minister only in the month of April and May. To the second part of the supplementary question, I am also being informed, Sir, that this is contrary to section 4 of the National Solidarity Fund Act 1991 which stipulates -

"To provide with the approval of the Minister, financial assistance directly to individuals who have undergone severe personal hardship."

Not a covering approval!

#### **NATIONAL SOLIDARITY FUND BOARD - MEETING - 07.07.05**

**(No. (I B/115) Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** 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 Board of the National Solidarity Fund the outcome of its meeting held on 07 July 2005.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the National Solidarity Fund Board has, on 07 July 2005 approved 5 cases of needy students, 12 cases of destitutes, 2 cases of medical treatment and 7 cases of assistive devices. The total amount disbursed was Rs369,701.

## NATIONAL SOLIDARITY FUND - DESTITUTES –

### CITE LA CURE

(No. I B/116) **Mrs B. Virahsawmy (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she will state if the National Solidarity Fund has on 24 June 2005 approved the cases of 28 destitutes residing at Cité La Cure.

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, yes. The National Solidarity Fund has on 24 June 2005 approved 28 cases of destitutes residing only at Cité La Cure.

**Mrs Virahsawmy:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister give us more details of the cases of the 28 destitutes of Cité La Cure and whether there were floods or cyclone victims for that period? Can the Minister also inform the House how many Board meetings took place on a monthly basis?

**Mrs Bappoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there were no floods and cyclone victims at that very period. But I am informed that the profile of the recipients were either those being unemployed and others being persons who are unable to pay their water charges and electricity bills. The normal number of meetings for the Board per month is two and the Act does not provide any frequency for the meetings. But exceptionally the Board met on six occasions in June 2005.

## SUGAR INDUSTRY – 40-HOUR WEEK

(No. I B/117) **Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state if Government will introduce the 40-hour week and, if so, whether it will be applicable to the present harvest.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in August 2003, a judgment was delivered by the Supreme Court, ordering the Permanent Arbitration Tribunal to hold a fresh hearing on the issue of 40-hour week before a differently constituted Board.

Accordingly, the case is now at the Permanent Arbitration Tribunal. We are committed, and in the light of the outcome of the case before the



Tribunal, consultations will take place with all the stakeholders concerning the 40-hour week. However, it will not be applicable to the present harvest.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state whether this 40-hour week has been introduced in Rose-Belle Sugar Estate?

**Dr Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we don't believe in having a policy for one specific sugar estate only. Our policy is to put people first and we are totally committed...

*(Interruptions)*

These are the people who are generating wealth and we will see to it that there is fairness and equity in respect of those workers.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sorry, I have not obtained an answer from the hon. Minister.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has answered the question, he has said that he will look into the issue globally.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if you allow me, my question was very specific. I asked the hon. Minister whether this 40-hour week had been introduced in Rose-Belle Sugar Estate?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Can I intervene here? The Minister has answered the question and he has said that he is going to look into the issue globally.

## **DUBREUIL – LAND LEASE**

**(No. I B/118) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if one Mr B. B., residing at Dubreuil, has obtained a lease for a plot of land and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the purpose thereof, and

- (b) whether the conditions of the lease have been complied with and, if not, whether he proposes to take any action and, if so, when.

**Mr Dulull:** From records available at my Ministry, no lease for a plot of land has been given to any person having the initial B.B., residing at Dubreuil. I invite the hon. Member to fish for more information and to provide any additional information he may catch on this matter.

### **HEALTH CARE ASSISTANTS - RECRUITMENT**

**(No. I B/119) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the recruitment of 388 Health Care Assistants, he will state the following facts –

- (a) when the vacancies were advertised;
- (b) the closing date for applications;
- (c) the number of applicants;
- (d) qualifications required for the post;
- (e) the number of applicants interviewed;
- (f) the dates on which
  - (i) interviews were held
  - (ii) the report of the selection board was approved, and
  - (iii) the approval of the PSC was obtained, and
- (g) whether provisions had been made for these recruitments in the 2004/2005 budget.

**The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are cases pending before the Supreme Court and, the matter being *sub judice*, it would not be proper to reply to the question in the manner in which it has been set.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the House that letters of appointment in this particular respect were dated Thursday 30 June 2005 and were posted on Saturday 02 July 2005 by officers...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, order!

**Mr Sinatambou:** ... who are not supposed to work on Saturdays. No plausible reason has been found at the level of the Ministry of Health to explain such haste. It is further alarming to note ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, let the Minister answer, please!

**Mr Sinatambou:** ...Mr Speaker, Sir, that 101 candidates, that is more than 25% of the appointees were selected from the sole Constituency of the former Minister of Health and Quality of Life.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order, please!

**Mr Sinatambou:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the cause for alarm lies in the fact that a comparison with two other Constituencies taken at random shows that only four candidates were appointed from Constituency No. 1 and only 7 candidates were appointed from Constituency No. 12.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the first part of his answer, the Minister said that the case is *sub judice*, it is before the Court, but I am surprised that he is giving answers to other parts of the question.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Don't comment on the answers of the hon. Minister!

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister state whether all procedures were respected? Yes or no!

**Mr Sinatambou:** This matter, as I say, is *sub judice*..

*(Interruptions)*

There is no shame at all, Mr Speaker, Sir.

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

**Mr Sinatambou:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it would appear that the issue which is before the Supreme Court is, indeed, whether the right procedure has been followed.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the PSC had approved those nominations?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Minister has answered, he has said the matter is *sub judice*. He has given an answer to the question.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask him another supplementary question? Has an approval from the PSC been obtained before laying off those workers, and if so, can he table that letter of dismissal from the PSC?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I hope the hon. Member does realise that I am only deputing.

*(Interruptions)*

## **MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS – PROFICIENCY TEST**

**(No. I B/120) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, with a view to reducing acts of medical malpractice, he will state if he proposes to take measures with a view to test all medical practitioners, including specialists, surgeons and physicians coming from any country before they start practising in Mauritius.

**The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that consultations with all the stakeholders concerned are presently being held to bring necessary amendments to the Medical Council Act 1999 to provide for assessment of the technical abilities of all grades of medical practitioners before they are allowed to practise in the country.

Among the proposals being considered, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a written proficiency test covering all medical subjects. It is still being considered whether all doctors, Mauritians as well as non-mauritians trained abroad, should be required to pass the proficiency test before the grant of

registration. It is also being considered whether similar tests should not be held in Dentistry and Pharmacy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is worthwhile to note that the Medical Council used to have the power to impose an assessment for the purpose of determining whether any person intending to be registered as a practitioner or a specialist, possessed adequate professional knowledge and skill to enable that person to practise in Mauritius. However, those powers, Mr Speaker, Sir, were removed by the Medical Council (Amendment) Act 2002.

### **INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION CONVENTIONS – RATIFICATION**

**(No. I B/121) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the hon. Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he will state the number of International Labour Organisation Conventions ratified during the periods –

- (i) 1995 to 2000, and
- (ii) 2000 to 2005 and if it is proposed to ratify other conventions and, if so, when and which ones.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the answers to parts (i) and (ii) of the question is as follows: (2) for part (i) and (8) for part (ii).

As regards the last part of the question, the House may wish to note that, in practice, we align our laws with the articles of the relevant conventions before we proceed with ratification thereof. We will, therefore, proceed with the ratification of further conventions as and when we are ready to do so.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the Minister to revisit this issue because it had never been the case that we have to amend all our laws, then we ratify the convention. It had always been the case that we ratify conventions, then over the months, the years, we change the legislation until one State Law Officer, some three years back, *dans un trait de génie*, came with this interpretation of the law. And, now we have reverted back to the previous situation. So, can I invite the hon. Minister to liaise with the hon. Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and see whether I am right and, in fact, the

normal procedure is to ratify a convention, then over a number of months or even a year you change the law.

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have always been amending the laws and then ratify ...

**Mr Bérenger:** It does not make sense!

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is the information that I have been given. I will look into the matter according to the points that are being raised here. According to the information I have obtained from my officers, we have much work to do before the ratification takes place because we have to be in conformity with the laws of the country before we ratify.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I just want to remind the hon. Minister that we have ratified many conventions without amending any laws .....

**Mr Speaker:** What is your question?

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Soodhun:** According to my information, Mr Speaker, Sir, we had during the past years ratified the convention without amending any laws.

## **ICT SECTOR - WAGES AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**

**(No. I B/122) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial, Relations and Employment whether he will state if the wages and conditions of employment in the ICT sector are prescribed by a Remuneration Order and, if not, whether he proposes to ensure that a minimum wage is fixed in that sector.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, wages and conditions of employment in the ICT sector are presently not prescribed by any Remuneration Order. However, conditions of employment in that sector are currently governed by the provisions of the Labour Act, 1975, as amended.

On the issue of the fixing of a minimum wage for the Information and Communication Technologies sector, I wish to draw the attention of the House to the fact that this sector, being at a developmental stage, demands a very flexible approach with regard to conditions of employment without, however, compromising the fundamental rights of the people employed therein. It will not be appropriate at this point in time to fix a minimum wage, especially because this sector is called upon to employ very skilled and professional workers and their contract of employment may vary from situation to situation.

Furthermore, minimum wage determination will entail the categorisation of employers with a rigid and fixed job classification. This will close the door to multi-skilling which is the current trend, specially in this sector.

This House may wish to note that an Information and Communication Technologies Labour Provisions Bill was drafted in 2004. Subsequently however, following a decision of the previous Government in 2004, a fresh Bill, the Information and Communication Technologies (Special Labour Provisions) Bill was prepared at the level of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications. There has been no development since. I have already taken up the matter with my colleague, the new Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications, to ensure that we put in place an appropriate legal framework to provide for conditions of employment in the ICT sector.

## **REMUNERATION ORDERS - REVIEW**

**(No. I B/123) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he will inform the House of the number of Remuneration Orders revised since 2000, indicating the number of workers concerned and the rate of wage increases granted to each category of workers.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, 10 Remuneration Orders have been reviewed since 2000.

The other details asked for in the question are being circulated. **(Appendix 1).**

### **ECG EXAMINATION - FEMALE PATIENTS**

**(No. I B/124) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he is aware that female patients undergoing an ECG examination do so in the presence of male ECG technicians at the Victoria hospital, Candos, and, if so, will he state the reasons for such a practice, indicating if alternative arrangements are being envisaged.

**The Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunications (Mr E. Sinatambou):** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are presently six ECG technicians, 5 male and 1 female, posted at the Victoria hospital.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the practice is that no procedures are carried out on a female patient by a male health staff in the absence of a female staff.

This practice, therefore, results in female patients undergoing ECG examinations in the presence of male ECG technicians.

Whatever may have been the established practice under the former Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government will take corrective measures to ensure that ECG examinations carried out on female patients are invariably done by female staff and not in the presence of male ECG technicians.

### **GRANARY - PORT LOUIS HARBOUR - NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST**

**(No. I B/125) Mrs L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether



he will state the date on which the Granary at the Port Louis Harbour was included in the National Heritage list.

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Heritage Fund Board has made a recommendation to my Ministry for the Granary at Port Louis and two other sites, namely, the "Monuments aux Esclaves" and the Gunpowder Magazine at Pointe Canon to be designated as National Heritage.

The inclusion of these sites on the National Heritage List is under consideration.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the Minister whether the decision was not already taken by Government and, if so, the date at which the Government took decision to include this monument in the National Heritage List?

**Mr Gowressoo:** On 25 June 2005, Government agreed to the designation of the Granary at the Port Louis Harbour as national heritage based on the recommendation by the National Heritage Fund Board.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Could the hon. Minister confirm that when a monument or a site is included in the National Heritage List, the approval of the National Heritage Fund Board is required prior to making any development or modification to that site or building?

**Mr Gowressoo:** I have already answered this question.

**Mr Bérenger:** The Minister has in fact confirmed that on recommendation from the National Heritage Trust Fund that the previous Government had already taken a decision to approve the recommendation. So, can I ask the Minister what is the problem? Why does not the Government implement?

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered this question.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, would the Minister then agree that measures had already been taken to protect the Granary and that the Granary ...

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry. The question has been put and the answer has been given by the Minister.

### **CHATEAU MON PLAISIR - ART GALLERY**

**(No. I B/126) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he will inform the House where matters stand regarding the project for the setting up of an Art Gallery in the Chateau Mon Plaisir at the SSR Botanical Garden, Pamplemousses.

**Mr Gowressoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the SSR Botanical Garden Trust is in the process of developing conceptual plans and design for the renovation and upgrading of the existing infrastructure at the SSR Botanical Garden.

The proposal of my Ministry for the conversion of part of the Chateau Mon Plaisir into a Art Gallery is being considered in the development plan.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I request the Minister to bear in mind, when the issue will be discussed, that the French Art Collector has proposed to donate to Mauritius a good number of the best amongst the best paintings of Hervé Masson, but to put as a condition that there should be a proper Art Gallery? Can I request the Minister to keep that in mind?

**Mr Gowressoo:** I have noted the suggestion of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, Order!

### **MOKA/QUARTIER MILITAIRE - SPORTS FACILITIES**

**(No. I B/127) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he is aware that the region of Moka-Quartier Militaire is deprived of sports facilities and, if

so, will he consider the advisability of putting up an omnisports gymnasium and a swimming pool in that region.

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in my replies to Parliamentary Questions No. I B/7 and I B/58, I have already informed the House that my Ministry is presently carrying out an audit of all sports infrastructures and in the light of that audit consideration will be given to the setting up of new facilities, as appropriate.

However, for the benefit of the House, I would like to point out that the localities within the vicinity of Moka and Quartier Militaire have some sports facilities such as football grounds, volleyball pitches, basketball and petanque courts.

Moreover, the upgrading works at Quartier Militaire stadium are underway with *inter alia* the construction of retaining wall, main entrance ramp and fencing. These works, which were expected to be completed by 30 April 2005, are behind schedule and are now expected to be completed by November this year.

As regards swimming pool, this is being undertaken on a phased manner on a regional basis due to high costs involved for implementing such projects and its running and maintenance. It is envisaged to provide for the construction of a swimming pool in the region of Flacq, subject to the availability of funds.

### **VERDUN AND ALMA - CREMATION**

**(No. I B/128) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Local Government whether he is aware that there exists a scarcity of wood for cremation purposes in the regions of Verdun and Alma and, if so, will he consider the advisability of setting up a gasoline or diesel-propelled incinerator in the said regions.

**Dr. David:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that there is a problem of scarcity of wood for cremation purposes in the regions of Verdun and Alma.

Being given that the annual number of cremations from the regions of Alma and Verdun is not very high, it would not be feasible to set up a

gasoline or diesel propelled incinerator only for these regions in view of high running and maintenance cost of an incinerator which will turn around Rs800,000 annually.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is looking into the possibility of setting up one incinerator each in centrally located regions.

### **TRUST FUND FOR THE REHABILITATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS - PROJECTS**

**(No. I B/129) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the projects financed through the Trust Fund for the Rehabilitation of Vulnerable Groups in the Constituency of Moka and Quartier Militaire, he will –

- (a) give the number initiated and completed during the period of 01 January 2005 to date, with a breakdown of each in terms of site and cost incurred, and
- (b) give the number of projects which have not been completed, indicating the reasons therefor.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question.

In regard to the projects financed through the Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups in the constituency of Moka and Quartier Militaire, I am advised that during the period January to June 2005, 6 projects for a total amount of Rs1.4 m. have been approved for phased implementation. A statement giving the sites, costs and status of the projects is being tabled.

As regards part (b) of the question, out of these, 1 project has been completed and the remaining ones are being implemented according to the planned schedule.

### **CAMP THOREL/NOUVELLE DÉCOUVERTE – ROAD CONSTRUCTION - STUDY**

**(No. I B/130) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if it is proposed to construct the Camp Thorel-Nouvelle Découverte link road and, if so, when.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I'll reply to this question.

I am informed by the Road Development Authority that there has not been any study for the construction of a road from Camp Thorel to Nouvelle Découverte.

In view of the interest shown by my hon. friend, I have requested the Road Development Authority to carry out a study and, subsequently, my Ministry will take a decision.

**Mr Dayal:** I would like to thank the hon. Minister for taking this initiative as the opening of this road will pave the way for developments in the region. It will also link St. Julien D'Hotman, Camp Thorel to Nouvelle Découverte and *via* Les Mariannes to Port Louis.

### **CUREPIPE/QUARTIER MILITAIRE - LINK ROAD**

**(No. I B/131) Dr. P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the link road between Curepipe and Quartier Militaire is narrow for traffic purposes and, if so, will he consider widening that road.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority that Quartier Militaire Road has developed from existing agricultural tracks which have been provided with bituminous surfacing to cope with the evolution of traffic volumes and transport modes.

The existing road is 9.4 km long and has an average width of 5.2 to 6.2 metres. It is also characterised by a series of sharp bends and steep sections. There are no shoulders or footpaths, except for a minor stretch in

Valetta and part of Quartier Militaire. The drainage system is generally inadequate.

In order to bring the road to an acceptable international standard, a contract was awarded to LuxConsult S.A. for the study and detailed design of the “Upgrading of Quartier Militaire Road”. The consultants have completed the design and submitted the tender document.

This is being studied and subsequently the implementation schedule will be established. It is to be pointed out that in the current budget an amount of Rs30 m. has been provided for the project.

**Dr. Ramloll:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have one supplementary question. Presently, this road is quite narrow and is very accident-prone. Last year, we heard of some remedial measures. I would like to ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to see if these measures could be expedited so that this road be widened as soon as possible?

**Dr. Beebeejaun:** It will be widened, Sir.

### **RIPAILLES & COTE D’OR GOVT. SCHOOLS**

(No. I B/132) **Dr. P. Ramloll (Third Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether his Ministry has any plan for the reopening of the Ripailles and of the Côte d’Or primary schools.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, the ex-Ripailles Govt. School also known as R. Ghoorah Govt. School was closed down in 1994 because it was under-populated, *i.e.* it had around 60 pupils only. The pupils were partly diverted to Nouvelle Découverte Govt. School and partly to Mohunlall Mohit Govt. School. Free bus transport facilities are being provided to date to the pupils to attend school in the morning and back to their residence in the afternoon.

Presently, 52 pupils from Ripailles are attending Nouvelle Découverte Govt. School and 50 are attending Mohunlall Mohit Govt. School.

Ripailles Govt. School was converted into a Basic Secondary School in April 1995. The Basic Secondary School Project was launched by the Ministry of Education with a view to catering for all pupils who had not passed the CPE Exam after a second attempt and who could not be admitted to a secondary school. This project was renamed as State Secondary School (Vocational).

The State Secondary School (Vocational) at Ripailles was closed down in December 2002, because it had only four students who were subsequently directed to other State Secondary Schools (Vocational).

The building is presently not being used. Three blocks have been condemned and one block of six classes needs repairs and maintenance.

As regards part (b), the ex-Luchmeenaraidoo Govt. School at Côte d'Or, I am informed that the school was closed down on 26 April 2004 due to its very low school population which stood at 32 pupils in April 2004, and the following measures were taken by my Ministry –

- (i) the transfer of 32 pupils to S. Soobiah Govt. School. Parents opted for S. Soobiah Govt. School instead of the other schools found in the vicinity;
- (ii) the provision of transport facilities to the 32 pupils from Côte d'Or to S. Soobiah Govt. School in the morning and back in the afternoon, and
- (iii) admission for the year 2005 in Std I for pupils residing in the locality or in the vicinity in any schools in the region.

The building is presently not being used.

Closures are effected –

- (i) as a result of declining school population below 150, and
- (ii) after consultation with PTA, local population and MPs.

Therefore, in view of the low student population in both regions, and the fact that the Ministry has other high priority projects, it is not planned to reopen the two schools.

### **MGI – RECRUITMENT EXERCISES – JAN 2005 TO DATE**

**(No. I B/133) Dr. P. Ramlohl (Third Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to Education Officers and minor grades/manual/field workers at the MGI, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information on the recruitment exercises carried out during the period 01 January to date.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that –

- (i) recruitment exercises at the level of the MGI (Mahatma Gandhi Institute) are carried out by the MGI Council through its Appointment Committees, and
- (ii) from January 2005 to date, the MGI has filled the following vacancies which existed on its establishment with regard to Education Officers and minor grades staff

–

Education Officers	- 11 posts
Laboratory Attendants	- 7 posts
Office Attendants	- 13 posts
Gardeners	- 10 posts
Handy Workers	- 3 posts
General Workers	- 66 posts
	.../...

It should be noted that while the posts of Education Officers and general workers were advertised to the general public, the other vacancies were filled by promotion internally, *i.e.* qualified serving officers of the institute were promoted to higher posts.

Government has taken a decision to the effect that all temporary appointments made during the pre-electoral period, *i.e.* from 24 April to 03 July should be terminated subject to legal advice being obtained and the MGI has already been apprised of that decision for necessary action at its end.



If the hon. Member has any worry or any specific issue in mind, I shall be pleased to look into the matter if same is communicated to me.

**Dr. Ramloll:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the Minister for the answer. My interest lies in the case of the field workers who were recruited prior to the election as he just said. May we know if the Minister can table the residential address of those concerned?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have checked the information and the workers come from various constituencies.

**ST. JEAN ROAD, QUATRE BORNES  
– “THE GATEWAY” BUILDING - CONSTRUCTION SITE**

**(No. I. B/134) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware of the public danger represented by a crane from which a number of concrete slabs are suspended just above the main road at the construction site for “The Gateway” building at St. Jean Road, Quatre Bornes and whether any actions are envisaged to prevent any accident.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that two engineers of my Ministry visited the construction site for “The Gateway” building at St. Jean Road, Quatre Bornes, on Friday 19 August 2005 in the presence of the site manager of Ireko Construction Ltd.

The site manager reported that there are two tower cranes on the site, a small one located at the back of the building and a larger one located along Surath Avenue. The counterweight (concrete slabs) of the smaller crane is at ground level and does not swing over the main road. The bigger crane has never been used since its erection on 08 July 2005 and the counterweight is presently over the building.

A bigger tower crane will soon be shifted on the other side of Surath Avenue on a bare land. The foundation shall be designed by a Registered Professional Civil Engineer and the crane will be inspected by a Mechanical

Engineer prior to operation. The proper fixing of the counterweight to the arm of the crane will be checked by the Mechanical Engineer.

During operation of the crane, a full-time Safety Officer will oversee related safety aspects.

The operation of the crane will inevitably entail swinging of the counterweight over Surath Avenue and St. Jean Road.

The construction is a private development and the Municipality of Quatre Bornes, which is the Authority which issued the development permit, has been requested to ensure that the contractor takes all safety measures so that the crane does not represent any danger to the public.

As a further measure of precaution, my Ministry has requested the Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit and Ministry of Labour Industrial Relations & Employment to inspect the site regularly to ensure proper health and safety measures.

### **ST JEAN ROUNDABOUT - OVERHEAD PASSAGEWAY - LIGHTING**

**(No. I B/135) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether with regard to the overhead passageway at the St Jean roundabout, he will consider making available lighting facilities as from early evening for the benefit of the public.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Sir, the construction of the overhead passageway between the St. Jean roundabout and the Phoenix roundabout was completed in April 2003. I am informed that the CEB has been unable to install the electric poles which are to be located on private properties. The matter has been taken up with the Ministry of Local Government for an early resolution of the problem.