

**Debate No. 35 of 04.12.2007**

## **ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Mr Speaker:** Questions addressed to Dr. the hon. Prime Minister! The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions B/1246, B/1247, B/1250 and B/1253 have been withdrawn.

### **POINTE AUX CANNONIERS – TOURIST – ALLEGED DOGS ATTACK**

**(No. B/1235) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** 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, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to whether a case was reported of an alleged attack on a tourist by three ferocious dogs on the beach at Pointe aux Cannoniers and, if so, if an inquiry has been carried out thereinto and the outcome thereof .

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 11 October 2007 at 09 20 hours, a tourist reported to Pointe aux Cannoniers Police Station that he had been attacked by three dogs while he was walking on the beach.

On the same day, Police started an inquiry and visited the site in the presence of the tourist. The tourist identified the three dogs of boxer breed which were locked in the yard of Mr M. P.J.M. when Police visited the site. Inquiry into the case has been completed and prosecution is being initiated against Mr M. P.J.M. on charges of allowing animal to stray and keeping dogs of boxer breed without being holder of the relevant permit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I should add that the Ministry of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications has embarked on a programme in the North of the island for the control of stray dogs in collaboration with the Mauritius Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) and the Protection of Animal Welfare Society (PAWS).

The programme consists of sensitisation campaigns, dog catching exercises, vaccination and sterilisation of stray dogs. The programme is expected to cost Rs2 m. and would be financed by the Tourism Fund.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, some time back, Government stated that whenever there is any Police inquiry involving a tourist, there will be a fast track so as to allow the tourist *de prendre part au procès*. Can the hon. Prime Minister say if such fast track has been put up?

**The Prime Minister:** The Police was doing the fast track, not the Prime Minister's Office, but, as I said, the inquiry into the case has been completed and the prosecution has already been initiated.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since it has now become a usual practice for people, whether they are Mauritians or foreigners settled in Mauritius, to take their dogs for a walk on the beach and these dogs represent a potential threat to people, especially children, who are usually on the beach, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can consider the promulgation of regulations to compel owners of these ferocious dogs especially, to provide for muzzles for their dogs when they take them for a walk on the beach?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think there are laws. I suppose they have to put them on leash. As I said, the campaign for stray dogs has already been initiated, especially on beaches.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not talking about stray dogs, but dogs who have got their owners who usually take them on the beach for a walk. This is a potential threat. I have myself witnessed cases of dogs threatening people on the beach.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the law already provides for that, but I will recheck.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the Prime Minister refer to the breed of dogs involved in that case. We know what has been taking place elsewhere. People have been attacked and hurt by dogs, and children have even been killed by dangerous breeds. Can I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether there are breeds that are interdicted at import or to be in Mauritius and, if not, whether he can take action?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I remember, there is a list of breeds that are not allowed to be kept in Mauritius.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has rightly informed the House that the law already provides for that kind of situation. But, I am sure that the hon. Prime Minister knows that, in fact, the law provides for the offence of allowing animals to stray. My friends at the Bar know that this offence is visited with a very small fine. I think there is then a need to review the law.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has made a good point, and I will look into the matter.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not get the reply of the hon. Prime Minister when my colleague, hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, was talking about people taking big dogs to the beach. But, even if the dogs are on leash, this is no guarantee of safety, especially with many children around. The hon. Member made a suggestion about putting muzzles to the dogs. Many people do that when they take their dogs for a walk, even in towns. They wear muzzles. This is a protection against biting. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he would consider that?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not understand and I am sorry. I thank the hon. Member for clarifying this. I think that is also a good suggestion, and I will look into that.

### **MBC – STAFF – RECRUITMENT MAY 2005-DECEMBER 2007**

**(No. B/1236) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to the staff of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Corporation, information as to the number thereof recruited since May 2006 to date, indicating, in each case –

- (a) if it is on a permanent or contractual basis;
- (b) the procedures followed for the recruitment, and
- (c) if these recruits are being paid allowances, and if so, obtain
  - (i) a list of the beneficiaries thereof, and
  - (ii) the reasons therefor.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I am informed by the Director-General of the MBC that, since May 2006, the Corporation has recruited nine employees on a permanent basis and 11 employees on a contractual basis.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Director-General of the MBC that seven out of the nine employees recruited on a permanent basis were re-deployed from the former Development Works Corporation in line with Government decision. The remaining two employees were recruited by the Board of the MBC in accordance with the standing procedures and practices at the Corporation, whenever there is a need for specific skills and competences in certain areas.

It is to be pointed out that most of the recruitment undertaken since May 2006 was made for a number of specific reasons. In fact, additional staff was required for the live presentations of all news bulletins on television as against the production of previously canned news bulletins, namely mid-day news, Samachar and MBC news.

The introduction of morning television since December 2005 and the increase in news bulletins on radio both in European and Oriental languages also warranted the recruitment of additional manpower. Furthermore, it is to be pointed out that in preparation of the digitalisation process and the additional number of radio channels as well as the inception of Digital Terrestrial Channels, there was need for more staff to be recruited.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am tabling a statement giving the information asked for by the hon. Member in part (c) of the question.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the list which is being tabled contains only the names. What I want is the addresses of these people. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the recruitment is causing a lot of frustration within the staff of the MBC/TV, and that it has been made from one particular constituency? Can we have the list?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't think that recruitment has been made from one particular constituency. But, I can look into the matter.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can give us an indication on the number of freelancers who have been recruited during that period?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, freelancers are not considered to be on a contractual basis. But, I can look into the matter.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – CASES**

**(No. B/1237) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** 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 reported alleged cases of domestic violence since 2002 to date, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the number thereof;
- (b) the number of spouses who have
  - (i) been assaulted while being under the protection of a Protection Order, and
  - (ii) passed away as a result thereof while being under the protection of a Protection Order.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that, since 2002 to date, a total number of 4,983 cases of domestic violence have been reported to the Police. 1,654 spouses were assaulted whilst they were under a Protection Order, out of whom three passed away.

Mr Speaker, Sir, domestic violence has become a real societal problem which is causing damage to our social fabric. The prevention against domestic violence is a matter of national concern. It is not a matter of party politics. Therefore, Government is fully committed to bringing all the necessary support to those involved in the fight against this scourge. We want to give a strong signal to the public, Mr Speaker, Sir, that any form of domestic violence will not be tolerated.

This is why amendments are currently being brought to the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, so as to strengthen the mechanism of the legislation in order to better protect victims of domestic violence and also stiffen penalties against those who fail to comply with the provisions of a protection order. I said that this has nothing to do with party politics, and I understand the hon. Minister has had contacts with Members of the Opposition, so that we can make sure that we have a law that gives the protection that we think it should give.

A full range of measures is also being implemented by the Ministry of Women's Right, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection to fight this problem. Amongst others, a national Action Plan to combat Domestic Violence was launched on 23 November 2007 in the context of the International Day Against Violence Against Women. This Action plan, which will be implemented over a period of three years, provides a road map to guide policies to combat domestic violence. In this respect, a multi-sectoral approach is being adopted, involving all stakeholders including Ministries, NGOs as well as civil society.

In addition, significant emphasis is being laid on the importance of sensitisation, awareness and family counselling. As such, a massive sensitisation campaign has been launched across the island through the distribution of pamphlets and booklets. Specific projects are also being implemented. These include the setting up of 'Zero Tolerance Clubs' aiming at empowering the community, through training, to detect cases of domestic violence, pre-marital counselling, as well as marriage enrichment programmes to sensitise engaged and married couples on the importance of a healthy and violence free life, and a gender-sensitive project known as 'Men As Partners' aiming at involving men, so that they bring a positive contribution in all aspects of their family lives.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the question as well as the reply were about reported cases of alleged domestic violence. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether his office, the Commissioner of Police or anybody has estimates of unreported cases of domestic violence?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am afraid I am not aware of the number of unreported cases. It is probably difficult to know if it is unreported. But, I can ask the Commissioner of Police to look into it.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, being given the Prime Minister has given a high figure for cases reported since 2002, can we know what has

been the trend? Because it is possible that – we don't know how many cases – there are more and more reported cases. Can we know the trend as from 2002 to date?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will give the figures. In 2002, there were 714 cases; in 2003, there were 806 cases; in 2004, the number came down slightly to 798; in 2005, it went up again to 940; in 2006, it came down slightly to 926, and this year, as at 30 November, the total number of cases seems to be lower, that is, 799.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in his reply, the hon. Prime Minister referred to amendments to the amendments being brought to the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act. There is reference in there to the Chief Justice. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister to check whether the Chief Justice has been consulted? In case he has not been consulted, it is not too late. I think that, out of due respect, he should be consulted before we are asked to approve the law.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just been told that the Chief Justice has actually been consulted.

**Mr Lauthan:** Mr Speaker, Sir, usually when we talk about domestic violence we have in mind violence between spouses. But we know there have been cases where elderly people have been assaulted and even killed by their children or grand-children and vice-versa, children have been killed by parents. Did the figures that the hon. Prime Minister has given us include those cases and, if not, could he table them?

**The Prime Minister:** It actually includes those figures, there are five categories which include all those cases that the hon. Member mentioned.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has information with regard to the number of perpetrators who have been sentenced to either a term of imprisonment or a fine?

**The Prime Minister:** This was not asked in the question, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't have the figures with me, but I am sure we can provide these figures.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, since the Prime Minister has mentioned that there is a high number of cases where there have been assaults while being under the Protection Order, can we know what is the role of the Police? May I know, once a Protection Order is issued, whether there is a follow-up on the part of the Police for each case?

**The Prime Minister:** In fact, there is a follow-up in each case. As I said, if it is found that this has been the case, they are treated as a breach of Protection Order, and all the procedures for non-compliance with the Protection Order are carried out.

### **EXHIBITS/ITEMS OF EVIDENCE – PROCEDURE**

**(No. B/1238) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether, in regard to exhibits and other items of evidence in the possession of Police Officers, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the procedure followed for the handing over thereof –

- (a) when these Police Officers proceed on retirement, and
- (b) in the case of those Police Officers who pass away while being on duty.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that Standing Orders as regards to the “Safe Custody of Exhibits” are laid down in the Police Standing Order No. 123 as amended by Amendment Slip No. 16 dated 04 December 2000.

According to these procedures, where an officer referred to as an exhibit officer, comes across an exhibit, he has to insert entries in the Diary Book and Exhibit Register, giving a full description of same and the circumstances in which he came in possession of it. Thereafter, he has to put up a statement. The exhibit is then wrapped, labelled, marked, sealed and signed by the exhibit officer and by the person from whom the exhibit has been secured. The exhibit is finally handed over to the officer in charge of the station to be kept under lock and key until it becomes necessary to transfer it for further examination or to be produced as evidence in Court.

When an officer in charge of a station is proceeding on retirement, he has, prior to his retirement, to hand over the exhibits to the relieving officer. The latter needs to verify all the exhibits against the exhibit register, and both officers have to sign a handing/taking over certificate. In case the Officer in Charge passes away while on duty, the newly appointed officer in presence of a witness has to carry out a careful and methodical check of all exhibits against the exhibit register and relevant entries are inserted.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Commissioner of Police has reported over the last few years any cases where these Orders have not been followed?

**The Prime Minister:** He has not reported to me of any such case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Lauthan:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether it does happen that, at least, for some time, officers having made a raid or seizures keep them in a sort of personal safe or directly to the official safe?

**The Prime Minister:** From what I see from the Police, Mr Speaker, Sir, that they have to immediately insert it in the Diary Book and then fill the exhibit register, whether they immediately take it to the safe or not, but it is supposedly to be in the safe, but they have, first of all, to give a full description of the same and the circumstances in which the exhibit came into their possession. Then, they have to insert the entries in the Diary Book and the exhibits in the register at the same time. Then, he has to make a statement; then, as I said, the exhibit is labelled, marked, wrapped, sealed and signed. It has to be signed by both the exhibit officer and by the person from whom the exhibit has been secured. It is handed over to the officer in charge of the station who then keeps it under lock.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Prime Minister whether it is the Court which decides on the disposal of the exhibits?

**The Prime Minister:** I don't know whether the Court actually decides, but, I think, after the case, the Police then decides what to do, unless the Court says what has to be done. But I have never heard of the Judge himself saying what should be done with the exhibits.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, when the decision is taken to dispose of the exhibits, this is also recorded in the register book?

**The Prime Minister:** According to the Police Standing Orders, yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**FIREMOUNT TEXTILES COMPANY – INDIAN NATIONALS  
– ALLEGED CRIMINAL OFFENCE IN INDIA**

**(No. B/1239) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** 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 there are some Indian Nationals who are working at the Firemount Textiles Company with a valid work permit and who are alleged to be presently charged with a criminal offence in India, and if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if an inquiry is being carried out thereinto.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that following a letter dated 10 October 2007 from the Director of Firemount Textiles Ltd to the effect that two Indian nationals who were working thereat, have been charged with criminal offence in India, Police contacted INTERPOL India through NCB New India to verify and confirm the genuineness of the information. The Police have forwarded two reminders to INTERPOL India.

Furthermore, upon the request of the Commissioner of Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation also requested the Indian High Commission confirmation of the information.

A reply is still being awaited from both Authorities.

Furthermore, a declaration was made on 15 November 2007 by the Human Resource Manager of Firemount Textiles Ltd to the effect that the two Indian nationals were fugitives and were wanted in the State of Punjab and the Central CID is carrying out further investigation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that up to now it has not yet been established whether these Indian nationals were, in fact, involved in any criminal offence. We are waiting for the information.

The two Indian nationals previously held valid work permits. On 20 July 2007, another worker of Firemount Textiles Ltd made a declaration of "Assault" against the Director of the Company and the two Indian nationals mentioned earlier were his witnesses. Following the request of the Director to cancel the work permits of five Indian nationals due to gross misconduct, the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment carried out an enquiry. The latter subsequently cancelled the work permits of the Indian nationals, including these two persons, on 11 October 2007, as the employer did not renew their contract of employment.

However, the Commissioner of Police requested on 23 October 2007, the extension of their residence permits as their presence was required in the case of "Assault" and these residence permits have been extended up to the end of this month.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can confirm whether the two Indian nationals are in Mauritius in view of the case of assault and not in view of the clarification as to whether they have committed an offence or not?

**The Prime Minister:** There are two things. We are waiting for the information that we have asked for from two sources in India. In the meantime, yes, they are still in Mauritius because of the case of assault.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, when the application was made for a work permit by Firemount Textiles Company, there was a morality certificate which was submitted by Firemount Textiles Company for the grant of the work permit?

**The Prime Minister:** I will have to ask the Ministry concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister what is being done at the level of the Prime Minister's Office to see to it that there is a proper screening of applications so that we don't end up with people having criminal records outside the country entering the country and have an occupancy permit? We understand that the occupancy permit is now delivered in a facilitated manner.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, these two Indian nationals started work before changes were brought to the law, but that screening is still going on. We find it is beneficial to the country that we have accelerated the process.

### **SUPERINTENDENTS OF POLICE – NUMBER IN POST**

**(No. B/1240) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas & Floreal)** 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 Police Force, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of Superintendent of Police Officers who are presently in post.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there are at present 22 Superintendents of Police in post.

As previously stated in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. B/1028 on 06 November 2007, a promotion exercise will be carried out shortly, after bringing some structural changes in the Police Force.

**Mr Bodha:** Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister how many posts are vacant at present?

**The Prime Minister:** I do not have the details, Mr Speaker, Sir, but, as I am saying, we are doing structural changes to the Police force. We want to organise it in a slightly different manner.

**Mr Bodha:** Will the Prime Minister agree that there are more than 23 posts which are vacant?

**The Prime Minister:** It could well be, Mr Speaker, Sir, because we want to finish the process of the structural changes before appointments are made.

**Mr Bodha:** Will the Prime Minister agree that the fact that there has been no promotion exercise, this has been a demotivating factor as far as other officers at the lower level are concerned?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we know that there have been a lot of criticisms, people are not there and so on. We want to make sure that the structural changes are brought, then promotion is going to be given.

**Mr Bérenger:** The hon. Prime Minister says that he does not have the information, but if he does check the information and we find out that there are as many vacancies as there are Superintendents of Police, I am sure he would agree that this is a very serious situation in terms of law and order.

**The Prime Minister:** This exercise is nearly finished, Mr Speaker, Sir. That's why we are not doing it until the exercise is finished.

**Mr Ganoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can we have a list of the other vacancies in other grades as well?

**Mr Speaker:** This question is related to the number of Superintendent of Police and not any other category. So, the hon. Member must come with a substantive question, and give proper notice.

**The Prime Minister:** Just to clarify this point, I should add that in the meantime when the need is felt to have any post filled, this is being done. For example, in January, there were some who were put in post because they were needed.

## UNLAWFUL GATHERING/PUBLICATION OF FALSE NEWS - CASES

(No. B/1241) **Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floreal)** 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 offences relating to unlawful gathering and publication of false news, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to the number of reported cases which are presently under investigation.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that out of 13 cases of “unlawful gathering”, seven are still under inquiry, two have been sent to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice, two cases are pending for trial in Court and two have been classified.

As regards “publishing false news”, five cases have been reported to the Police and are still under inquiry.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether, out of the 13 cases for unlawful gathering, two concern two trade union leaders?

**The Prime Minister:** I think it could well be correct. I know there is, at least, one name here, but probably two.

**Mr Bodha:** May I also ask the Prime Minister to confirm that these two trade union leaders are also under an objection to departure?

**The Prime Minister:** I think they are following the procedure and if that is the case, probably it is the case.

**Mr Bodha:** Will the hon. Prime Minister agree that trade union leaders who have to leave the country to attend international conferences should not have been under an objection to departure?

**The Prime Minister:** Obviously, they have to make sure that they do not do illegal gathering acts; and they are not above the law.

**Mr Bodha:** Will the Prime Minister agree that this is not good for the image of the country?

**The Prime Minister:** What would be wrong for the image of the country is for people to flout the law and think they are above the law!

**Mr Bodha:** Let me come to the second part of my question, Mr Speaker, Sir, which relates to the publication of false news. May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether one of the cases relates to the MBC?

**The Prime Minister:** I won't be surprised! I am not sure, Mr Speaker, Sir. I do not have the details here, but maybe I can check it. I do not know whether one case involves actually the MBC. Not that I know of, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have the names of the persons who have complained, but whether they actually work at the MBC or not, I am not sure.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there has been any case of publication of false news being sentenced in Court since 1995?

**The Prime Minister:** I'll have to look into that matter, Mr Speaker, Sir. I do not have the information right now.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the Prime Minister whether, in the case of the MBC, it relates to a complaint by Dr. Dinesh Ramjuttun and, if that is the case, whether an inquiry is being carried out at the level of the MBC? May I know also who are the people who have been asked to make a statement in the course of the inquiry as far as the News Room of the MBC is concerned?

**The Prime Minister:** Of all people, of him to make a complaint is really unbelievable! But anyway there is, actually, no evidence at hand that such inquiry is going on at the MBC. Mr Speaker, Sir, to answer the question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I think there was the case of "Le Mag" which was started, but which continued after 1995.

**JOURNALISTS – ARREST – 21.11.2007**

**(No B/1242) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North & 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 the arrest of Mr G. C, Mr J. V and Miss A. V, on Wednesday 21 November 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –

- (a) the reasons therefor, and
- (b) the charges lodged against them, if any.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that an inquiry is ongoing by the Central Criminal Investigation Department following the publication of an article entitled “*ça va se savoir – un magot découvert dans un poste de Police*” in Week-End newspaper of 18 November 2007 and the broadcast on Radio Plus the next day at 08 00 hours in connection with the same matter. The article in Week-end newspaper alleges that an important sum of money has been found in the locker of a Police Officer in a Police station of the Upper Plaine Wilhems District.

Subsequently, on 19 November 2007 at 08 00 hours the Radio Plus has in its news bulletin broadcasted that a sum of Rs4.7 m has been found concealed in a locker belonging to an ex-Superintendent of Police posted in a Police station of the Upper Plaine Wilhems. It also alleges that that sum of money may be the proceeds of the MCB hold-up case.

An inquiry was instituted which reveals that both publications are false and clearly intended to sully the reputation of a dead person.

A *prima facie* case of “Publishing false news” was established against the three persons concerned.

The three persons were interviewed on the same day and released on parole after undertaking to appear before Court the following day.

On 22 November 2007, a provisional charge of “Diffusing false news” and “Defamation” was lodged against all three accused before the District Court of Port Louis Third Division. They were released on bail on the same day upon each furnishing a surety of Rs4,000 and entering into a recognizance for the sum of Rs25,000.

The next appearance before the Court has been fixed for 30 April 2008.

**Mr Jhugroo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Prime Minister confirm that, following his statement at the National Assembly on 20 November 2007, these three journalists were arrested?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, that is the procedure that was followed.

### **TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL – CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX**

**(No. B/1243) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Home Affairs, Minister of Civil Service & Administrative Reforms and Minister of Rodrigues & Outer Islands whether he has taken cognizance of the recent findings of Transparency International on the level corruption prevailing in Mauritius and, if so, will he state –

- (a) if he has caused the findings to be examined, indicating the outcome thereof, and
- (b) the remedial measures that have been taken, if any.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken cognizance of the Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International for 2007.

I would like to point out that Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index is a composite index that is based on expert opinion surveys. However, given that it is practically impossible to measure the actual extent of corruption in a country, Transparency International assesses level at which corruption is perceived, and not the level of corruption *per se*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the year-to-year comparison of a country's CPI score does not only result from a changing perception of the country's performance, but also from a change in sample and methodology used by the sources of information. I must say that I have noticed myself a major discrepancy in the English and French versions of the Corruption Perceptions Index 2007 of Transparency International. The Country Policy and Institutional Assessment of the African Development Bank used among the five or six surveys, was compiled in 2005 when our score was at its lowest.

Statistics should therefore be placed and interpreted in the appropriate context. For example, a country's rank can change simply because new countries have been added to the list and other countries drop out. I note that the Corruption Perceptions Index score of 4.7 has been same for Mauritius in 2000 when 90 countries were involved and in 2007 that number has doubled - in fact, 180 countries are involved. The number of countries being rated in 2007 compared to 2006 has now increased by 17.

Additionally, Transparency International itself acknowledges that unbiased and hard data continue to be difficult to obtain and thus scores contain inherent imprecisions. They said that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the fight against corruption is a national fight and not only an institutional one.

In Mauritius, we have a well-defined strategy to build integrity in the country with the following objectives to -

- (i) create a corruption-free Mauritius;
- (ii) create public outcry and intolerance against corruption;
- (iii) improve governance in the public and private sectors;
- (iv) develop responsible citizens and an ethical workforce, and
- (v) make corruption a high-risk low-gain activity.

Mauritius has adopted a three-pronged approach based on investigation, prevention and education. ICAC is currently implementing a three-year action plan which defines the strategies to achieve the country's objectives for the prevention of corruption in line with regional and international obligations. The strategies are further complemented with sensitization campaigns conducted in different socio-economic spheres.

We should not therefore question our strategy because of the ratings of 2007.

The same strategy made us improve our score last year from 4.2 in 2005 to 5.1 in 2006. Transparency International even praised Mauritius in its 2006 report for the initiatives taken.

From an overall perspective, in fact, the CPI has improved from 4.5 in 2001 to 4.7 in 2007. We should also take into consideration other indices, Mr Speaker, Sir. The World Bank in a recent publication on 'Doing Business', ranked Mauritius 1<sup>st</sup> in Africa and 27<sup>th</sup> in the world. The World Bank Research Institute recently, in its latest good governance report on Africa, ranked Mauritius third on a list of 52 African countries for applying measures of good governance. The Mo Ibrahim Index also ranked Mauritius first among the 48 sub-Saharan countries surveyed.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the Transparency International Report and other such reports are examined by the National Economic and Social Council?

**The Prime Minister:** I would have thought so, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I'll have to check whether they have actually got the report. I am sure they do.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over! Questions addressed to hon. Ministers! The Table has been informed that Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/1256, B/1257 B/1258 B/1281 B/1282 B/1283 B/1301 B/1302 and B/1304 have been withdrawn.

**NOTRE DAME – WOMEN CENTRE – CONSTRUCTION**

**(No. B/1256) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a women centre at Notre Dame, she will state when construction works are likely to start.

*(Withdrawn)*

**LE HOCHET & TERRE ROUGE – SEWERAGE PROBLEMS**

**(No. B/1257) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will state if he has received representations from the inhabitants of Le Hochet and Terre Rouge complaining of sewerage problems being encountered in the region and, if so, the remedial measures he proposes to take.

*(Withdrawn)*

**LE HOCHET & TERRE ROUGE – DRAINS PROJECT**

**(No. B/1258) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will state if there is any project for drain works to be carried out in the region of Le Hochet and Terre Rouge and, if so, when works are likely to start.

*(Withdrawn)*

## PROCUREMENT LEGISLATION - PROCLAMATION

**(No. B/1259) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the Procurement Act, he will state the reasons why it has not yet been proclaimed.

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to Parliamentary Question No. B/186 in April last.

As intimated to the House, various preparatory tasks have to be completed before the Act can be proclaimed. The new structures provided for under the Act have to be established, the key persons appointed, the staff of Ministries and Departments trained and all the other stakeholders fully sensitised about the new procurement framework.

As at date, the key persons who will man the institutions provided under the Act, namely the Central Procurement Board, the Procurement Policy Office and the Independent Review Panel have been appointed. Furthermore, the last component of the training programme for procurement officials is well under way. Accordingly, Mr Speaker, Sir, arrangements have been made for the Act to be operational with effect from 17 January 2008.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Sir, I can understand from the Minister that there has been a lot of administrative procedures involved, but can the hon. Minister state why it has taken such a long time?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are three sets of reason, the most important one was to train the officers who will be responsible for the three institutions that we have set up. The second one is the training that needs to be given to the other stakeholders who are going to work with the three institutions. The third one is that it was not easy to find the right mix of people for the three committees that are in the Act. It took us some time to find the right mix. Very often, you think you have located the rare bird, but then there are some problems that arise and we need to change. When you change one, you must make sure that the mix is the right one.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** May I ask the hon. Minister when he feels that all exercises will be fully completed and that the Act will be fully operational?

**Mr Sithanen:** It will be by 13 of January 2008.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Minister, until the Procurement Act comes into operation, whether it is the Central Tender Board, as constituted under the Central Tender Board Act, that is performing?

**Mr Sithanen:** Yes. Let me also inform the hon. Leader of the Opposition that, at least, as far as I know, there is no process that has been affected as a result of the delay - which is unfortunate - that has occurred in the proclamation of this Act.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I know, Mr Speaker, Sir, whether I am right in saying that the coming into operation of the new Procurement Act is something which the European Union is insisting on?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Member might know, there are two sets of conditions that need to be satisfied. The first set of conditions relates to three factors that must be taken into account; one of them is the Procurement Act. But let me also add, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, as far as the trigger of that particular condition is concerned, the European Union is satisfied that this has been satisfied. Similarly, le *cadre macro économique* has been agreed upon with the EU and they are happy about it. The third one is the outline of the energy policy which has also been agreed. The first *tranche*, which is the fixed *tranche*, depended on this first set of conditions and there are three conditions. I think there is a fourth one on public financial management, if my memory serves me right, Mr Speaker, Sir, which has been agreed and the money has been disbursed under that particular *tranche*.

**SUGAR SECTOR – REFORMS – EU FUNDS**

**(No. B/1260) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the reforms in the sugar sector, he will state whether funds have so far been disbursed by the European Union in connection therewith and, if so, indicate the amount and the use to which they have been put.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development that the first *tranche* of €6.5 m., which is a fixed *tranche*, was disbursed by the European Union to Government in June 2007 under the sector budget support programme.

I am further advised that funds to the tune of Rs309 m. have been subsequently allocated by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to the Mauritius Sugar Authority to refund loans taken for the implementation of Phase I of the Field Operations and Regrouping Project for small planters.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** The Minister knows fully well, and he even stated in a reply to a PNQ, that 60% of that money was for the blueprint, if I am not mistaken, and 30%, if I recall, was for the VRS. Can the hon. Minister just confirm whether that is correct?

**Dr. Boolell:** The hon. lady is referring to the variable *tranche*.

**Mr Bérenger:** I heard the hon. Minister say that some of the money was used to refund loans that had been made to a given organisation. Being given that the 135 workers of St. Félix are still waiting for their blueprint, can I ask the hon. Minister if money can be loaned to whatever organisation for the implementation of the blueprint in their case and refunded later on?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, there are ongoing discussions between Government and the MSPA. I do hope that the deal will be concluded, pending that, the workers have been taken care of and they will be remunerated up to mid-January.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Speaker, Sir, apart from the fixed *tranche* which goes directly in the coffers of the Minister of Finance for budget support for macroeconomic stability, in fact, no funds have been disbursed for the variable *tranche* which relates to objective-oriented projects in the sugar sector reform? Can he confirm that?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have stated very clearly that the sum released has gone to the small planters in respect of preparation of land, derocking, cane setts, etc. As to the variable *tranche*, there are four conditionalities which need to be complied with. Up to now, we have complied to one of the conditionalities.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, a sum of Rs309 m. has been supposedly spent on small planters. Can I know from the Minister as to the number of small planters who have been covered by that scheme?

**Dr. Boolell:** I submitted all the facts and figures, but this is money earmarked specifically to support the small planters. All of it have gone to the small planters over and above the acquisition of fleet made by Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool precisely for the preparation of land for small planters.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if I understand the Minister well, it means that Rs309 m. were given to the Sugar Authority for derocking purposes, but we understand also that there was a loan of Rs500 m. which was the amount for derocking. Can we know the amount of money used effectively for derocking?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the hon. lady that promises were made by the previous Government.

*(Interruptions)*

We not only made promises, but we honoured our commitment and the first thing that this Government did was to release Rs500 m. as a loan, and the sum of Rs309 m. is being used to service that amount of Rs500 m.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that this money has gone to the small planters, but, in the same breath, he mentioned that the money has been sent to the Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the sum of money was given to the Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool or whether it went straight as support to the small planters?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, both were to empower the small planters.

**Mr Gunness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister, precisely, how many planters have so far benefited from this scheme, be it derocking, land preparation or whatsoever?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I will lay the document on the Table of the Assembly for the eyes of everybody.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned that the money has gone to the SPMPC. Can we know the amount of money which has been spent by the SPMPC and for what purpose?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, over Rs175 m. have been spent for the purpose of acquiring fleets to respond to the needs of the small planters.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the fleet that has been acquired by the Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool has been used for derocking the fields of the small planters?

**Dr. Boolell:** Precisely, Mr Speaker, Sir.

## RAI FOUNDATION - SCHOLARSHIPS

(No. B/1261) **Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the scholarships awarded by the RAI Foundation, India, he will state –

- (a) if they were advertised;
- (b) the names of the persons who sat on the scholarship selection panel, and
- (c) table a list of the selected candidates who have been awarded the scholarships.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the following categories of scholarships fall under the responsibility of my Ministry -

- (i) State Funded scholarships, commonly known as the Laureate Scheme at the undergraduate level, and the State of Mauritius Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme at the postgraduate level, and
- (ii) Scholarships funded by friendly donor countries/organisations as a result of bilateral cooperation agreements.

Apart from scholarships under the Laureate Scheme which are awarded to the best ranked students at the Cambridge Higher School Certificate examination, the other categories of scholarship, namely the State of Mauritius Postgraduate Scholarships and those funded by friendly donor countries/organisations, are advertised to the public in the press following which a selection exercise is carried out by the High Powered Scholarships Committee under the chairmanship of my Ministry.

Scholarships awarded by the RAI Foundation, India were private scholarships. As those scholarships did not fall under either of the categories listed earlier, my Ministry was not involved in the issue.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, doesn't the hon. Minister think that this is a very unfair situation, and that for the sake of transparency, all those private scholarships should be geared towards the Ministry of Education which then can advertise and give the possibility to everybody to apply?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not the statutory responsibility of the Ministry.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Doesn't the hon. Minister think that this is a very chaotic situation? Because when we are talking of equal opportunities, we are not providing same to each and every candidate with the required qualification to apply?

**Mr Gokhool:** I think there will be implications from the donors which maybe private organisations. I don't think the idea should be to regulate private scholarships.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he doesn't consider it to be proper in the future to ensure that all scholarships donated to Mauritius, privately or through Government bodies, be opened to all candidates rather than to be restricted to a few through some particular institutions?

**Mr Gokhool:** I think it is for the donors to decide how to manage the offer of these scholarships.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister – since he has been given notice of this question – whether, up to now, he has tried to find out to whom these scholarships were awarded?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, these were private scholarships, and I don't think it is my responsibility to look into who obtained them. However, I need to add that TEC regularly advises parents and students to check with TEC with regard to recognition and equivalence and if they need any other information, be it for private scholarships, they can still go to TEC and seek the information.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Minister does not know about it, there is a very easy way of finding out, he can ask his colleague, hon. Dr. Jeetah.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry condones this practice...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member cannot use the word “condone”.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Since Government proposes to come forward with an Equal Opportunity Bill, is this not against the practice of equal opportunities?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have explained that private organisations are offering scholarships. I don't think this can be regulated or overseen by my Ministry. This is not the statutory responsibility of my Ministry.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if he could find out whether there are other foreign institutions offering scholarships to Mauritians through private bodies?

**Mr Gokhool:** I don't know and this may have to be found out.

**Mrs Hanoomanjee:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether this practice of private scholarships can, in a certain way, go round the practice of advertising scholarships by Government and that this bad practice can continue against usual practices?

**Mr Gokhool:** These are interesting issues, but I think they have to be discussed with the private organisations. I don't know how far we can go in terms of dealing with offers of private scholarships.

## SUGAR ESTATES WORKERS – TRANSPORT COSTS

(No. B/1262) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the refund to the workers of the sugar estates of the transport costs for their children before the introduction of the Free Transport Scheme -

- (a) he will state if the owners of more than 100 *arpents* of land under cultivation were refunding same, and
- (b) he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sugar Authority, information as to if it has ensured that the amount that was being spent thereon is being used for the welfare of the workers or remitted to Government.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Remuneration Orders covering the agricultural and non-agricultural workers of the sugar industry provide that school transport be provided by the employer to children of workers. Such provisions are still valid.

The House will note that in my reply to PQ B/269, I had indicated that there are several modes of transport which the sugar estates put at the disposal of children of the employees of the Corporate Sector. With the provision of free transport by Government, it implies that most of the employees of the Corporate Sector are using public transport and hence the Corporate Sector is making a saving. My Ministry has impressed upon the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association (MSPA) that the saving made through the use of public transport be ploughed back to improve the welfare of children of the sugar industry workers.

In addition, Government has negotiated with all parties concerned comprising the Ministry of Education, the Mauritius Sugar Authority and the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association and the latter has agreed to open up the field of study under the blue print and VRS in order to enable a larger number of beneficiaries to take full advantage of the scholarships being offered by the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association. The award of such scholarships takes on board all the priority fields of Government. Furthermore, in response to a request from the Ministry, the MSPA also agreed to request its members to make available, interest free loans to their

employees for the payment of examination fees for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate.

The House will note that Government is currently negotiating an all inclusive package deal with the MSPA and the issue of school transport will also be taken on board.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister will agree with me that he, himself, informed the House that if this provision would have been applied, normally it would have cost Rs18 m. per year. Can the hon. Minister inform the House how many scholarships have been offered to the children of the workers for the past two years because he just mentioned that they are going to use this money to offer scholarships?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have stated in the reply that we impressed upon them to widen the fields as to the number of scholarships that can be awarded. As matters stand, each sugar State has the obligation to award 5 scholarships. That was spelt out in 1998. We impressed upon them to do the needful. I don't have the exact number, but when we appealed to them to grant loans at a concessionary rate to students sitting for SC and HSC, they have complied. But I have stated in the conclusion of the reply that there are ongoing discussions and this is also part and parcel of the deal being discussed.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister had referred to an answer he had given to PQ B/269. That's already two years ago. May we know how many educational plans have been put in place since the last two years? Can he give the amount of money that the sugar factories have ploughed back in respect of those two years?

**Dr. Boolell:** I do not have the exact amount, but when we appeal to them to dispense support to parents whose children were taking SC/HSC examinations, to grasp this opportunity, they did the needful. There are ongoing discussions between the MSPA and Government and I have stated that this is also part of the deal ...

*(Interruptions)*

No, there are ongoing discussions, and I am sure we will come to fruitful conclusion and, of course, they are bound to honour their obligations and we will see to it that the workers have their rights and that these be entertained.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that the all-inclusive package discussion is now on. I put that question two years ago and I am hearing the same answer two years after.

**Mr Speaker:** This is a comment.

**Dr. Boolell:** Yes, it is a comment, but yet there has been lot of progress made and I stated that in respect of students who sat for the SC and HSC, loans at a concessional rate, were granted.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request the hon. Minister if he can make a good homework and see for the last two months what has been the input of the different sugar factories and table copy of all the actions that have been taken and the expenditure made in respect of the sum saved.

**Dr. Boolell:** There has been progress but, of course, we would have liked to accelerate the pace of progress.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in the past, the students were provided transport from their house to the school and back.. May I know whether the Minister is going to amend the provision of the Remuneration Order or is considering providing the same advantage?

**Dr. Boolell:** There is still provision in the Remuneration Order to provide transport free of charge to children of workers who work on the sugar estates and in the fields. We can see to it if there is implementation. If some of the children felt that their interests are not being taken care, we can impress upon the sugar estates to do the needful.

**Mr Soodhun:** Will the Minister consider setting up a committee with trade unions and representatives of his Ministry for the monitoring of this issue?

**Dr. Boolell:** There is no need to set up a committee as such. I can impress upon the PS or the Senior Chief Executive to do the needful and to look into the matter.

*At 1.05 p.m the sitting was suspended.*

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

### **SUGAR REFORM – SMALL PLANTERS – FUNDS, PROJECTS, ETC.**

**(No. B/1263) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the sugar reform, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sugar Authority, information as to whether it has designed any scheme in favour of the small planters, indicating –

- (a) the funds earmarked, and
- (b) the projects implemented as at to date.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the context of the sugar reform and the Multi-Annual Adaptation Strategy, the Field Operations and Regrouping Project, has been designed to improve the cost competitiveness by increasing yields and reducing production costs of the culture sector to ensure the sustainable and viable supply of cane by small planters through regrouping.

This project, monitored by the Project Implementation Committee, has several components which are sites specific. These components are -

- (i) derocking to render mechanisation possible;
- (ii) irrigation;
- (iii) land preparation;
- (iv) planting materials: cane setts, fertilizer, cement, scum and labour, and
- (v) two post planting herbicide applications for weed control.

Site management and detailed cadastral and topographical survey are equally important components to the tune of Rs30,000 per hectare. We have impressed upon the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association to provide these services free of charge.

The components mentioned above are being provided, as I have stated earlier, to the small planters out of a Government guaranteed loan of Rs500 m.

Regarding part (b), details of the projects so far implemented under Phase I had been tabled in respect of a question put to me by the hon. Member on 20 November 2007 in reply to PQ. B/1130.

I would like to inform the House that implementation of Phase II has already started.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether it is true to say that the small planters have been asked to pay about Rs1,500 for all the services which he has just mentioned?

**Dr. Boolell:** Yes, there is a contribution that the small planters have to make and it is almost a token sum when compared to the total cost of the preparation of the land.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** In the process of the sugar reform, may we know what the hon. Minister is doing so that the new varieties of canes, which take about seven to eight years to reach the small planters, do reach the small planters in a shorter lapse of time?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we constantly come up with new varieties of sugarcane. We have impressed upon them to come up with a variety which is rich in fibre and sucrose. But, it is not always easy. However, there is a new variety which is rich in the production of ethanol. Let me remind my hon. friend that a fund has been released by EU and out of 13 projects identified, more than 7 projects will be carried out by the Mauritius Sugar Research Institute to the benefits of all ACP sugar producing countries.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** In reply to an issue that I raised at Adjournment Time, the hon. Minister said that the ex-tea belt is being dealt with as a special case. May I to know whether the report related to the ex-tea belt is ready and, if so, when will its recommendations be put in practice?

**Dr. Boolell:** It is an area where the yield is very low. Of course, we have to address the problem. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member will recall that I said that we have to address the problem in a very forceful manner. There is a technical committee, comprising the MSIRI and AREU, which is looking into the specific problems as to how best we can address the problems of the planters. Firstly, whether we can introduce new varieties of sugarcane. Secondly, let me inform my hon. friend that, for example, there is a shortage of bananas on the local market and yet there is a need for 40 tonnes on a monthly basis for processing of bananas, because the market for export of banana chips is a very remunerative market. There is the problem of pitaya which is an alternative cash crop and the new Costa Rica variety of palm shoots. All these alternative cash crops are being looked into. But then, we have to consider reafforestation also.

### **SUGAR INDUSTRY – CROP SEASON - 40-HOUR WEEK**

**(No. B/1264) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the sugar industry, he will state if the 40-hour week for the workers during the crop season has been introduced and, if not, when will it be introduced.

**The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment ( Dr. V. Bunwaree):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am going to reply to this question as the subject matter relates to conditions of employment.

The answer is yes, Sir, since 22 June 2007, date on which the permanent Arbitration Tribunal (PAT) published its award, granting a 40-hour week during the crop season, on a 6-day basis to workers employed by members of the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association (MSPA).

The PAT has, however, not recommended any mode of implementation of the 40-hour week and I must inform the House that agricultural workers have not benefited at all from the provisions of this award because of the nature of the work they perform which is related mainly to task work and to piece rate work. The concept of time is, therefore, not applicable in their situation.

Right from the beginning, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the award was published, I personally publicly announced that there was an injustice towards these agricultural workers and this would have to be corrected.

The matter was raised in Cabinet on 13 July 2007 when it was agreed that the Technical Committee, set up at the level of my Ministry, to continue discussions with the trade unions and the MSPA with a view to reaching an agreement on the implementation of the 40-hour week.

Meetings were held with the Sugar Industry Trade Unions Common Platform and the MSPA. As both parties have expressed the wish to pursue discussions on their own, my Ministry is awaiting the outcome of these discussions before envisaging any further action before long.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for the information. I would like to reiterate that there is a time schedule at his Ministry for the introduction of this 40-hour week. Can the hon. Minister say whether we have a time schedule?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I have informed both sides, especially the employers, that I am in the course of reviewing the whole labour legislation and I believe that, by the time the Bill will come to Parliament, it will have to be thrashed out, if not, Government will intervene and take a decision.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in a reply to a PQ in this House, the hon. Minister stated that the Attorney-General is chairing a technical committee to work out the modalities of the 40-hour week. Can we know whether any report has been submitted and whether the committee has completed its work?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the committee chaired by the Attorney-General has already completed its work. It is another technical committee which is at the level of my Ministry.

**SUGAR SECTOR – MULTI ANNUAL ADAPTATION STRATEGY  
ACTION PLAN - APPROVAL**

**(No. B/1265) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether in regard to the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy for the sugar sector, he will state when it was –

- (a) approved by Government, and
- (b) submitted to the European Union.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy Action Plan 2006-2015 for the sugar sector was approved by Government on 21 April 2006.

As regards part (b) of the question, it was submitted to the European Union through the Delegation of the European Commission in Port Louis on 26 April 2006.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the Minister state whether there have been prior consultations with other Ministries before the finalisation of the MAAS?

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't know of any document that has been subject to such intensive and extensive discussion. Of course, there has been discussion with all the stakeholders, including all the Ministries concerned. After all, before this document was sent to the EU, it needed approval of Government.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, subsequent to the European Commission, the European Union receiving officially a copy of the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy came forward with their own strategy document, and, if yes, whether it would provide it to Government and whether after that a formal agreement was signed between Government and the European Union?

**Dr. Boolell:** Yes, following the document which we submitted, there was a sector policy document which was submitted by the EU and there had been also a question put to the Deputy Prime Minister by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee as to the commitment of Government vis-à-vis the EU and the detailed implementation of the plan.

**Mr Soodhun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm that this document was prepared in consultation with the Minister of Finance and the Advisers at the PMO?

**Dr. Boolell:** In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we did more than that. I recall on 15 June 2007, there was a discussion with all the stakeholders and that discussion was held at the European Commission and all the stakeholders were there. The matter was discussed lengthily.

*(Interruptions)*

I have stated very clearly, in no uncertain terms, that this document was approved by Cabinet.

**CT POWER LTD. (MAURITIUS) – EIA LICENCE**

**(No. B/1266) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether in regard to the CT Power Ltd (Mauritius), he will state if the EIA licence from the Department of Environment has been obtained, as required in the letter of intent.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Ministry of Environment & National Development Unit that the (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd. has submitted an application for an EIA licence to the Department of Environment on 06 April 2007. The EIA Notice was published on 14 and 21 April 2007 respectively and the last date for public comments was on 09 May 2007. I am informed that the application is still under consideration at the level of the Ministry of Environment & NDU.

**Mrs Grenade:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether all the conditions attached to the issue of such a licence have been made public and have been adhered to by the promoter?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, the matter is being taken up by the Ministry of Environment. If the hon. Member wants other information, she can perhaps put an appropriate question to the relevant Minister.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the EIA Committee has started working and hearing witnesses?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Yes, I understand from my colleague, but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, perhaps more and comprehensive information could be obtained from the Minister of Environment and NDU.

## MONTAGNE JACQUOT – CT POWER PROJECT – JETTY

(No. B/1267) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether in regard to the CT Power Project, he will state if the relevant clearances, as required by the letter of intent, have been obtained for the setting up of a jetty facility at Montagne Jacquot.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the letter of intent issued to the Mauritius CT Power Ltd. by the Board of Investment in April 2006 was for a 3 x 50 Mega Watt Power Plant, including a jetty for the offloading of coal at the premises of the plant.

However, in the context of the Power Sector Expansion Plan prepared in May 2006 by my Ministry, the CEB requested the promoter to downsize its initial proposal so that new dual Bagasse/Coal Fired plants from the sugar sector could be accommodated. The promoter informed that such a proposal implied that the project would no longer benefit from economies of scale which would have justified the construction of a jetty, specifically for the power plant. This led to the promoter bringing down his initial proposal to a 2 x 55 Mega Watt plant.

The inclusion of the jetty was therefore abandoned by the promoter and this modification was endorsed by the Board of the CEB.

The promoter has confirmed that following those modifications to the initial project, corresponding costs initially earmarked for the jetty would be ploughed back into other necessary infrastructure works, including land leveling, road upgrading and maintenance over a period of 20 years.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has the figure that had been included in the project put forward by the promoter? Was it Rs300 m. for the jetty?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as the jetty is concerned, the amount was about Rs370 m. and it is being ploughed back subsequently.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I know whether the project, as it stands, is still 2 x 55 Mega Watt or has it been altered again?

**Dr. Kasenally:** No, it has not been altered and it is still 2 x 55 Mega Watt.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the supply of coal, can we know the reduction in terms of tons of coal as far as the downsizing of the plant is concerned?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the figure is not available, but it is being worked out by the Coal and Equity Committee which has been specifically set up to look in the business of importation of coal.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can we, at least, get an indication from the hon. Minister of the percentage reduction if not in terms of tons?

**Dr. Kasenally:** It will be approximately two-thirds, but I can give the details if the hon. Member comes with a substantive question.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just want to know from the hon. Minister whether special measures have been taken for the storage of coal in the premises of the CT Power.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Every Coal Station Power makes provision for a stock to be kept for use just as it is at the CTDS project in Rivière des Anguilles.

## **CT POWER PROJECT - ÉLECTRICITÉ DE FRANCE – MISSIONS**

**(No. B/1268) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether in regard to the CT Power Project, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to the outcome of the missions held by the consultant *Electricité de France* to assess the cost reasonableness and the technological issues.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that an EDF technical mission proceeded to China in June 2007 accompanied by officers of the CEB to assess the technical and operational viability of the Coal Fired Power Plants manufactured and installed in China, similar to the one proposed by the (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd. The technical mission has reported that the power plants which they visited in China have been in operation for several years without any major problem and are still functioning satisfactorily and effectively. In fact, some of them are working effectively after the 20-year period.

According to the EDF mission, the technical viability of the equipment manufactured in China, has been ascertained. The Consultant is confident that the proposed plant of the (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd. will meet the requirements of the CEB.

I am informed by the CEB that following the report of the Consultant, the design of the plants to be built at Pointe-aux-Caves will be improved to meet local regulations as well as environmental and administrative requirements.

In parallel, EDF was entrusted with a separate assignment to assess the reasonableness of cost of the plant and equipment on the basis of the feasibility report of the (Mauritius) CT Power Ltd. EDF also found that the cost proposed by the promoter was 10% lower than international prices and 20% lower than for equivalent equipment of European origin.

The findings of the EDF mission as well as its assessment of the cost will constitute essential elements in the negotiation process aimed at concluding a Power Purchase Agreement.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the plant, which was visited by the mission, is operated by the promoter of the plant to be set up here?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not too sure. But, we know that this is the exact plant which is being operated by the promoter elsewhere and not in China.

**Mr Bérenger:** Therefore, can I know in which other countries are plants operated by the promoters of CT power, and whether it is planned for the consultant and the CEB people to visit such plants?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that a similar plant is operational in Malaysia. Certainly our technicians will go and visit these plants and see all the problems or whatever is involved before we set up our own project here.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a plant in Malaysia operated by the promoter who is to set up a plant here?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a plant operating in Malaysia. We will send a team there, to ensure that they see all the technicalities and whatever problems that normally crop up with the use of such a plant.

**Mrs Grenade:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the consultant *Electricité de France* has confirmed that the technology being provided is the most advanced clean coal technology on the market?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not the most advanced clean coal technology. There is the method which is being used here, that is, the spreader stoker, which is less efficient and which we use with coal and bagasse. What CT Power is using is pulverised coal. This is the second one, which is much more efficient and – I won't say cleaner – less dirty. Thirdly, there is the gasified one, which is not very much used because of technical problems, and it has not yet been perfected.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to know whether the equipment that have been designed and commissioned in China are operational outside China.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, there is a similar plant in Malaysia and elsewhere in the world.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I repeat my question: whether such equipment, designed under Chinese specifications, are operational outside China?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I repeat my answer: yes.

**Mr Lesjongard:** In his reply, the Minister stated that, for the plant to be commissioned in Mauritius, the design has to cater for local regulations. May I know what are those local regulations?

**Dr. Kasenally:** The local regulations are not so much concerned with the plant. As far as the disposal of coal ash is concerned, we will be using an

ash pond with a special design, so that it prevents percolation of the by-products from going down into our aquifer. Every year, there is upgrading of any plant to ensure that for every tonne of coal we get more power. This is what is going to be used. We are leaving no stone unturned to ensure that we get a better technology and a better *rendement* from our coal.

**Mr Lesjongard:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the production generation and transmission equipment are going to be totally ordered from China?

**Dr. Kasenally:** This is a highly technical question coming from a very technical minded person. However, I am going to be as honest as I can in the reply I shall give. I understand that all the equipment which will be bought are Chinese made but under licence from very reputable international firms in the United States.

### **POINTE AUX SABLES COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE**

**(No. B/1269) Mrs S. Grenade (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West)** asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether he will state if there is a project for the extension of the Pointe aux Sables Health Care Centre and, if so, where matters stand.

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Dr. S. Kasenally):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Community Health Centre at Pointe aux Sables has been accommodated in an exiguous building situated on a plot of State land for the past 20 years. With the increasing number of patients attending the centre, there is definitely a need to provide the services of the Community Health Centre in a more conducive environment.

In this regard, the Ministry invited tenders on two occasions for renting of a more spacious building in the region of Pointe aux Sables to relocate the Community Health Centre. However, on both occasions, only one offer was received and same was not considered suitable. A decision was, therefore, taken to extend the existing building accommodating the Community Health Centre.

The Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping is in the process of preparing the scope of works and the drawings. In the absence of the exact delimitation of the portion of land vested with the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life, a request has also been made to the

Ministry of Housing & Lands to update the survey of the plot of land. The extension project will be implemented in the financial year 2008-2009. In the meantime, it is proposed to relocate the Community Health Centre temporarily in a rented building. In this regard, fresh tenders have been invited to rent a more spacious building. The closing date has been fixed for 12 December 2007.

### **PREVOCATIONAL SECTOR - RECRUITMENT**

**(No. B/1270) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the teachers of the prevocational stream, he will state the number thereof recruited in the State Secondary Schools as at to date.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that there are presently 288 teachers who are posted in the prevocational stream of State Secondary Schools of which 118 employees came from the Technical School Management Trust Fund (TSMTF), 36 are primary school teachers and the remaining are supply teachers. The majority of the supply teachers were recruited since January 2004.

There are two categories of posts in the prevocational sector –

- (i) Education Officers (Prevocational) who hold a degree, and
- (ii) Teachers (Secondary prevocational) who hold at least a School Certificate.

In 2004, 57 posts of Education Officer (Pre-vocational) and 240 posts of teacher Secondary (Pre-vocational) were accordingly created on the establishment of my Ministry. Vacancies in both grades were reported to the PSC on 22 June 2005. In view of the lawsuit filed by the Technical School Management Trust Fund Employees' Union, the recruitment was delayed. However, the Commission has, in October 2007, carried out an interview of all eligible candidates.

The Public Service Commission has, on 16 November 2007, forwarded a list of 55 Education Officers (Prevocational) for recruitment, and offers of appointment have already been issued by my Ministry.

As regards the post of teacher (Secondary Prevocational), interviews are still ongoing at the PSC, and we are awaiting a list of some 90 candidates in the first instance for appointment.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there are any State Secondary Schools which will not provide prevocational stream and, if so, the number of teachers involved?

**Mr Gokhool:** All I can say is that all students who are to follow prevocational classes will be provided a seat. As regards the number of teachers, I have just given the figures.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether by January 2009, there would be any State Secondary Schools which would not be offering prevocational stream?

**Mr Gokhool:** I cannot say at this stage, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but all I can say is that, for students who have to follow prevocational classes, seats are provided, whether it is in the Government sector or the private secondary schools. We need to provide as many seats as are required and this is being taken care of by the Ministry.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I take it from the Minister then that about 90 new teachers for the prevocational stream would be recruited in the near future?

**Mr Gokhool:** I have given the hon. Member the figures of those who are being recruited now. As regards the future, we have to look at the figures of 297 posts which exist. If there is need to fill more posts, then they will be filled.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** My question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is about the 90 teachers who are being recruited presently as per the answer of the Minister.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I know this is a *dialogue de sourds*. The hon. Member is asking questions about teachers whereas the hon. Minister is talking about pupils.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I am talking about the teachers that are being recruited. May I ask the hon. Minister whether there are no cases where schools have stopped offering prevocational classes or stream and whether teachers, who were appointed there, have been reverted back to their previous jobs at the Technical School Management Trust Fund or whether they are being retained within the sector?

**Mr Gokhool:** I think the arrangement which is being made is to absorb the teachers from the Technical School Management Trust Fund who started working in the prevocational stream. I don't know of any case of a teacher wanting to go back to the Technical School Management Trust Fund. If there are cases, I am not aware, but arrangements are being made to provide them the posts which have been created.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the teachers who have been recruited right now are coming from the Technical School Management Trust Fund or whether they are teachers who have been recruited from the public in general?

**Mr Gokhool:** It is both, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because there are so many vacancies and I have given the figures. The number of teachers working presently is lower than the number of posts which have been created and we recruit both from the existing teachers of the Technical School Management Trust Fund, primary school teachers as well as from outside.

**Mrs Labelle:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is a new policy of Government not to offer prevocational courses in State Secondary Schools? Are we going towards this?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have given the answer. The question relates to teachers.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr Gokhool:** Concerning the policy, as regards prevocational classes, I have already replied. We provide the number of seats whether it is in Government colleges or secondary schools. We cannot just create seats when we can afford to provide them the seats, whether it is in Government colleges or secondary schools. I don't think that we should create seats just for the sake of creating seats and satisfying ourselves that seats are available in the State Secondary Schools or in the private secondary schools.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just stated that students who are willing to go for prevocational stream may not necessarily be admitted in State Secondary Schools, they can be sent to private secondary schools. My question is: whether the teachers who are being recruited will also be sent to private secondary schools in case there is a need for it? Because students can move from one sector to another, are we also stating that teachers, who are being recruited right now, will also follow the same fate?

**Mr Gokhool:** I think this is logical. If they have no students to teach, they have to be redeployed to other schools where there are prevocational classes.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the same policy will apply to education officers teaching in State Secondary Schools and private secondary schools?

**Mr Gokhool:** We are talking about education officers and prevocational teachers. If a college is not offering prevocational classes, we have to redeploy in colleges where the services of these teachers will be required to teach prevocational classes. I think I am clear.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he has a predetermined policy for teachers who have been recruited right now? Have they been told that, in case their services will no longer be required, they will be sent to the private sector?

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, education and training is a dynamic sector. We are providing for what is required now. We are engaged in a reform programme. This is a hypothetical question. Should the need arise, then we will have to take appropriate actions to redeploy the teachers.

**CEB – FORT VICTORIA – ALLEGED THEFT**

**(No. B/1271) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware of a recent alleged case of theft committed by an employee of the Central Electricity Board thereat, and if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Board, information as to if the case has been referred to the Police or to the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB of an alleged case of theft which occurred at Fort Victoria Power Station on Wednesday 20 June 2007. I presume the hon. Member is referring to that case.

I am also informed by the CEB that some 200 metres of copper bars, complete with fixation fittings, were found missing in the earthing system located in the basement of the power station. The value of the stolen material is Rs1.3 m.

The matter was reported to the Bain des Dames Police Station on the same day. In the course of the Police investigation, two CEB employees were arrested and a provisional charge of “larceny by persons in receipt of wages” was lodged against them before the District Court of Port Louis on 02 July 2007.

Pending the completion of the Police inquiry, the above two employees have been interdicted from duty on 06 July 2007 until further notice. An inquiry was also carried out by the Internal Audit Department of the CEB and a report was submitted to Management on 22 August 2007. As per the recommendations of the Audit, regular inspections are now being carried out by the CEB to ward off any such recurrence.

Further action will be contemplated against the officers in the light of the findings of the Police inquiry.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether other cases of theft have been reported in October this year, regarding officers of the CEB taking materials from the CEB and use them regularly for themselves?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, such recurrences, I won't say very often, but do come up from time to time and they may vary from very minor theft, compared to the one we just had. The question is to reinforce security, because there are too much ingoing and outgoing through the stores of the CEB. I have given instructions to the Board to ensure that they tighten up security everywhere because we cannot afford to have such thefts and ask the people of this country to pay up for them.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether in that particular case which had occurred in October this year, any Police inquiry has been carried out?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Yes, of course. There is not only a Police inquiry, but also an audit inquiry to ensure where the security has failed to reinforce it.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether any sanctions were taken against that officer?

**Dr. Kasenally:** We are in October, it takes some time for an inquiry, but certainly sanction will be taken.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there has been any report from ICAC on that particular matter?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, cases of theft are sent to the Police; they are arrested and then released. I don't think it is a case to be referred to ICAC. If the case is sent to ICAC there will be a delay, but simple, straight cases of theft are reported to the Police.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I do agree, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I have had information that, for that particular case, for one reason or the other, the matter was referred to ICAC and a report was submitted to the CEB.

**Dr. Kasenally:** There are so many things happening at the CEB, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I shall certainly inquire about the nature of that theft and the action which has been taken.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister will inquire. Next question!

### **SHRI RAMACHANDRA MEDICAL COLLEGE**

**(No. B/1272) Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Tertiary Education Commission, information as to whether the Shri Ramachandra Medical College has been given approval to operate in Mauritius and, if so, since when and, if not, why not.

**Mr Gokhool:** Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) which is responsible for the registration and accreditation of post secondary educational institutions and their programmes respectively that the Shri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute (now Shri Ramachandra University) has at to date not been given approval to operate in Mauritius.

I am further informed that TEC has not registered the institution and accredited the MBBS programme it proposes to run in view of the application being short of the full set of documents requested for.

At the time of application, applicants are informed of all procedures and modalities as well as the information/documents required for registration and accreditation of programmes. I take this opportunity to inform the House that some applicants invariably take undue time to submit the missing information/documents. This causes delay in the processing of the applications.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister which document, in particular, was missing from the set of documents?

**Mr Gokhool:** I have copies of the correspondence of TEC addressed to the Institution and there is a list of documents which they require to submit. I cannot say which particular document, but there is a list of documents which they would have to submit.

**Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** Will the hon. Minister lay on the Table of the National Assembly this list of documents which was missing from the application of the Ramachandra Institute?

**Mr Gokhool:** There is no problem, I can submit the list.

**MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, SME, COMMERCE &  
CO-OPERATIVES –ADVISER**

**(No. B/1273) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to Mr L.H.C.A.F., Adviser in his Ministry, he will state –

- (a) if he has represented his Ministry on any board meeting and if so, the number thereof;
- (b) if he has travelled on mission overseas since April 2007 and if so, the details thereof.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the information requested for is being compiled and will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister in which capacity this gentleman is working at the Ministry? He is all around *et il fait partie d'un trio infernal au ministère*. Is he an Adviser, Senior Adviser, Security Officer? We want to know.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question is quite clear. I did say that the information was going to be placed in the Library of the National Assembly. Let me inform the hon. Member that Mr L.H. has been retained as outsourcing facilitator by Enterprise Mauritius.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Je suis un peu perplexe, M. le président. J'ai en ma possession une carte .....

*(Interruptions)*

I have to read it. I won't mention names.

**The Deputy Speaker :** If the hon. Member states that he has something in his possession that he wants to mention...

**Mr Bhagwan:** I have to table it, I won't mention his name. Everybody knows Mr A.K.F. Lan Hing Choy, Senior Adviser, Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives, level 7, Air Mauritius Centre, Port Louis. Tel: 211-3358. Fax: 210-9513. Which is which?

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bhagwan:** I would like to have a reply from the Minister because this card is well spread out in the business area. I want a statement from the Minister because I asked a question in April last year and I am still waiting for a reply. Now we hear from the Minister that this gentleman is a Liaison Officer. Which is which?

**Dr. Jeetah:** The hon. Member asked a question in April. I asked ten questions to the Leader of the Opposition. Did you know what he said? He had no time, he was busy. But I have answered, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order! I said order!

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have said that I shall place the information in the Library of the National Assembly and I shall do so.

**Mr Bérenger:** Sir, is the Minister aware – I am sure he is – that recently, in September, a team went to Madagascar and that this so-called Adviser who uses the term “Special Adviser” on his card to do God knows what and he is not an Adviser, was in that team and, according to the minutes of the mission he acted as the leader of that team, amongst other things, requesting 5000 *arpents* of land and so on. By whom was he mandated?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, the chief of the region – I do not remember the name of the region in Madagascar – has offered 13,000 hectares to people wishing to do business and nobody has put these 13,000 hectares in anybody's pocket. This is for the State of Mauritius and if he happens to be a good negotiator, why is he being jealous about it?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question was: whether he was mandated and by whom. Just give the answer!

**Dr. Jeetah:** That has nothing to do with this question. If the hon. Member wishes to put a substantive question, I shall gladly reply.

**Mr Bhagwan:** Sir, following the card that I have tabled and, as we know now that this gentleman is a Liaison Officer and not a Senior Adviser, will this case be referred to the Police?

**Dr. Jeetah:** There is nothing to be referred to the Police. Let me remind the hon. Member that when they were in power here, Sir, I have the list of Advisers they used to have.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning the last mission undertaken by the same gentleman in connection with the purchase of flour, can the Minister confirm whether the Board of STC never approved that mission?

**Dr. Jeetah:** This is not correct! The hon. Member is misleading the House.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this morning the hon. Minister said that no contract was signed, but a contract was agreed upon. Will he say whether that contract was initialled by that gentleman?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I met the General Manager. I think they are currently working on the contract and that has to be vetted by the State Law Office and the hon. Member is misleading the House again.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister should listen and not get head up ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let me at the very outset state that Question Time is something which is the privilege of any hon. Member in this House. This is a cardinal principle that any Member, any backbencher in this House is entitled to put any question whatsoever even if the Minister feels like being irritated. Whether you like it or not, you just answer the question and if you do not have the answer, you just say that you do not have it or you have not been provided with one.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister says that no contract has been signed. I take him at his word, but the question I am asking is: if a negotiation has taken place in China, conditions must have been agreed upon, and...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Once again, this question has been put this morning when we were at PNQ time and Standing Order 22 says that no question can be put to any answer which has been given in the current session.

**Mr Cuttaree:** With due respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my question is not about the contract being signed. My question is about paraphrase, initialé of the conditions on which the sale is going to be done. This is done there. After they have discussed, this is initialled, the contract then comes. My question is whether the agreement was actually initialled by that gentleman?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this has nothing to do with this. I have not seen the contract myself. How come that the hon. Member has seen it himself!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Bhagwan:** Is the Minister aware or has his attention been drawn to the fact that this person has been involved in an accident recently at Baie du Tombeau.

*(Interruptions)*

*faire accident dan l'auto gouvernement!*

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order! Order, I said! Order!

**Mr Bhagwan:** Sir, I'll ask my question again. Is the hon. Minister aware or has his attention been drawn to the fact that this person is a Liaison Officer and so-called false Senior Adviser has been involved in a...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order! The hon. Member should not use the word 'false'.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Sinatambou:** On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let me listen to the point of order!

*(Interruptions)*

I am on my feet.

**Mr Sinatambou:** On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Under Standing Order 22 - *Contents of Questions*

“(1)(j) a question shall not be asked which makes or implies a charge of a personal character or which reflects upon the character or conduct of persons except in their official or public capacity”

**Mr Bhagwan:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has this person been involved in an accident late at night in a Government vehicle?

**Mr Sinatambou:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a point of order....

**The Deputy Speaker:** This question has nothing to do with the original one. I am rejecting it.

*(Interruptions)*

Order! Hon. Members, order!

*(Interruptions)*

Order, I said! Hon. Members, if we start to say who is on whose mission at night, I think we will never stop.

*(Interruptions)*

Order, I said! Hon. Hawoldar! Hon. Bhagwan! Hon. Ganoo can put his question.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister confirm...

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have said order. Hon. Hawoldar, I think you should withdraw what you have said.

**Dr. Hawoldar:** I withdraw, Sir.

**Mr Ganoo:** Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the person in question is also a member of the Board of the State Informatics Limited, a Board Member of the STC, a Director of the STCM (Ltd.) the newly created private company, and whether he is remunerated as Director of this new private company?

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I did mention that I shall table the information.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Next question! Hon. Mrs Labelle!

**PATIENTS – OVERSEAS TREATMENT – GOVT.  
ASSISTANCE**

(No. B/1274) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to overseas treatment in India, he will state if particular arrangements have been made in some hospitals thereat in relation to the expenses to be incurred by needy patients.

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Dr. A. Kasenally):** Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not clear to me what the hon. Member has in mind. However, I assume that the hon. Lady is referring to financial assistance granted by the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life to eligible patients inoperable in Mauritius and who proceed overseas for treatment and investigation.

I have to inform the House that, with regard to patients inoperable in Mauritius, the Ministry has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with four medical institutions in India as follows:

- (i) Manipal Hospital, Bangalore for cardiac surgery
- (ii) Sankara Netralaya, Medical Research Foundation, Chennai for ophthalmology
- (iii) Vimhans, New Delhi for Neurosurgery
- (iv) Apollo Hospital, Chennai for multiple specialities

Under the MoU, the Ministry benefits, *inter alia*, from preferential rates, accommodation facilities for accompanying relatives and transportation from and to the airport.

According to the existing policy, the Ministry meets all the costs of treatment of patients for either cardiac, neurological or ophthalmological problems and who cannot be treated locally and who are referred to the abovementioned institutions.

However, for any other medical problems other than the three specialities mentioned above which cannot be treated locally and in case a patient opts to proceed to a foreign medical institution of his own choice either in India or elsewhere, financial assistance of a maximum amount of Rs200,000 is granted to the patient. Any cost of treatment in excess of Rs200,000 has to be borne by the patient. For such cases, necessary administrative arrangements are made by the Ministry for the patient as well as the accompanying relative to benefit from a rebate in the airfares.

To be eligible for financial assistance for treatment abroad, the following criteria apply -

- (i) the household earnings of a patient should not exceed Rs50,000 monthly, and
- (ii) the patient concerned should be examined by a Medical Board which should advise as to whether such treatment is not available locally and would benefit the patient.

**Mr Bérenger:** Did I get the hon. Minister right because I remember that previously through the Memorandum of Understanding referred to, if a patient, could not be operated here and he was sent to any of these four hospitals it was paid for by Government. But, in the past, was it limited to these three diseases or by whatever technical name called, or was it open, in those hospitals?

**Dr. Kasenally:** Initially, as far as I can understand it, it was limited to the cardiac cases who could not be operated here or the neurological complicated cases which our neurosurgeons could not undertake, especially complex surgery such as cardiac, neurosurgical or even spinal ones on children.

**Mr Jugnauth:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for whatever disease Mauritian patients were sent to these hospitals, they were taken care of at whatever costs through the MoU.

**Dr. Kasenally:** As far as I understand, there has been no change in the policy.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I find the answer of the Minister strange, therefore, may I ask him whether, for example, in cases of children suffering from leukaemia, which is a very serious disease, as the hon. Minister knows it well - it may be children or adults, but I am talking generally about children - this cannot be cured in Mauritius. Surely, these facilities, which have been agreed upon in these hospitals, should have been extended to the children who suffer the disease.

**Dr. Kasenally:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as children with leukaemia are concerned, there is need for a special bone marrow transplant.

*(Interruptions)*

It is not so much technical, but it is a question of infection. It has to be done in a very sterile unit which is not existent everywhere. Such a treatment is very, very expensive, but I don't know whether this Memorandum of Understanding covers this treatment because there are few centres in the world which would allow this. Even if the transplant is done, the children have to be kept in a very sterile atmosphere and covered by very powerful antibiotics to prevent infection. Once any infection comes in, it becomes so overwhelming that it can kill the patient within days, if not hours.

### **COMPULSORY LAND ACQUISITION – OWNERS - COMPENSATION**

**(No. B/1275) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if he has received representations from the owners whose land have been compulsorily acquired for a review of the compensation paid out to them in relation thereto and, if so, indicate if his Ministry proposes to adopt the stand it adopted in the case of the compulsory acquisition of land for the construction of the State Secondary School at Triolet.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the cases of any owners who feel aggrieved by the quantum of compensation offered to them for their compulsorily acquired private lands, following assessment and valuation by the Chief Government Valuer, are submitted to an independent Board of Assessment whose award is full and final. This normal practice and

procedure, pursuant to Section 15 of the Land Acquisition Act, is obviously not new, but has been prevailing since long. Each case is considered on its own merits by a Board of Assessment which takes into consideration, and gives due weightage to all the circumstances and facts of a case, including the topographical and situational aspects and realities of the compulsorily acquired private land.

In particular relation to the case of the four plots of land compulsorily acquired at Triolet for the extension of the State Secondary School, my Ministry has received a letter dated 28 November 2007 from the legal counsel of one person whose private land of an extent of 2000 m<sup>2</sup> was compulsorily acquired on 18 August 2003 for the construction of the Sebastopol State Secondary School Complex. The legal counsel represented therein that the compensation for his client should be in line and in tune with the award of the Board of Assessment made in the case of aggrieved owners in Triolet, since his client's land too was agricultural.

Prior to the representation made by the legal counsel, his client has, in a letter dated 13 November 2007, informed my ministry that he has accepted the award of the Board of Assessment made on 08 June 2007, and that he has been paid. In fact, he encashed on 04 October 2007 his cheque bearing number 22608091 drawn on 27 September 2007. Being given that the award of the Board of Assessment is full and final, and that each case is considered by such a Board on its own merits as I have already stated, the representation made by the legal counsel on behalf of his client cannot be acted upon by my Ministry. Besides, there cannot be any conditional acceptance of an award made by the Board of Assessment. It cannot be over emphasised that Mauritius is a dynamic *Etat de Droit*.

May I end, Sir, by stating categorically that, while continuing to be bent on repairing all acts of blatant injustice, and to waste no time in prevaricating and in having cases of aggrieved owners referred without undue delay to a Board of Assessment, my Ministry will ensure that all representations received and which are justified, are dealt with expeditiously, and in the context of the principles of fairness, equity, and natural justice. Also, my Ministry does not make any assessment or valuation, and makes no award, but simply only acquires private lands compulsorily, as and when the need arises.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister tell us the value per *arpent* put by the Board of Assessment on this agricultural land referred to in the East of the country?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't have the information about the value of the land. I will make it available to the House.

**Mr Lauthan:** M. le président, ma question est simple. Je vais demander au ministre si, comme dans le cas similaire à Triolet, c'est-à-dire une partie du terrain que l'Etat a acheté, était agricole et l'autre partie se trouvait dans la zone résidentielle, on va adopter le même principe ? Le ministre vient de parler de *justice and fairness*, etc. Est-ce qu'on va aligner le taux de paiement pour la terre agricole sur celui de la zone résidentielle?

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have explained lengthily in my answer that if any owners feel aggrieved, they can appeal to the Board of Assessment for a revised valuation. It is the Board of Assessment that makes the award and once the award is accepted, it is unconditional and final. In the case mentioned, the award has been accepted and the owner has cashed the money; that's the end of it.

**Mr Lauthan:** Dans le cas de Triolet, avant même que le *Board* ait pris une décision finale, le ministère avait pris les devants pour dire qu'il était prêt à payer R 5 millions. Qu'est-ce que le ministre est en train de raconter?

**Mr Dulull:** I remind the hon. Member that the case of the owners of Triolet was a case of blatant injustice.

*(Interruptions)*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Dulull:** In the letter I have tabled in this House, in November 2002, the Chief Government Valuer himself recommended that the case of the three owners be referred to the Board of Assessment. After three years, nothing was done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The case was referred to and the award was given by the Board of Assessment.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Jugnauth:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister what was the award of the Board of Assessment in this particular case?

**Mr Dulull:** I will give the details and the exact amount of the award by the Chief Valuer and the Board of Assessment.

### **COASTAL REGIONS - STATE LAND – LEASE – JULY 2005 TO DECEMBER 2007**

**(No. B/1276) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the lease of State lands on the coastal regions since July 2005 to date, he will state if reservation letters have been issued to the prospective promoters, indicating in each case –

- (a) the names and addresses of the beneficiaries thereof, and
- (b) the extent of land to be leased.

**Mr Dulull:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has already started compiling the requested pieces of information, and I shall have it placed in the Library of the National Assembly as soon as the compilation and verification exercise has been completed.

**Mr Lauthan:** M. le président, malheureusement, le mot « Balaclava » a été enlevé de ma question. J'avais posé la question sur les *coastal regions* en général, mais en particulier Balaclava. Est-ce que le ministre a des informations pour la région de Balaclava?

**Mr Dulull:** I have no information as it does not mention specifically.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister does not have any information. Next question, hon. Lauthan!

## TAX COMPLIANCE AND TAX COLLECTION

(No. B/1277) **Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to tax compliance and tax collection, he will state if he is aware of cases of under statement, non filing of returns, fiscal evasion, acts of corruption and money laundering and, if so, if these cases have been referred to the competent authorities.

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is exactly because our tax compliance and tax collection has left much to be desired that we have instituted bold tax reforms. As a result, for the first time everyone is paying their fair share at a low rate. By making evaders and avoiders pay their fair share, tax relief has been extended to over 92 percent of taxpayers with half of those on PAYE now paying no tax at all.

As the hon. Member is no doubt aware, the Ministry of Finance receives numerous anonymous and non-anonymous letters from various quarters, part of which relate to tax matters. These are forwarded to the Mauritius Revenue Authority and to other competent authorities for investigation and necessary action.

Especially in view of the simplification of the tax regime and the removal of over 36,000 taxpayers from the tax rolls, the MRA is now well positioned to detect cases of under reporting, non-filing of returns, fiscal evasion and cases of money laundering which have tax implications.

Furthermore, I would also like to highlight that by consolidating the previous list of personal reliefs and deductions into a single enhanced exemption threshold, we have eliminated the possibility of aggressive tax planning by high income earners. By maximising use of tax breaks, a number of high income earners were previously legally able to pay less than 5 percent of their total income as tax. In contrast, others in much lower income groups typically used to pay around 10 percent. As the hon Member is aware, most of those who used to pay 10 percent of their income as tax are no longer paying any income tax.

The new measures were designed to reduce tax evasion and avoidance. To bring those who were not paying their fair share into the tax net has rested on -

- (i) the simplicity of the tax system, and
- (ii) information gathered from the NRPT and tax on interest income and other tax withholding measures.

I am informed that the MRA has carried out an audit and investigation exercise in financial year 2006-07 on 2,038 taxpayers for an assessment amount of Rs868 m. On the other hand, in respect of fiscal evasion, MRA has issued assessment on 52 cases for an amount of Rs137 m.

The House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will recognise that today we have a tax system which is fairer, simpler and more equitable. Tax compliance and tax collections are improving and we are implementing several programmes to deal with under statement of income, non filing of returns and fiscal evasion.

**Mr Lauthan:** M. le président, encore une fois, malheureusement, ma question a été diluée complètement car elle ne faisait pas allusion aux institutions telles que la MRA. Je voulais savoir du ministre, d'après la déclaration publique qu'il a faite, si, par rapport aux mesures budgétaires concernant la taxe, etc. *he has come across cases of people he would qualify as bandits, intellectual terrorists and money launderers.* C'était cela la question.

**Mr Sithanen :** I have said we received anonymous letters and we invariably sent these anonymous letters to people. The hon. Member is expecting me to reveal the name of people and I will never do that. I will always act as a responsible Minister and I'll continue to do that notwithstanding the pressure there is to do that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have to draw the attention of the hon. Member – and it is not the first time that this is happening here - that if even he feels that his question has been amended *à son insu*, representations should be made to Mr Speaker himself. It is the appropriate manner to do it and not in the House. Because we have got Monday as well to do it.

**Mr Lauthan:** With due respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, I talked to the Clerk. We agreed on a modified version, but not this one. It is far from the version we agreed upon.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Still, this is not a matter to be discussed here, even with me. This is a subject which has to be thrashed out privately with Mr Speaker. Next Question!

### ICTA – BOARD MEETINGS

**(No. B/1278) Mr N. Bodha (First Member for Vacoas and Floréal)** asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether, in regard to the Board of the Information Communications and Telecommunications Authority, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to the date of its last meeting.

**Mr Sinatambou:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that there is no such Authority by the name of Information, Communications and Telecommunications Authority. Instead, it is the Information and Communication Technologies and it is the Authority that operates under the aegis of my Ministry.

However, if the hon. Member is making reference to the ICT Authority, I am informed that the last meeting of the Board of the Authority was scheduled for Wednesday 28 November 2007, but was postponed to Saturday 01 December 2007.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether in the last six months, prior to this meeting which was scheduled on 28 November 2007, there was any other meeting scheduled?

**Mr Sinatambou:** The answer is in the affirmative, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can he give the date?

**Mr Sinatambou:** First of all, I am informed that the last meeting I referred to earlier was convened by way of a letter dated Friday 23 of November. In this respect, I wish to inform the House that any allegation to the effect that the last meeting of the Board was convened *en catastrophe*

after receiving notice of the hon. Member's question is not only false, but also unfounded. The other meeting was scheduled for 28 September 2007 but, however, had to be postponed, because it could not be held on account of a lack of quorum in terms of section 6 of the ICT Act of 2001. Furthermore, in the absence of other meetings, four circulatory resolutions have been passed on 29 June 2007, 28 September 2007, 11 October 2007 and 18 October 2007. That is the information I have.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there was a communication from the Prime Minister's Office requesting the Board not to meet?

**Mr Sinatambou:** The answer is in the affirmative.

**Mr Bodha:** May I ask the hon. Minister another question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? For the last two meetings which were scheduled, one was not held because of a lack of quorum and the last scheduled one was postponed. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there was a directive from the Prime Minister's Office that only commercial items could be on the agenda?

**Mr Sinatambou:** The answer is in the affirmative.

**Mr Bodha:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister agree that this is a major weakness for a country which has the ambition to become a cyber island when the regulator is not functioning as it should? I would like to know what the Minister thinks of this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, I have to reject this question because the hon. Member is asking for the hon. Minister's opinion.

I have to inform hon. Members that the Table has been advised that PQs Nos. B/1303 and B/1306 have been withdrawn.

**SIT – LAND OWNED**

**(No. B/1279) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the State Investment Trust, information as to the total area of land owned by the Trust.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Sugar Investment Trust that it currently owns a total area of 3,904 arpents.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Minister has given the figures for the total area of land owned by the Sugar Investment Trust. I take it at this point in time. Does he have the figure of the extent of land having been sold to small planters, employees of the Sugar Industry?

**Dr. Boolell:** I have the figure in respect of the acreage that has been sold. I take it for granted that most of the land has been sold to small planters. I can lay the information required on the Table of the Assembly.

**Mr Bundhoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister how much was paid by SIT when they bought the land?

**Dr. Boolell:** The SIT purchased the land from the Ilovo consortium at Rs125,000 per arpent, but then if we add the VRS cost pension liabilities, it comes to quite a hefty amount.

*(Interruptions)*

Yes, there was revenue that was forfeited by the State and the total cost would come to Rs1.44 billion. When you take on board the fact that the consortium purchased the asset from Ilovo at Rs1.7 billion, which means that SIT bore the cost almost entirely.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether the information he is going to be tabled is not only about the amount of land that the SIT sold, but also to how many small planters, labourers, artisans, members of SIT and what was the value of all that land sold?

**Dr. Boolell:** It is going to be tabled.

**CANE GROWERS ASSOCIATION – MEMBERS**

**(No. B/1280) Mr M. Allet (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the members of the Cane Growers Association, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Association, information as to –

- (a) the area of their respective plantations;
- (b) the number of labourers working for each of them, indicating –
  - (i) their terms and conditions of employment, and
  - (ii) if they are regrouped under any syndicate or other organization to defend their rights.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Cane Growers Association that it has a membership of 34 planters owing 4,250 hectares and employing 717 workers in total.

The information regarding the exact extent of land owned by each of the planters as well as the number of workers employed by each of them is being compiled by the Association and will be tabled in due time.

With regard to the terms and conditions of employment of the workers, I am advised by the Association that most of its members are applying the provisions of the Sugar Industry (Agricultural Workers) (Remuneration Order) Regulations 1983, with the exception of a few who are applying partly the package deal.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am informed that 60% of the workers are members of a recognized trade union.

**SUSPECTS - RIGHTS - SAFEGUARD**

**(No. B/1281) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice & Human Rights whether, in regard to the rights of suspects, he will state the additional measures that have been or will be taken for the safeguard thereof.

*(Withdrawn)*

**RAILWAY CAMP, MAHEBOURG - GOVERNMENT QUARTERS**

**(No. B/1282) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the occupiers of the Government quarters at Railway Camp, Le Quartier, Mahebourg, he will state if his Ministry had required them to vacate the premises and, if so, if this decision has been reviewed since.

*(Withdrawn)*

***SOCIETE JEUNESSE ET FRATERNITE MUSULMANE DE  
MAHEBOURG – PLOT OF LAND***

**(No. B/1283) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will state if he has received any request from the *Société Jeunesse et Fraternité Musulmane de Mahebourg* for the allocation of a plot of land in Beau Vallon, in the Constituency of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien to be used for religious purposes.

*(Withdrawn)*

## CANE CULTIVATION – STUDY

**(No. B/1284) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to cane cultivation in Mauritius, he will state if his Ministry has carried out an independent and comprehensive study to assess the impact the substantial reduction thereof will have on our climate and environment, in view of the fact that it has been recognized as being a major carbon sequestrator and/or absorber.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no such study has been undertaken by my Ministry.

However, the environmental impacts of the reduction of sugar cane cultivation as planned in the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy (MAAS) have been addressed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report (financed by EU). The report only mentions the dangers that would occur to environment if we are to do away with sugar completely. The report does not address the issue of greenhouse gas emissions.

I am advised that such a detailed study is not warranted at this stage in view of the fact that our climate system is influenced by the global greenhouse gas (GHC) emission. I am further advised that all SIDS taken together contribute only about 1% of the world total GHG emission.

The Kyoto Protocol also acknowledges that developing countries like Mauritius are not major emitters of GHGs and are not primarily responsible for global climate change, and consequently, developing States like Mauritius under the Kyoto Protocol do not have any binding emissions reduction targets. However, as a moral commitment to the Kyoto Protocol, my Ministry is fully engaged in promoting the reduction of greenhouse gases through the promotion of renewable energy (for example, solar, biofuel (ethanol), composting), three planting campaigns and energy efficiency through the promotion of use of energy efficiency bulbs.

**Mr Bérenger:** May we know from the hon. Minister who is going to be in Bali in a few days' time for the United Nations Convention of the Environment? I understand there is going to be a proposal that there be financial incentives for countries which have huge forests to keep their

forests. Therefore, can we know if anything is being thought about or worked upon as far as sugarcane fields are concerned?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this morning I had a conversation with the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry.

*(Interruptions)*

I am speaking about the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry who is participating in that Convention. Unfortunately, there is nothing as such on sugarcane fields. But, as far as afforestation is concerned, this is one of the items on the agenda.

**Mr Cuttaree:** Can the hon. Minister give some precisions regarding this carbon credit? Is he aware that countries which are taking steps to reduce emission of carbon dioxide are given carbon credit?

*(Interruptions)*

I want it to be said here, in the House, what is happening to our request for carbon credit?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, this is a very, very complicated issue in the development mechanism, and this is another issue which is being taken up out of the four main issues. This is one of the main issues that is being taken up at the Bali Conference. In fact, they are trying to simplify the system itself because, as it is now, it is too complicated. So far, no SIDS countries have been able to get anything out of it.

**UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE – BALI –  
DELEGATION**

**(No. B/1285) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether in regard to the United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Bali from 03 to 14 December 2007, he will state if the delegation will include technicians of his Ministry and, if not, why not.

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will be attending the Conference together with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, who is the national focal point of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNCCC). The invitation to attend the conference is for Ministers and high ranking Government officials.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given the important nature of this conference, doesn't the hon. Minister deem it fit to have technicians of his Ministry in the delegation as it is both technical and political?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, normally, at the initial level, officers of different Ministries have already participated. For example, from the Meteorological Division officers have attended meetings in Vienna, Valencia, Nairobi and other countries.

As far as this meeting is concerned, we have had only two invitations, which include the Minister and one top ranking officer who is responsible for UNCCC in the country.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether there has been or there will be any kind of coordination in relation, of course, to the conference in Bali, at the level of the Indian Ocean Commission, the Southern African Development Community or the African Union?

**Mr Bachoo:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, till now, I don't have any information on this issue. But normally, when we attend the conference, on the spot agreements are reached between different groups. For the time being, we have worked a meeting with the Aosis members. This has already been planned and I do hope that when we will be there...

*(Interruptions)*

As far as the Aosis is concerned, we have got a meeting, but for other organisations, up till now, I don't have much information.

**SUGAR REFORMS –  
SUGAR PRODUCTION & SUGAR CANE CULTIVATION**

**(No. B/1286) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the sugar reforms, he will state if a maximum production target for our sugar has been set and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the quantum thereof, and
- (b) whether cane cultivation will be restricted to the production of sugar and, if not –
  - (i) the acreage of land under cane cultivation which has already been abandoned or the shortage in the tonnage of cane produced, and
  - (ii) the policy to encourage maximum cane cultivation in order, *inter alia*, to protect the environment.

**Dr. Boolell:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, In the context of the sugar reform, the target set for sugar production is 520,000 metric tonnes by year 2015 to enable the industry to meet its commercial commitments *vis-à-vis* EU buyers.

In view of the challenges facing the industry in the light of the EU sugar reform resulting in the drastic cut of 36% in export price of sugar and the phasing out of the sugar protocol by October 2009, producing only sugar will not enable the industry to survive. This is why there is a shift from the sugar industry to sugarcane industry where the industry will have a multifunctional role. In this new configuration, sugarcane production will be centralised at the level of three factories which will be flexi-factories capable of producing raw sugar, refined white sugar, special sugars, ethanol from molasses and cane juice, more electricity from bagasse and industrial rum.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to information available at the Sugar Insurance Fund Board, acreage of land under sugarcane cultivation is on the decrease from 77,322 hectares in 2001 to 71,507 hectares in 2006. Likewise, cane production has decreased from 5.7 million tonnes in 2001 to 4.7 million tonnes in 2006.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the sugarcane industry has a relatively low environmental impact in comparison to other land uses, for example, in regard to relatively low agro-chemical inputs, soil conservation qualities and availability of cost-effective wastewater re-use and recycling technologies. It is, therefore, essential for the preservation of our environment that the sugar industry continues to exist and the maximum acreage is put under sugarcane cultivation. Sugarcane is known to be quite effective in the green scene of the air also contributing to the prevention of our lagoons.

However, in the context of the reforms, policies have been elaborated for two categories of land, *i.e.* land which will remain under cane and land which could no longer be under sugarcane.

Regarding land that will remain under cane, measures have been taken to encourage planters, particularly small planters, to regroup themselves under the Field Operations and Regrouping Project. This project enables them to benefit from a number of facilities and incentives that will allow them to be competitive and cost-effective. For difficult areas where increase in yield is not possible and which yet have to remain under cane cultivation for environmental reasons, it is envisaged to provide financial support to the planters concerned from funds under the accompanying measures.

With regard to land which will not remain under cane cultivation, estimated at some 5,000 hectares, alternative activities that are more profitable than sugarcane cultivation will be envisaged. Some potential areas for agricultural diversification purposes on these lands have been identified by the Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute which has classified these areas into three categories. Since these areas are ecologically sensitive areas, prone to degradation, the choice of alternative crops is a very crucial one.

Some potential crops identified by AREU as alternative to sugarcane are as follows -

Horticultural crops: pejibye, palm, aloe vera, vetiver grass

Fruits : pineapple, litchi, avocado, passion fruit, banana, mango, papaya, strawberry

Ornamentals : tropical exotic flowers and foliage.

**Mr Dayal:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been a constant reduction in the acreage of land under sugarcane plantation. Will the hon. Minister say to the House what are the mitigating measures that are being taken to address this environmental problem, being given the multi-functionality of sugarcane benefits derived from cultivation of sugarcane. The cane plantation lead to the protection and preservation of environment, soil conservation, minimum use of pesticides, discharge of a minimal pollution unlike textile, and also is a major carbon sequestrator and absorber, maintenance of a green landscape.

**Dr. Boolell:** I thank the hon. Member. This is *du déjà vu et entendu*, and rightly so. We constantly have to highlight the multifunctional dimension of the sugarcane industry.

As hon. Dayal has stated, it is the best carbon dioxide cleanser and if it were not for sugarcane we would all have to wear mask in this country. This is a fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Hence, the relevance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of keeping as much acreage of land under sugarcane cultivation.

*(Interruptions)*

Of course, we have brought amendments to the SIE Act to release land for other remunerative purposes, especially where land is squeezed between the two, IRS or hotel project, because the value of the land is constantly going up. This is the best asset that the planters have: the land. Having said so, it goes without saying that it is the crop which uses less agro-chemicals, especially in coastal areas where you have sugarcane; it prevents erosion and eutrophication of lagoon, hence the relevance of this multifunctional dimension. I grant the hon. Member other than we have to have a holistic

approach in respect of renewable sources of energy, sugarcane remains a forerunner in respect of protection of environment.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the Minister about the reform plan for the sugar industry? The Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy does tell us that we should be left with four sugar factories, but I heard the Minister say four and then he corrected himself and said three. Can I ask him whether what he has in mind is the fact that we should be very, very worried that, indeed, we will be left in the few years ahead of us with three. With the way things are going, especially as far as production of electricity from bagasse is concerned, I am very afraid that Médine might have to close down in the years ahead. Is that why he has referred to three and not four?

**Dr. Boolell:** Of course, we are not going to highlight the policy of Government which has been done over and over in respect of timing and sequencing of power plant coming on stream. Having said so, Médine is keen to go into property development. It will continue to produce energy from bagasse and coal, but in the years to come, we will end up with three subclusters: Belle Vue, Savannah SUDS and Fuel.

**Mr Bérenger:** Amongst other ways of making planters - big and small - stay on their sugar cane land, I would like to ask the Minister whether thought has been or is going to be given to - when they become shareholders in the new Energy Production Units and generally planters should become shareowners - devise a plan for planters to become shareowners and attract them to either stay or even increase their land under sugar cane.

**Dr. Boolell:** This is the policy of Government, to mitigate the reduction in the price of sugar. We constantly have to add value to the sector and see to it that there is a wide participatory approach and planters are forerunner in respect of this wide participation.

**LA FERME MARINE DE MAHEBOURG PROJECT – LEASE  
AGREEMENT, EIA LICENCE, ETC.**

**(No. B/1287) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether in regard to the *La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg* project, he will –

- (a) state the details of the lease agreement, indicating the extent of the lagoon leased to the promoter, and
- (b) state the conditions of the Environment Impact Assessment Licence and table copy thereof.

**Dr. Boolell:** With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the reply.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I ask the Minister to table copy of the lease between *La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg* and Government?

**Dr. Boolell:** I will table all the relevant information.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the lease agreement, I pointed out last time that the sea forms part *du domaine du public*. I just want to know from the hon. Minister how the part *du domaine du public* has been leased to a private company.

**Dr. Boolell:** I remind my hon. friend to refer to the details of the lease agreement which was agreed in September 2001 between Government and *La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg*. Until the new Aquatic Business Activities Bill will be introduced, we have to rely on provisions of the 1998 Fisheries and Marine Resources Bill and, of course, the new Bill which was passed in Parliament is yet to be proclaimed.

**Mr Bérenger:** As far as I can see, I believe *La Ferme Marine de Mahebourg* is doing a very good work, but I take it that the lease agreement includes all precautions to be taken for environmental protection and so on. This being the case, from what I hear. Can I know from the Minister who is doing the monitoring that the clauses of the lease are abided by? Is it Environment? Is it Agriculture? Who is doing the monitoring?

**Dr. Boolell:** It is an inter-institutional approach. It is both Ministries of Environment and Agro Industry and Fisheries.

**HORSE RACING BOARD – *POLICE DES JEUX* – AMOUNT PAID**

**(No. B/1288) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Horse Racing Board, information as to the amount of money it has paid to the *Police des Jeux* for the last three years, indicating the quantum thereof.

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Horse Racing Board has paid an amount of Rs956,471 to the *Police des Jeux* in the financial year 2004/05, Rs963,444 in 2005/6 and Rs838,518 in 2006/07.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just want to know from the hon. Minister what is the purpose of paying to the *Police des Jeux*?

**Mr Sithanen:** I don't know. I have to ask for it. The only information I have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the *Police des Jeux* consists of one officer in charge, one officer second in charge and 18 other Police officers. The allowance is payable monthly and the rate varies between Rs3,000 and Rs8,000 depending on the rank of the officer. I presume it must be on the same basis that used to exist in Customs where, depending on what they do, they get some reward.

## TEXTILE PRODUCTS – EXPORTATION

(No. B/1289) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether in regard to textile products, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if initiatives have been undertaken to export these products to the neighbouring countries, including South Africa and, if not, why not.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has spearheaded a number of export development initiatives to support export growth to the region. In November last year, I led a business delegation which included operators from the textile and clothing sector, to the International Apparel, Textile, Footwear and Machinery Trade Exhibition of South Africa held in Capetown. In 2006, Mauritius also organised an Inward Buying Mission of major buyers from South Africa. The organisation of the Mauritius for Africa Fair last year as well as this year attracted a large number of buyers from Africa, including South Africa.

These events generated interesting contacts with buyers and have contributed to boost exports of textile and clothing to South Africa. Thus, exports of textile and clothing which stood at Rs 0.4 billion in 2005, registered a significant increase of 155% in 2006 to reach Rs1.02 billion. This increasing trend has been maintained in 2007, as exports are estimated to have reached Rs650 m. during the first semester. And I would like to thank the hon. Member for asking this question.

A Regional Business Matching and Trade Show was organised this November 2007 in Madagascar with a strong focus on participation of our local garment enterprises. From 2005 to 2006, our exports to Madagascar rose by 25% from Rs1.2 billion to Rs1.5 billion. May I, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, draw the attention of the House that the EPZ sector is expected to achieve a record output of Rs43 billion in 2007, representing an increase of 16% over 2006. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at this trend, my Ministry is currently working out on a new target for next year and I suspect it is not going to be too far from Rs50 billion for 2007, but we are still working on the figures.

Enterprise Mauritius has a number of other regional trade development initiatives in the pipeline for next year which will have a strong focus on textiles and garments, namely –

- (i) an IOC Business to Business Meeting for the Mauritian SMEs in the first quarter of 2008;
- (ii) a Mauritian Week in South Africa in the second quarter of 2008, and
- (iii) a Mauritian International Textile and Apparel Trade Exhibition (MIATEX) which will be held in October 2008 which will have both an international and regional perspective.

And also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that next year, we'll be holding the World International Textile Manufacturers Federation Conference in Mauritius and Mauritius will truly be the centre of the world in terms of textile and clothing.

**Mr Dowarkasing:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, despite that we have witnessed a progress in our export, the hon. Minister would agree with me that whatever he said is very insignificant compared to the market possibilities in South Africa which is today being invaded by Chinese products.

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me give some figures to the hon. Member. The whole world market of textiles and clothing is worth US\$500 billion. Over the last five years, the hon. Member presided over the loss of 30,000 jobs - I think it is good to note that this is something of the past – and out of those, 70% were women. This year only, we have had investment to the tune of Rs5 billion in the textile and clothing sector. This is still the largest manufacturing sector, and we ought to give, at least, credit to this industry.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Table has been advised that PQ No. B/1291 has been withdrawn. Next question.

**MALBERBES, CUREPIPE – FOOTBALL GROUND**

**(No. B/1290) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands)** asked the Minister of Youth & Sports whether, in regard to the project for the construction of a football ground at Malherbes, Curepipe, he will state when works are likely –

- (a) to start, and
- (b) to be completed.

**Mr Tang Wah Hing:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping that the contract for completion of the outstanding works has been awarded to Messrs S. S. Ramburuth Building & Civil Construction Co. Ltd on 16 November 2007.

The site will be handed over shortly to the contractor after submission of the performance bond and the insurance policy by the latter. Works are expected to start in December this year, and completed by end of April next year.

**SC & HSC EXAMINATIONS – SUPERVISORS & ORGANISERS - SELECTION**

**(No. B/1291) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the supervisors, assistant supervisors, organisers and assistant organisers appointed to conduct the Cambridge School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate Examinations, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the MES, information as to the criteria used for their selection.

*(Withdrawn)*

## **SALE BY LEVY SOLIDARITY FUND – SETTING UP**

(No. B/1292) **Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development whether he will state if the Sale by Levy Solidarity Fund has already been set up and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Fund, information as to the amount of money that has been disbursed therefrom as at to date.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen):** Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the House would recall that, in my last Budget Speech, I announced the setting up of a Sale by Levy Solidarity Fund that will financially assist deserving families who have lost their only residence through Sale by Levy to acquire a house, and that only cases reported to the Police before 31 December 2006 will be eligible for consideration.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have made progress in implementing the measure.

A High Level Committee has been set up under the Chairmanship of the Financial Secretary, comprising, *inter alia*, representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity & Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions and the Attorney-General's Office to determine deserving cases.

Letters were issued on 31 July to the 96 victims who had provided a report to the Police, inviting them to call at the Social Security Office nearest to their locality by 10 August 2007 to provide for necessary information and documents, and fill in a self declaration form regarding family income and assets owned.

To ensure full coverage for all those eligible, a press communiqué was issued on 04 and 05 August 2007 inviting those who had not received their letters, but had reported their cases before 31 December 2006, to inform the Ministry of Finance by 10 August 2007.

In addition, we have consulted the association pressing for action in favour of sale by levy victims to verify if anyone who met the eligibility criteria had been left out.

The Ministry of Social Security, the Police Department and the Master & Registrar have been mobilised to verify information provided. Out of 112 reported cases, 98 have been identified and investigated into. As at date, investigation in respect of 25 cases has been completed, and a decision relating to their eligibility for assistance will be taken shortly by the Committee.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if I heard the Minister well, he said that the victims have to state the family income. Can I know why the family income needs to be taken into account?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of course, it is for deserving cases. It is in cases where they have only one house which they have lost. We all know what is the definition of 'deserving'.

**Mr Guinness:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am talking about deserving cases for the 'only residence'. I know that in the Budget Speech, the hon. Minister stated 'only residence'. But, if this is the case, why is the family income needed?

**Mr Sithanen:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they must be deserving. Somebody can have one house, but not deserving. *Cela depend! S'il touche R 20,000, R 30,000 par mois!*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Time is over!

## MOTION

### SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

**The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen) rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*