

Debate No. 06 of 10.04.07**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****STATE BANK OF MAURITIUS – CHAIRPERSON**

(No. B/86) Mr A. Ganoo (First 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 State Bank of Mauritius (Ltd), information as to whether there has been any change recently at the level of the Chairperson of its Board and, if so –

- (a) the reasons therefor, and
- (b) if the new incumbent has already assumed office.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. B/74)

MAURITIUS SUGAR AUTHORITY BOARD - REPRESENTATIVES

(No. B/87) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Board of the Mauritius Sugar Authority, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the name of its Chairperson and members, and
- (b) state if he proposes to appoint a representative of the sugar industry workers and a representative of small planters thereon.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, a reply will be circulated. (**Appendix No. II**).

The proposal made by the hon. Member may be considered. Section 7 of the Mauritius Sugar Authority Act provides for the setting up of an

Advisory Council and there are members belonging to the trade union and members of the planting community sitting on the Advisory Council.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I know that the workers are not represented on the Mauritius Sugar Authority Board. But since the sugar industry is undergoing major reforms, would the hon. Minister consider appointing of one representative of the sugar industry workers and one representative of small planters on the Board?

Dr. Boolell: The hon. Member should have paid heed to the reply I have given. I have stated that his proposal may be considered.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have one more supplementary question I would like to make a humble request to the Minister. There are very important issues concerning the Chairman who is going to be raised at Mauritius Sugar Authority Board. I think that the Chairman should not be judge and party at the same time. I am suggesting the name of Mr Kishore Deerpalsing.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is making a statement. Next Question!

SMALL PLANTERS – DEROCKING – CONTRIBUTIONS

(No. B/88) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will state if small planters who are regrouping themselves are required to pay any contribution for the derocking and preparation of their land and, if so, will he indicate the amount of such contributions and the method of collection thereof.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply will be circulated. (**Appendix III**).

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the derocking project, may I know if there is an Implementation Committee that oversees this project and, if so, who chairs that Committee, and what are the expenses as compared to the land population to derocking project?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a Project Implementation Committee and it is chaired by Dr. Deepchand. Concerning the average cost that has to be borne by planters – if this is what the hon. Member is asking – it varies from 7%, depending if it is coarse derocking that is going to be carried out; under the worst case scenario, if it is fine derocking, it may amount to Rs4,500 per arpent.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Agro Industry whether with regard to derocking and to other projects in this connection, incentives are provided to small planters.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a host of incentives which I can circulate unless my good friend wants me to read them out and, secondly, if my good friend comes with valuable suggestions, we will certainly take them on Board to see to it that more incentives are given to the planters.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know how the expenditure for derocking project is being scrutinised?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can understand the concern of my good friend, but I can give him the firm assurance that there are checks and balances and the account will be audited by the Director of Audit.

Mr Bundhoo: One last supplementary, Mr Speaker, Sir, May I know from the hon. Minister – I am not insisting - whether his Ministry is presently working on some incentives with regard to derocking project for small planters?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the project is already ongoing and, in fact, we have completed the first phase and we are honouring one of the commitments in respect of performance indicators established by the European Union.

Mr Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to regrouping, can the Minister confirm whether incentives will be given to small planters so as to make the regrouping exercise a success?

Dr. Boolell: The regrouping exercise, if anything, is already a success. We have already completed the first phase and we are honouring the commitment set by the EU in respect of performance indicators. As my good friend is reminding me, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think have been forward

looking right from the outset. A sum of Rs500 m. has been released precisely to enable Sugar Planters Mechanical Pool to acquire a fleet of equipment to prepare land for the planters. The objective, of course, is to bring down the cost of production to mitigate the loss due to the reduction of 36% and to boost productivity. In respect of land acreage, this, in itself, will increase by more than 2% to 3%.

Mr Soodhun: One supplementary question, Mr Speaker, Sir. May I know whether the hon. Minister inform the small planters in writing that all works would be free of charge?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, not to my knowledge, but I can assure my good friend that there are regular meetings between the planters and the Project Implementation Committee. In fact, in respect of exchange of information, this exercise is being done in a very professional manner.

CESS FUNDED INSTITUTIONS – STUDY

(No. B/89) **Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the cess funded institutions and their restructuring, he will state if a study has been carried out thereon, and if so, whether it has been completed, indicating if a copy of the report will be laid on the Table of the National Assembly.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply will be circulated. (**Appendix IV**).

300 ARPENTS SCHEME – BENEFICIARIES

(No. B/90) **Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the proposed allocation of 300 arpents of land, located in the south of the island, on lease to planters and prospective planters, he will give a list of the prospective beneficiaries thereof.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the reply will be circulated. (**Appendix V**).

NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS - EXPENSES

(No. B/91) **Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue)** asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to the celebrations organised in the context of the 39th Anniversary of the Independence and of the 15th Anniversary of the Republic of Mauritius, he will give a breakdown of expenses incurred by Government in connection therewith.

Mr Gowreesoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the breakdown of the expenses incurred by the different Ministries and departments is being compiled and will be tabled as soon as it is ready.

**TRUST FUND FOR SPECIALISED MEDICAL CARE – SURGEONS
& MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS – PRIVATE PRACTICE**

(No. B/92) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care, he will state if he is aware of the industrial relations problems existing thereat and of the decision of its Chairperson to prevent surgeons and medical practitioners employed thereat from practising in the private and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Trust Fund, information as to where matters stand.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the Board of the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care employs its own personnel, on such terms and conditions as the Board may determine in accordance with Section 8 of the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care Act of 1992.

I am also advised that according to the terms and conditions of contracts of medical and paramedical staff employed by the Trust Fund, private practice is not permitted. However, given the scarcity of specialist's staff in that area, the specialists continued to engage in private practice after their normal working hours as is the case for specialists employed in Government service who are allowed under certain conditions to do private practice under Section 6 of the Public Health Act.

I am aware that there was a feeling of frustration among specialists concerning the privilege of private practice. I had a meeting with the Chairperson and Executive Director of the Trust Fund on this matter. I am now informed that at its last Board meeting held on 04 April 2007, the Trust Fund has decided that specialists employed by the Cardiac Centre may be authorised to engage in private practice as their counterparts in the public service subject to terms and conditions as may be approved by the Board.

**CITE VALLIJEE GOVT. SCHOOL – PTA & PARENTS’
DEMONSTRATION**

(No. B/93) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Cité Vallijee Government School, he will state if he is aware of the problems which arose thereat, on Friday 23 March 2007, and, if so, will he state the reasons therefor.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed that on Friday 23 March 2007, a group of parents, among whom was the President of the PTA, staged a demonstration in front of the Cité Vallijee Government Primary School.

During the demonstration, the parents referred to a number of problems as follows -

infrastructure
access and security
overcrowded classrooms, and
performance.

Concerning infrastructure, the Head Teacher drew the attention of Zone 1 to the state of the toilets at the beginning of March 2007. The Maintenance Unit of Zone 1 removed the rendering on 28 March 2007. The intervention team of the Ministry of Local Government repaired the ceiling of the toilets after one week, as a temporary measure, pending the national survey of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure on the state of the infrastructural needs of all schools in the zones for necessary action in due course. The survey will be carried out around mid-May 2007.

As regards access and security, I understand that the wall surrounding the school has been repaired by a team of the Ministry of Local Government to reinforce existing security arrangements. In this respect, my Ministry has already issued a circular emphasizing upon the reinforcement of security measures at school, and a follow-up is made thereon with Heads of schools.

On the issue of overcrowded classrooms, I understand that the class size at Cité Vallijee Government Primary School is within the range of 25 to 35 pupils. However, in STD V, where the student population is 39, there was a group of around 12 students who were in need of special and individual attention. In view of the fact that there were both a spare classroom and a teacher available at Cité Vallijee Government Primary School, the Head Teacher, in consultation with the Zone Director, decided exceptionally to split that class into two.

Finally, on the question of performance, I am informed that the percentage pass at CPE has gone down from 36.2% in 2005 to 32.8 % in 2006, that is, a decrease of 3.4 %. There is a combination of factors that account for this decreasing trend. I understand that measures are being taken to redress the situation in terms of pedagogy, classroom management and parents' mediation.

Contrary to what has been alleged, School Development Unit meetings are usually held at the end of each month. One of the purposes of these meetings is to promote dialogue among the different partners involved in the educational process of the ZEP school. However, for this year, two meetings were held, one on Friday 26 January 2007 and one on Friday 23 March 2007. The meeting could not be held in February because of Cyclone Gamede. I understand from the Head Teacher that the parishioner of the locality, Father Mongelard, did not attend these meetings since the beginning of the year because of other commitments, while the President of the PTA did not turn up either.

I wish to assure the House, here, that my Ministry is closely monitoring the situation at the Cité Vallijee Government Primary School.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président, le ministre est-il au courant que le curé, notamment le Père Mongelard, qui participait à cette manifestation, a été brutalisé par des personnes manipulées par un gros bras d'une haute personnalité ?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am talking about school management, school administration matters. I am not aware that such an incident happened within the school premises.

CA/D06/P09/3

**INSTITUT SUPERIEUR DE TECHNOLOGIE/UNIVERSITY
OF LIMOGES – PROTOCOL AGREEMENT**

(No. B/94) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to *l'Institut Supérieur de Technologie* of Camp Le Vieux, he will state if it will be authorised to hold courses leading to a “*licence*” to be awarded by the University of Limoges, France.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the present circumstances, the answer is in the negative.

However, I would wish to inform the House of the following -

A Protocol Agreement was signed in September 1999 for a period of three years and renewed for a further period of three years in 2002 between the Technical School Management Trust Fund and the *‘Institut Universitaire de Technologie (IUT) du Limousin’*, which forms part of the University of Limoges for the running of a two-year Programme at the *‘Institut Supérieur de Technologie’* leading to a *‘Diplôme Universitaire Supérieur de Technologie’* (DUST), co-awarded by the University of Limoges and IST.

In the context of the new policy orientations in the technical and vocational sector, in line with the Government Programme 2005-2010, negotiations have started in September 2005 with representatives of *Institut Universitaire de Technologie du Limousin* and University of Limoges for the renewal of the Protocol following its expiry in September 2005.

In the meantime, my Ministry has received a correspondence from University of Limoges where in it is mentioned that, and I quote –

“L’ancrage universitaire des formations dispensées par l’IST de Rose Hill était un préalable à tout nouveau partenariat avec l’Université de Limoges”.

As a result, further negotiations were held with the French side.

As the House may be aware, IST does not have a university status in the current regulatory framework as defined in the TEC Act. A Technical

Committee was set up under the chairmanship of the Tertiary Education Commission, with representatives of the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology Mauritius and has recommended that linkages be established between UoM/UTM and the University of Limoges for the co-delivery of a '*Licence Professionnelle*'. Based on those recommendations, the current proposed Protocol worked out by my Ministry makes mention of a proposed collaboration between IST, University of Limoges and UoM/UTM for the co-delivery of a '*Licence Professionnelle*' to holders of the DUST wishing to pursue further studies leading to a degree. This would facilitate the renewal of the Protocol to satisfy the new requirement of the French side, as mentioned earlier.

I met His Excellency, the French Ambassador, on 23 March 2007, to present our proposals for a renewal of the Protocol along the lines spelt above. These have been transmitted to the University of Limoges and their response is awaited.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that *l'Université de Limoges* had informed that it was a '*préalable*'. Can I know a '*préalable*' to what? Did the University of Limoges suggest that this '*préalable*' should now develop into something else? What else?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, during my meetings I have stated that the idea is to upgrade the IST. I think that the people at Limoges want the IST to emerge as a university in the end. I have explained to them that we are not discarding this possibility but, in the present context, it is not possible. Legally, it is not possible. Administratively, there are other issues that have to be tackled. I have explained to them that we can link up the IST with the University of Mauritius or the UTM to facilitate the process. That's what we have suggested to Limoges.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister what has been the response of the University of Mauritius or the UTM to this proposal?

Mr Gokhool: As I have explained, there has been a technical committee and they have recommended that we should go for this. This is certainly going to facilitate things. I have met the students and explained to them that we want to maintain the link. There are a lot of benefits that students can derive. But, there is a process that we have to go through. The

students want me to speed up the matters and do it overnight. I cannot do that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister refers to a technical committee. Fair enough! But, the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology of Mauritius are independent entities with their Boards, and so on. Can I know from the Minister whether there has been any reaction to the proposals of that technical committee coming from the University of Mauritius or the UTM?

Mr Gokhool: This committee is under the chairmanship of the Chairman of the Tertiary Education Commission, under which these two universities fall. If an agreement is reached, I don't think there will be any problem. It is only a matter of receiving the reply from the French authorities, and then we will proceed with the agreement that has to be signed.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether Son Excellence, l'Ambassadeur de France, has been made aware of the urgency of the situation?

Mr Gokhool: Yes, certainly, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am following this matter personally, so that we expedite things.

Mr Cuttaree: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can confirm that the President of the University of Limoges is coming to Mauritius in the days to come, and whether this matter will be thrashed out by the time this gentleman leaves?

Mr Gokhool: If they give a positive answer, we can thrash out the matter even before they come, that is, we can start the process. Every time there are representatives from Limoges, I have made it a point to meet them.

Mr Cuttaree: My question was whether it is a fact that the *Président de l'université* himself is coming to Mauritius over the next weekend, and whether this matter is being taken up with him?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of the visit of the President, but if he comes, I am certainly going to find an opportunity to meet him.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

MAURITIUS/EUROPEAN UNION - FINANCIAL AGREEMENTS

(No. B/95) Mr J. Cuttaree (Second Member for Stanley and Rose Hill) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Financial Agreements between the European Union and the Republic of Mauritius on the accompanying measures for the reform of the sugar industry and in the wake of the reduction in the price of Mauritius Sugar Exports to the European Union, he will state the reasons for the delay in the signature thereof.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that a critical part of the aid programming exercise for disbursement of EU funds to Government relates to the conditions which the Government of Mauritius has to satisfy for the release of funds. This commitment has to be taken in respect of each of the annual disbursements expected under the European Community Accompanying Measures for sugar.

In regards to 2006, two amounts have been approved –

- €6.543m. under the Sugar Sector Support Programme and
- €4.557m. under the 9th EDF *reliquats*.

The conditions for the first fixed tranche, which is a one-off disbursement of €6.543m. are –

- (i) a sustainable macro-economic reform programme as assessed by the European Community in consultation with the IMF;

- (ii) satisfactory progress in public finance management, in particular, the enactment of the new Public Procurement Bill within financial year 2006-07, and
- (iii) definition of a coherent energy policy.

The Government is fairly comfortable with conditions, first, above since the macro-economic environment remains relatively sound as assessed by the IMF and there is a well-defined macro-economic policy framework in place. Subsequent disbursements after June 2007 will move from Sectoral to General Budget Support.

As far as the second condition is concerned, the Procurement Act was passed in the National Assembly on 12 December 2006. The law will be proclaimed shortly.

With regards to the third condition, the definition of a Coherent Energy Policy, the EU has proposed to work together with the Mauritius side in preparing the required submission. This was done and Cabinet approved the Policy on Friday 06 April 2007 and this has been despatched today by the Financial Secretary to the Commission.

The various milestones for the disbursements are as follows –

- The European Commission Delegation has received the document from us this morning so that it can in turn seek the approval of its principals at the Commission in Brussels, before authorising the signing of the Financing Agreement for the first fixed tranche of €6,543m. by the Government.
- The European Community Delegation has also requested that the signing of this Financing Agreement is scheduled to coincide with the approval of the Financing Agreement for the variable tranche of €4.557m. The submission on the energy policy will, therefore, effectively unlock €1.1m., i.e. Rs490 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the House that in mid 2005, we could only expect 15% of €15m. i.e. some €38m. Thanks to the intensive lobbying, especially conducted by the hon. Prime Minister, we will now receive 19.4% of €244m., that is, €48m. This represents an additional

amount of €110m. equivalent to some Rs5 billion. The total amount to be disbursed under accompanying measures, the 9th and 10th EDF, will amount to €301m.

Mr Cuttaree: The financial agreement was to be signed in December last year. What happened when we found out that this does not happen?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, as long as we are meeting the scheduled date, we have no problem. We had to make sure that we had a coherent energy policy and the views of all stakeholders were taken on board. We are going to submit it, we have done it today and we are well within the scheduled date.

Mr Cuttaree: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, in the discussion with the Commission on the accompanying measures, the submission of the Multi-Annual Adaptation Strategy Action Plan to the European Union was a pre-condition for the agreement of the Commission to support us?

Dr. Boolell: As my hon. good friend is surely aware, the Action Plan has been acclaimed by the Commission and the member States. There have been proposals which have been looked into, but in respect of modalities, Government has, rightly so, reviewed some of the proposals.

Mr Cuttaree: I understand that the hon. Minister is talking about modalities, but in terms of the policy decisions as set out in that Plan, Government is sticking to these proposals.

Dr. Boolell: Yes, in respect of all the broad policies, Government is, indeed, doing so.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he will tell us how does the proposal of setting up the 100 megawatts coal electricity plant near Pointe-aux-Sables fit into the proposal which has just been submitted to the Commission?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I know, we have no problem, because we are looking at timing and sequencing of all projects. We are going to optimise the use of bagasse and in respect of renewable energy, Mauritius is the world leader in renewable energy. It is true that this project is a core one. We are going to use pulverised coal which, in itself, does not

go against the spirit or letter of what EU wants us to do. Besides, EU is conducting a strategic environment impact assessment.

Mr Bérenger: Can the hon. Minister confirm that it is Government's policy to maximise the use of bagasse for electricity production? Is the hon. Minister aware that the Central Electricity Board, on behalf of Government, is putting pressure for a fast track treatment of this project of a 110 megawatts which represents nearly one third of our total peak production?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I know, there is no pressure being exercised. Of course, in respect of the IPP concerning the sugar industries, discussions are ongoing. In respect of Savannah, a Letter of Intent has been issued and as to the other independent power producers, especially the sugar industry, the needful is being done. But as I have stated, we have to make sure also that they sort out some of the internal problems.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has referred to three conditions set by the European Union through the European Commission. But, at the same time, he has said that Government goes along with what is contained in the Multi-Annual Adaptation Strategy Action Plan. Can I ask the hon. Minister, apart from these three conditions, are there others, for example, the price of sugar on the local market or labour laws in the sugar industry?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, in respect of labour law, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Labour, is coming with a new legislation to ensure that we constantly protect the interests of the workers. As to the price of sugar on the local market, this is an issue that has been discussed, but there is no imperative need to see to it that there is liberalisation of price of sugar on the local market. However, I am receptive to see to it that industrial users can no longer be subsidised as it used to be.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Sir, we understand that the Minister has just submitted the national coherent energy policy to Brussels. Has any approximate date been set for the signature of the agreement or should all the other conditions be fulfilled before a date is set for signature?

Dr. Boolell: Sir, in respect of the accompanying measures concerning the 6.543 million euros, we have met all the conditions. Of course, we are waiting for the European Commission to respond to the document that we

have submitted and since we work very closely with the delegation of the European Community in Mauritius, I do not expect any problem, and I hope that the financing agreement will be done within two weeks.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister mentioned the National Energy Policy Document, can I know from the hon. Minister whether this document is going to be circulated.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, certainly, the needful will be done. We are receptive to it, but if my good friend is willing to exchange certain information in respect of this document, we'll do the utmost, provided the time is appropriate.

Mr Bérenger: Sir, we've been talking about the signature of this or that agreement. Can I ask the Minister what takes place between signature and disbursement? Are there conditions within conditions that have to be met between signature and disbursement of the funds?

Dr. Boolell: I grant hon. Bérenger is right. But once we are fulfilling all the pre-conditions and the set conditions, disbursement will not be a problem.

Mr Ganoo: Let us come back to this energy policy document, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister confirm that in the report, distinction has been made in terms of bagasse coal plants and solely coal-fired plants? The recommendation has been made to prefer 'dedicated coal plant' instead of bagasse coal plants?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not right. We spelt out that we are going to create space for all players to come in, but the interest of independent power producers in respect of those who produce energy from bagasse will be taken on board. The discussions are ongoing with the Central Electricity Board and Savannah has been issued with its Letter of Intent and they are going ahead with the projects. As I have stated, in respect of FUEL, we expect that they are going to sort out some of their problems and I know discussions have started. I can assure my friend that the objective is renewable energy and to see to it that we optimise energy from bagasse.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can we know whether, in fact, he has to await disbursement of funds before granting any compensation to employees of St Félix?

Dr. Boolell: In fact, there is a bridging loan. I am glad that the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association has expressed willingness to start negotiations and all these sensitive issues will be taken on board.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the accompanying measures and the Multi-Annual Strategic Action Plan, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there is any commitment from Government to finance up to 75% of the VRS to social component and 70% of the ERS component?

Mr Speaker: Which document is the Leader of the Opposition referring to?

Mr Bodha: The Multi-Annual Strategic Action Plan which was referred to in the question.

Dr. Boolell: There is commitment in respect of equity participation by planters, if we refer to paragraph 137. However, we'll cross the bridge when we all sit around the table and discuss all those relevant issues, notwithstanding the fact that we have to ensure wide participation of all the stakeholders.

Mrs Perrier: Let me come back, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the coal energy project. The Minister just said that there is a full EIA which is on preparation. I would like to know who is financing it and who is conducting this expertise?

Dr. Boolell: I have stated that the European Commission is conducting a strategic environmental impact study.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister will recall that in the last Sugar Industry Efficiency Bill which was discussed, the whole concept of the cluster had disappeared whereas this is a basic part of this annual plan. Can I know from the hon. Minister what is the position regarding the sugar

cluster and the role which ethanol production is going to play in that and whether the provisions in this plan are still being adhered to?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the cluster is there because the bottom line remains competitiveness and we have to do our endeavour to bring down the cost of production, notwithstanding the fact that we have to create opportunities for all the stakeholders to participate into this well-meaning national endeavour.

BAMBOUS (GEOFFROY) PRIMARY SCHOOL (SECOND PHASE) - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/96) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Bambous (Geoffroy) Primary School, he will state when will the construction of its second phase start.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member may wish to be informed that in Bambous, there were two primary schools at the beginning of 2004, namely Bambous A Government School and New Bambous G.S. Over time, these two schools had become overcrowded such that the population in most classes was over 40 pupils. The then Government decided to have a third school constructed in the region, namely Bambous (Geoffroy) G.S.

Phase I works, comprising the construction of one classroom block and a toilet block were begun at Bambous (Geoffroy) in December 2004 and completed in August 2005. Thus, pupils could be accommodated in Standards I and II in the new building in January 2006. In 2007, pupils of Standards II and III were accommodated there and those of Standard I have been temporarily accommodated in Bambous A and New Bambous G.S.

With regard to the Phase II works, the construction of a second six-classroom block at the school, tenders were launched by the Central Tender Board on 23 March 2007, with closing date fixed for 02 May 2007. Along that schedule, the works are expected to start around mid-June 2007 and completed by the end of November 2007.

BEL OMBRE – HOTELS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/97) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether, in regard to the construction of the new hotels at Bel Ombre, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if an amount of Rs25 m in respect of each hotel has been remitted to the Tourism Fund for social projects and, if so, when.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X.L Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, all the contributions payable by the promoters who have been allocated hotel sites where State lands are involved under the Bel Ombre Integrated Hotel and Leisure Development Project, have already been remitted to the Tourism Fund.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am circulating the details of the exact amount paid by each promoter. **(Appendix VI).**

The House may wish to note that it is now the practice for promoters to pay the full amount of their contribution to the Tourism Fund upon signature of the lease.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the Minister say why, up to now, no discussion whatsoever has been held between those responsible to manage the Fund and members of the Village Council of the locality with respect to the social projects that have to be carried out in the locality?

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of this. The question related to the contributions and I replied to that.

Mr Dowarkasing: Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister what are the social projects that have been identified at Bel Ombre where this money will be used?

Mr X.L. Duval: Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, the question related to the financial contribution and I replied to it.

MGI – SOLFERINO – ROADS

(No. B/98) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, in regard to the Mahatma Gandhi Secondary School of Solferino, he will state if it is proposed to construct a public road/access within its compound and, if so –

- (a) when and by whom its location was decided;
- (b) if an evaluation of its potential dangers to students was carried out and, if so
 - (i) by whom;
 - (ii) if any report has been submitted, indicating if a copy thereof will be tabled;
- (c) the estimated cost in terms of additional walls, flyover or underpass and maintenance thereof, and
- (d) if he will consider diverting that road/access.

The Minister of Environment & National Development Unit (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to this question.

It is not proposed to construct any public road within the compound of Mahatma Gandhi SSS of Solferino. I wish to inform the House that roads existed on three sides of the plot of land identified for the school. I would like to draw the attention of the House that for the construction of a full-fledged State Secondary School, five acres of land are required. However, in this case, only four acres of land were made available in three lots.

All buildings components of the school complex are designed on these four acres. In order to accommodate play areas, parking facilities and a future swimming pool, another plot of about four acres has been acquired on the other side of one of the existing roads.

To address the issue of security and safety, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit advised the construction of an overhead bridge to provide safe access to students from one side to the other without exposing themselves to crossing the road.

Other mitigating measures recommended by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit include the construction of humps, posting of speed limit signs and appropriate marking of the road.

In view of the fact that the detailed design of additional walls and footbridge has not been completed, the estimate cannot be provided at this stage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am laying a copy of the approved Master Plan of the school dated December 2004 on the Table of the Assembly.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request the hon. Minister to make sure that all necessary precautionary measures be taken to the satisfaction of all the stakeholders – the Rector, the parents and the Student Council?

Mr Bachoo: I have mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, that all these measures have already been included in the plan.

RECTORS & DEPUTY RECTORS – TRANSFERS

(No. B/99) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to Rectors and Deputy Rectors, he will state the policy in regard to their transfers, indicating if he is aware that certain transfers are often cancelled at the last moment and, if so, will he give the reasons therefor?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the house that there is a well-defined policy regarding the transfer of Rectors/Deputy Rectors in my Ministry. That policy is a set of approved guidelines for informed decision making and for consistency. I am tabling a copy of the established set of criteria guiding this policy.

Procedures for transfer are normally initiated in March and effective during second week of Easter holidays. In exceptional cases, *ad hoc* transfers may be effected during the academic year. This has to be fully substantiated and approved by the Supervising Officer of my Ministry. Since I took office as Minister of Education & Human Resources, the transfer of Rectors/Deputy Rectors was cancelled only once due to the fact that 10

Rectors/Deputy Rectors were appointed as Administrators, 5 of whom were due to be transferred. Action was accordingly stayed on the transfer exercise and necessitated my Ministry carrying out a fresh exercise.

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister confirm whether the transfer exercise is done by a panel or by any particular individual at the Ministry?

Mr Gokhool: We have a transfer committee at the Ministry which looks at all cases of transfer. These are normally sent from the zones and the transfer committee finalises the recommendations.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just stated that since he assumed office, there has been only on one occasion cancellation of transfers. Could he inform the House on which date exactly the cancellation occurred?

Mr Gokhool: I would not have the exact date because this was a decision which was communicated to us by PSC - the nomination of administrators - and then we had to redo the exercise and take care of those who were appointed administrators. But I don't have the date, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will table letter which is entitled 'Change in Posting' whereby a Deputy Rector was transferred to Bell Village SSS and the transfer exercise was cancelled at the last minute. The letter is dated 08 May 2006. The hon. Minister stated earlier on that the transfer exercise was done in March and after the Easter Holidays, but this letter is dated May 2006. Following that, will he accept that a transfer exercise that is cancelled at the last minute and another one made instead is perceived as victimisation in respect of one and favoritism in respect of another?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I anticipated this question from the hon. Member. In fact, the case that the hon. Member is referring to has nothing to do with the transfer of Rector or Deputy Rector. The case being referred to concerns a temporary Deputy Rector. So, the case is different. Secondly, in my reply, I have just mentioned in paragraph 2 - 'in exceptional cases, *ad hoc* transfers may be effected during the academic year'. Apart from the annual exercise, there may be a few cases for ill health, for various other reasons and we have to address that issue. The last thing I would like to say is that we should not generalise on the basis of one

particular case. We deal with 69 colleges where Rectors, Deputy Rectors and temporary Rectors are posted. I'll request my hon. friend not to generalise on the basis of one particular case, because these cases do occur, and we take them into account.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister seems to be aware of the case I am referring to. Can he explain to the House why this happened?

Mr Gokhool: As I have said, I am tabling the criteria. The criteria mention that the cases can be examined with respect to health problems, age factor, difficulty in managing the school itself and other administrative reasons. If the hon. Member wants a reason, I think the person concerned could have written to the Ministry and sought an explanation. My office would have given the explanation to that person.

Mr Varma: Can I inform the Minister that the person concerned does not fall under any of the criteria he mentioned and the person concerned contacted his Ministry and met his advisers on a number of occasions? Is he aware of that?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we can have a lot of contacts. A lot of people phone about making representations, but if the person concerned believes that there is a genuine grievance, the person should put in a formal letter which will be considered and a reply will be given with the explanations. Lastly, I think that if officers feel that they are aggrieved, a reply is given and they are not satisfied, they can also seek legal redress.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House whether the reasons for the cancellation of the transfer was given to the officer concerned?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said, if people contact us, we can talk about the issues, but if a formal letter is written to the Ministry, I will make sure that the reason is given.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been a cancellation of a transfer. Was the officer concerned informed about the reasons for the cancellation of the transfer?

Mr Gokhool: Well, as I explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, the criteria are known and I believe any officer should take cognisance of the criteria. Once

the person feels there is a point to enquire further, the person may ask for the explanation and the reason will be given.

Mr Varma: The hon. Minister has made a difference between Rectors and Deputy Rectors in a substantive capacity and temporary Rectors and Deputy Rectors. He has mentioned guidelines. Are there different guidelines for temporary Rectors and Deputy Rectors as well as for substantive Rectors and Deputy Rectors?

Mr Gokhool: The guidelines which are established are for Deputy Rectors and Rectors, but temporary Rectors are taken care of whenever there are requests made for transfers. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the system. A person who is appointed Deputy Rector is employed on a temporary basis for six months and, therefore, is assigned duty whenever there is a vacancy which arises and we have to make the transfer.

Mr Speaker: I think the hon. Member has made out his case. Next question!

CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS – SCRIPTS – MARKED LOCALLY

(No. B/100) **Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the scripts for the subjects of the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations which are marked locally he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, information as to –

- (a) the list of subjects involved, and
- (b) the cost involved, indicating its method of computation.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by MES that –

- (a) 16 out of 46 subjects are marked locally at School Certificate level. For the Higher School Certificate, all the 53 subjects are examined and marked by Cambridge. Only the course work component for subjects such as Computing, Design & Technology, and Food Studies are marked in Mauritius. The list of subjects marked locally at School Certificate level is being tabled.

(b) the sum for marking of scripts amounted to MUR 7,208,663.67 last year and includes fees paid to examiners, markers, and other support staff at approved rates. It is to be noted that there is no uniform cost structure and the cost of marking varies from subject to subject.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, how will the hon. Minister compare the costs of marking locally with that done in Cambridge?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are a number of factors that we have to take into account in arriving at the costs for marking a particular paper and they are not uniform.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister explain how the computation is made for a student who takes seven subjects, four of which are marked locally and three are marked at Cambridge, with that of a candidate whose seven papers are marked at Cambridge?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, when we compute the costs, we have to take into account a number of factors. For example, the local context and specificities, the Mauritius only paper or is it on international paper, the availability of logistics and human resources and the number of candidates involved. The MES takes all those factors into consideration to arrive at the cost structure. It is not easy for me to give the figures at this point, but if a case is given to me, I'll ask the MES to compute the figures.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether it costs less to mark a paper locally than to mark a paper at Cambridge?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, that will depend, if it is an international paper which is being marked locally, it may happen that the cost is lower. But if it is a paper which has got a local content and has local input and logistics have to be deployed for the marking of the paper, that paper may cost more than the international paper.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, how can the hon. Minister reconcile the fact that all students pay more or less the same fees for the SC examination?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we correct a number of papers locally, the cost structure is worked out and an amount is arrived

at. Therefore, the papers which are marked locally have got a fee as well as the papers which are marked externally. The two are taken together and the total cost is arrived at.

Mr Varma: I have a last supplementary, Mr Speaker, Sir. Is the hon. Minister planning to review this whole procedure whereby some students will be made to pay less for the SC examination?

Mr Gokhool: This is a complex issue, Mr Speaker, Sir. The MES is studying the issue and will come with recommendations.

MAHEBOURG/PLAINE MAGNIEN CONSTITUENCY - UNEMPLOYMENT

(No. B/101) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he is aware of the unemployment situation in the constituency of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien and, if so, will he state the –

- (a) number of male and female;
 - (i) unemployed who are registered with his Ministry;
 - (ii) who have been employed since July 2005 to date, and
- (b) the institutions/organisations where they have been employed.

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am well aware of the unemployment situation in the constituency of Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien.

I, however, wish to inform the House that my Ministry registers jobseekers through its 13 Employment Information Centers which are spread over the whole island. Such Employment Information Centers delimitate specific regions or localities and, therefore, each one of them does not cater for one constituency only, but for more than one.

As regards jobseekers residing in Constituency No. 12, that is, Mahebourg/Plaine Magnien, they are required to register either at the EIC of Mahebourg or that of Rose Belle depending on their place of residence.

Indeed jobseekers who reside in Constituency No. 12 are covered by these two EICs which do also cater for other constituencies, essentially No. 11. I am mentioning this because the question has been put for one constituency and the collection of data is on the basis of EIC.

As regards part (a) (i) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, as at 28 February 2007, a total of 1,296 unemployed jobseekers comprising 539 males and 757 females, residing in the constituency of Mahebourg/Plaine Magnien were registered with the employment service of my Ministry.

As far as question number (a) (ii), is concerned, since July 2005 to date, 69 males and 141 females have been placed in employment.

These figures must, however, take into consideration the fact that not all unemployed jobseekers do notify my Ministry when they find employment. The figures could be higher.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is awaiting the result of selection in respect of 107 jobseekers who have been referred to employers for placement during the same period.

Insofar as part (b) of the question is concerned, since July 2005 to date, jobseekers residing in the constituency of Mahebourg/Plaine Magnien have been placed for employment in 39 different organisations/institutions. The list is being compiled for circulation and I hope it will be ready by next week.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm that the unemployment problem in Constituency no. 12 is partly because five factories have closed down over the past few years in the constituency?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is a fact, Mr Speaker, Sir. I wish to point out to the House that these factories have closed down between 2000 and 2005 when this Government was not in power.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to Parliamentary Question B/16, the hon. Minister stated that out of the 1947 workers laid-off by the closure of five factories in their constituency, 1445 should, in principle, have been unemployed. Could he inform the House how many of these have been redeployed since?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I need notice of this particular question because it does not relate to the substantive question. But I wish to further point out to the House, and the hon. Member is aware of it, that one of the MEDIA estate that was closed between 2000 and 2005 has been reopened.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister, again, in reply to Parliamentary Question B/16 on 09 August 2005, stated that there is much room for improvement in the practices undertaken to facilitate the redeployment of workers in Constituency No. 12. He also stated that he was proposing to review these practices to ensure that every possible measure is being taken for maximum redeployment of laid-off workers. Can he now, Mr Speaker, Sir, inform the House, after 20 months he made that statement, in Parliament, what practices have been reviewed or improved?

Dr. Bunwaree: First of all, I would wish to inform the hon. Member of the good result that has taken place since August 2005 concerning registered jobseekers. I am the Minister for the whole country, of course, and, it is not only for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien that I have to look into. I have to give the same treatment to all the EICs. As at August 2005, the number of jobseekers registered in the 13 EICs was 50,551. The computation is made every four months, the next one will be done at the end of April next. I am giving the last one as at December 2006. From 50,551 in August 2005, we have come down to 36,086. To reply to the hon. Member's question, I wish to say that the measures that have been taken are: redynamisation of all the EICs; the officers working there are more active and proactive in the placement. All the EICs are computerised and in the days to come we will inaugurate the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) which will operate on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week, for jobseekers to be able to register themselves online and for job offers to be posted on the website. With the electronic exchange that is going to accompany the system, we will provide facilities for matching between offers and demands. All this is coming before the end of the month of June.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister also stated that there was a committee working on the steps to be undertaken to redeploy laid-off workers. Could he inform the House when the committee was set up and the composition of that committee?

Dr. Bunwaree: If a proper question is put, I can give the exact date. The committee is ongoing. If we follow what is happening in the country, we will realise that the problem was there before 2005 - laying-off of workers was then the talk of the town. Now, each time workers are laid off, as in the case of Desbro presently, people are not crying on the streets; they come to the Ministry, and the needful is done.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the Minister inform the House what procedure is normally adopted to communicate with a person who has obtained a job?

Dr. Bunwaree: It is not our job. It is the job of the jobseeker who has got a job to communicate it to us so that we can remove him from the list. In my reply I said that, in some cases, this information is not given to us, because they wait for a while, and this can give rise to some difficulties in interpreting the figures. But we try to find out through the NPS or through other system if they have got a job and then they are removed from the list.

Mr Varma: One supplementary question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I think the issue has been fully debated.

L'ASSURANCE ROAD, DAGOTIERE - RESURFACING

(No. B/102) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if it is proposed to resurface the l'Assurance Road from the newly constructed bridge up to Shivala Road, Dagotière and, if so, when and, if not why not.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the resurfacing of L'Assurance Road will start soon.

MOUNT ORY – LANDSLIDE

(No. B/103) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he is aware that there is a problem of landslide at Mount Ory, near Pont Souillac, and, if so, will he state if it is proposed to construct a retaining wall thereat.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is fully aware of the problem.

However, due to unavailability of funds, the project could not be implemented. Once funds are identified, the project would be implemented.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the imminent danger that the situation is creating up to the point that part of the footpath and the road are already severely damaged and will it take it as a matter of urgency to remedy the situation as the dwelling of some of the inhabitants are under threat?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are fully conscious of the problem. I'll convey this to the substantive Minister and I do hope that in the forthcoming budget provisions will be made for that.

VALETTA – FOOTPATH – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/104) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if it is proposed to construct a footpath along the main road at Valetta, from the vicinity of Viswanath Mandir to the Achanah Snack, and, if so, when and, if not, why not.

The Minister of Environment and National Development Unit (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall answer this question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, footpaths on a total length of about 500m. have already been provided. It is proposed to extend the footpath up to the end of the village on a length of 300m. It will be done in the forthcoming budget.

MTPA – BUDGET

(No. B/105) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will state if the decision to reduce the budget of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority will have a negative impact on the tourism sector and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQs B/105 and PQ B/115 together since both questions relate to the same subject.

As Members of this House are aware, the decision of Government to reallocate/reduce the approved budget of MTPA for the purpose of subsidizing the SC and the HSC examinations fees was accompanied by an appeal made by Government to the hotel and banking sectors to compensate for that reduction by contributing to the budget of MTPA, as a gesture of solidarity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been made to understand from my colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, that his Ministry is having consultations with representatives of the hotel and banking sectors on the matter, and that these sectors have reacted positively to the appeal.

Therefore, as no reduction in the overall financial resources of the MTPA is presently envisaged, the question does not arise.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has just said that he has been informed by his hon. colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, that consultations have taken place with the operators of the hotel industry and the like. May I ask the hon. Minister if he forms part of those consultations since he says he has been informed and, if he does not form part of these consultations, why not?

Mr Duval: It is the role of the Ministry of Finance to collect funds and it is the Ministry of Finance which is handling the negotiations with both sectors.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister one question? Has he been informed ..

Mr Speaker: He has said so, he has been informed.

Mr Dowarkasing: ... by a letter formally of this decision not to remove this fund?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously, the Ministry of Finance does not have the money yet, but it is looking very positive.

PLASTIC BAGS – TAX COLLECTED

(No. B/106) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether he will state the amount of money collected in terms of tax on plastic bags as at to date, indicating the use to which the money has been put.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply tot his question.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority that an amount of Rs8.3 m. has been collected in terms of tax on plastic bags for the period 01 July 2006 to 31 March 2007.

As it is the case with all other taxes, the amount collected has been credited to the Consolidated Fund to meet normal government expenditure.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the Ag. Minister of Finance whether that money was not earmarked for environmental projects?

Dr. Bunwaree: It goes to the Consolidated Fund.

DUBREUIL – WATER SUPPLY

(No. B/107) **Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he is aware that the inhabitants of the village of Dubreuil are facing acute problems of water supply and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CWA that the village of Dubreuil is provided with water from Piton du Milieu reservoir on a 24-hour basis. Some 600 families living in the village are supplied from a network comprising mainly cement/galvanised iron pipelines which are very old and prone to frequent bursts. In fact, some 16 bursts have been reported since January 2007.

On 28 March 2007, 20 families, residing along Princess Alexandra road, were deprived of water supply due to a burst of a pipeline along the said road.

The problem was attended to on the same day and the following steps were taken by the CWA –

- (i) water tanker service was made available to the 20 families;
- (ii) 100 metres of the existing pipeline were replaced as a temporary measure, and
- (iii) transfer of the water supply of the 20 families to the new pipeline.

As a long term solution, the CWA is envisaging the replacement of the existing internal reticulation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have, therefore, directed the CWA to attend to the problem with due diligence and complete the project as expeditiously as possible.

**CLUB MEDITERRANEE PROJECT – ALBION
– CONTRIBUTION TO TOURISM FUND**

(No. B/108) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the Club Méditerranée Project at Albion, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the promoters have made any contribution to the Tourism Fund for social projects and, if so, indicating –

- (a) the amount thereof, and
- (b) the use to which the money has been put.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that the promoters of the Club Méditerranée hotel at Albion have paid Rs25 m. to the Tourism Fund on 30 November 2005.

Concerning part (b) of the question, I am informed that funds have been earmarked for the rehabilitation of the Albion Public Beach as well as for the provision of various amenities on the beach.

However, the project has not yet been implemented since the Concept Plan submitted initially by the promoters had to be amended as it made provision for the development of undeclared public beach and plots of land which have already been vested with the National Coast Guard and the Mauritius Institute of Oceanography.

Following several meetings and site visits with the representatives of various Ministries and Departments, Albion Village Council and other '*force vives*' of the region, consensus has been reached to work out a new plan for the rehabilitation of the actual public beach and for the provision of the following facilities: changing rooms, toilet block, open showers, food court, fire place, bollards, lighting facilities, signage, among others.

Moreover, the Tourism Fund will also finance the construction of a fish landing station at Albion. This project will be implemented by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries.

**MAURITIUS/IVORY COAST FOOTBALL MATCH –
COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS**

(No. B/109) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the football match between the team of Mauritius and that of the Ivory Coast, held on 21 March 2007 at the Anjalay Stadium, he will –

- (a) state the number of complimentary tickets obtained by his Ministry, and
- (b) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Football Association, information as to –
 - (i) if any complaints have been made by the players for lack of facilities and, if so, the nature thereof, and
 - (ii) the facilities put at the disposal of members of the press to cover the event.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Football Association provided my Ministry with 250 complimentary tickets for the football match Mauritius National Team against the Ivory Coast Team held on 21 March 2007 at Anjalay Stadium.

These tickets were distributed among staff of my Ministry and to all those who collaborated with my Ministry for arrangements for the event.

In fact, it is a normal practice, as in the past, for the Mauritius Football Association to provide a number of complimentary tickets to my Ministry for major international football matches.

I would like to inform the House that my Ministry has played a key role in providing all the necessary logistic facilities to the Mauritius Football Association for the organisation of the match. The event was a resounding success in terms of spectators' attendance and the popular interest it had aroused as a result of the presence of football stars such as Dider Drogba and Kalou.

This friendly match was a good preparation for our National Football Team in view of the forthcoming Indian Ocean Islands Games scheduled in Madagascar in August 2007. I would like to point out that my Ministry is closely monitoring the preparation of our national selection.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Mauritius Football Association that it did not receive any official complaint from players for lack of facilities.

As regards facilities put at the disposal of members of the press to cover the event, I am informed by the Mauritius Football Association that arrangements were made for two marquees and chairs and tables to accommodate some 20 persons.

However, it would appear that more than the expected number of media people had turned up to cover the football match.

TETANUS TOXOID VACCINE – 10-YEAR OLD BOY - REACTION

(No. B/110) Mr S. Naidu (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether, in regard to the recent vaccination of primary school children, he will state if complaints have been received in connection therewith and, if so, the nature thereof and the remedial measures taken, if any.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, vaccination programme in primary schools is a regular feature. It is carried out on school premises in accordance with an immunisation schedule, in line with WHO guidelines.

Vaccination of “Booster Diphtheria and Tetanus, Polio and Mumps, Measles and Rubella (MMR)” is administered to primary school students on entry. These protect our children against infectious diseases, such as Diphtheria, Polio, Tetanus, Measles, Mumps and Rubella. Furthermore, vaccination of “Tetanus Toxoid”, which protects against tetanus, is administered to all primary school leavers, that is, children of ages between 10 and 11.

It is an established practice to carry out a screening exercise at the school to rule out contra-indications prior to vaccination. During the vaccination exercise, it is also common that a few children feel some discomfort. This may happen after any injection and is not alarming.

During the vaccination programme of 2007, a few cases of discomfort were reported from four schools.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that on 06 March 2007, 101 CPE pupils of Petit Verger Government School were vaccinated with Tetanus Toxoid. Out of them, a ten-year old boy developed fever on the night following the injection and had weakness in his left arm. On 08 March, the child attended the Accident & Emergency Department of Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, where he was given treatment. On 09 March, the child attended hospital again and was admitted. He was discharged on 10 March, as his condition had improved and he was given an appointment for 14 March, on which date the child was reviewed in the Orthopaedic Outpatient Department.

The child again was called on 21 March for further investigations. On admission, blood investigations, CT Scan and Magnetic Resonance Imagery (MRI) of the brain and cervical spine were carried out. No abnormality was revealed. During this period, daily physiotherapy was provided to the child. He was discharged from hospital on 30 March 2007, as his condition had improved further, with the recommendation to continue physiotherapy as an outpatient.

However, before his next appointment on 07 April, the child was readmitted at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital on 04 April, with weakness of all four limbs. Immediate supportive treatment was started, and the next day the child was assessed by a panel of five specialist doctors, among whom a neurosurgeon. CT and MRI scans were repeated, which did not show any abnormality again.

I visited the child on Thursday 05 April, accompanied by officials of my Ministry. We met the panel of doctors who confirmed that the child was recovering. We also explained the situation to the child's mother who was present there.

I am further informed that, according to the international medical literature available, this is a very rare case of neurological complication known as 'Guillain-Barré syndrome', which may occur in one out in a million cases, resulting from an immunological reaction of the patient to the vaccination.

I understand that this is the first such case reported in Mauritius. Some 60,000 persons have been vaccinated from the same batch and no such complications have been reported.

However, as a precautionary measure, the remaining doses (22,360) in this batch were immediately withdrawn. A sample of the vaccine has been sent abroad on 27 March for testing. Concurrently, the supplier, which is WHO listed, has been apprised of the issue.

Dr. Jeannet, a neuropaediatrician and '*Maître d'Enseignement et de Recherche*' of *Centre Hospitalier Universitaire* of Lausanne, Switzerland, examined the child yesterday at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital. He agrees with the diagnosis made on the case, and finds the treatment given to him so far to be appropriate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to the latest health report I received this morning, the child's condition has further improved and he is able to walk independently without any support, and has regained strength in all his limbs.

Mr Naidu: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the Minister say that the supplier of the vaccine has been informed of what has happened, and that an analysis is being done. Can we know from the hon. Minister what is the result of the test being done on that vaccine?

Mr Faugoo: We are waiting for the results, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Naidu: Mr Speaker, Sir, my information is that the case the Minister is referring to is not the only one. There is another case where the parent of the child went to the Ministry, but, unfortunately, he was not given due consideration. Officers refused to meet and talk to him. Can the Minister confirm that this is the case?

Mr Faugoo: There is no other such case, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Member is mistaken. As I stated, there were several cases from several schools. But these were cases of discomfort only. That is something usual which happens in the normal course of things.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, just for the sake of information, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether vaccination in schools is done on a voluntary or compulsory basis.

Mr Faugoo: It is voluntary, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, as it is done on a voluntary basis, were the parents given notice that their children were going to be vaccinated in school?

Mr Faugoo: I suppose this is the case, but I need to check, Mr Speaker, Sir.

LA VIGIE ROUNDABOUT – SHELL PETROL STATION

(No. B/111) Mr V. Mardemootoo (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Ministry of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to whether Shell Mauritius Ltd has been delivered with all the relevant clearances to operate a petrol station at La Vigie.

The Minister of Environment & National Development Unit (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I will reply to PQ Nos. B/111 and B/128 together.

Licences to operate petrol stations are granted by the NTA, subject to clearances from the respective local authority, the Fire Services and the approval of the RDA, if the station requires an access to a main road or the motorway.

As far as access to main roads and motorways is concerned, each application for development along main roads or motorways, is examined by a standing technical committee comprising of the RDA, the Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit and the Police Traffic Branch. The

Committee takes into consideration all aspects relating to traffic and road safety, access criteria to the highway, mitigating measures as well as the possibilities of future expansion of the road.

In case of Shell Mauritius Ltd, an application for access to La Vigie roundabout was made in March 2006. It was examined by the Technical Committee, and clearance was given by the RDA in September 2006.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am laying a copy of the clearance from the RDA on the Table of the Assembly.

The company applied to the NTA for a licence on 07 November 2006. The application was published on 14 November 2006, and no objection was received.

On 27 February 2007, the NTA decided to grant the licence after obtaining clearances from the Ministry of Housing & Lands, Ministry of Environment & NDU, RDA, the Traffic Management & Road Safety Unit, the Municipal Council of Curepipe and the Controller, Fire Services.

Mr Mardemootoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, since I think that Mauritius is going to be the only country where we are going to have a petrol station onto a roundabout, I am going to put several questions with regard to safety. May I know from the hon. Minister whether a traffic impact assessment, including road safety, has been assessed, and the findings thereof?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I had discussions with technicians of RDA, the Traffic Management Unit and I am told that it is not a requirement to submit a traffic impact assessment for all projects. However, a traffic impact assessment is required for projects which are likely to generate or attract substantial traffic. In the case of the construction of the petrol station at La Vigie roundabout, this is a stand-alone project which will attract only a limited traffic and, hence, no traffic impact assessment is required. But as far as safety is concerned, the entrance and exit of the petrol station is found on a service lane and is at a distance of 50 metres from the edge of the existing carriageway which is considered to be a safe distance. That is the information which is available to me.

Mr Mardemootoo: Is the hon. Minister aware that further to a stopping order from the MPILTS, the Municipality of Curepipe ordered the stop of the work on site? May I know from the hon. Minister what happened afterwards?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, in fact, this matter was brought to my notice in the Ministry of Environment when I came to know a bit earlier that they had not yet received the PER from the Ministry of Environment and they had already started clearing that plot. It was at that time that we protested and the Municipality of Curepipe issued a stopping order. After that, all the necessary clearances were received by them. It was only after receiving all the clearances that NTA gave them the authority to start business.

Mr Mardemootoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister on what technical bases that RDA granted access to this roundabout?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I said that there is a technical committee and I am laying on the Table of the House a copy of the main recommendations of the technical committee. They found that project to be suitable, feasible and all the necessary precautions have been taken.

Mr Mardemootoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the technical committee of the RDA regulated by law to give access to this kind of roundabout?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is along the land and all the necessary clearances were obtained from different Ministries. It is very difficult for me to step myself into the shoes of those members of the committee as to why they have given the permission.

Mr Mardemootoo: What I know is that this committee is only responsible to give access. Now, the RDA has allowed to extend that road link, but who is going to take care of that road afterwards? Is it the RDA or the Ministry of Environment?

Mr Bachoo: Normally, these conditions are imposed before granting the licences and the promoters are supposed to maintain that additional road.

Mr Bundhoo: May I ask the hon. Minister if he would consider the possibility of doing two things. Firstly, to look at the project, conduct an inquiry and find out how this was given? Secondly, may I ask the hon. Minister if he would consider the possibility of amending the regulation to ensure that in future this does not happen? Thirdly, does this filling station belong to Shell or to somebody else, or patented by Shell?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to convey this to the substantive Minister and, as far as who is looking after the petrol station, I don't have the information with me, but I am definitely going to convey it to the substantive Minister.

Dr. Hawoldar: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just told us that there is a technical committee which looks after it. Then, how does it corroborate the fact that a few years back in the roundabout of Mapou - it is probably the same technical committee - they refused to give the permit? I don't know the owner of this building there. They refused to give the permit and the person had to pull down the building, put up a new building, and the access was made parallel to the main road. But, in this case, where it is more dangerous, the same technical committee has approved the building of the station. Can the hon. Minister explain how the same committee, using the same set of values, in one case, causes a building to be brought down and, in the other case, they approved it?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is mistaken. As far as the case of Mapou is concerned, it was Total Filling Station and neither the RDA nor any of these organisations, para-statal bodies, and committees, has granted the permission. They had taken on their own to build that filling station. In fact, it was the RDA who gave instructions to pull it down because they had not accepted any of those conditions which were laid down. They had to pull down, abide by the conditions and then put up another filling station.

Mr Guimbeau: Can the hon. Minister tell the House who is the owner of this filling station at La Vigie roundabout?

Mr Bachoo: I don't have that information with me.

Dr. Hawoldar: It is the same technical committee, with the same category of professionals, with the same guidelines, who have given two different judgements in two cases which are more or less different. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he would be prepared to set up an independent committee to inquire into the matter and report to the House later on?

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the Total Filling Station was concerned, it was not a dual carriageway and it was, in fact, pulled down. Here, at La Vigie, it is a dual carriageway. On one way only they can service any carriage which is coming whereas the Total Filling Station was not a dual carriageway. Secondly, if I am not mistaken, the entrance was from the roundabout itself and, at that time, Total Filling Station refused to put up an additional lane. Thirdly, I'll definitely convey the apprehension of the hon. Member and the request which he is making to the substantive Minister.

Mr Mardemootoo: Hon. Minister, let bygones be bygones, we know...

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member should put his question.

Mr Mardemootoo: We know that a danger might happen. We know it's dangerous there because there is a station onto the roundabout. Is the hon. Minister prepared to find other access to this petrol station instead of the roundabout? Because, otherwise, in the near future, when the big tanks of fuel will come, there may be a big accident there.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very serious issue and I promise the hon. Member that we are definitely going to look into it.

RICHE TERRE AND TERRE ROUGE – LEASE AGREEMENT

(No. B/112) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the resumption of possession of land from planters at Riche Terre and Terre Rouge, he will state –

- (a) the reasons therefor;
- (b) the acreage of land involved, and
- (c) the alternative proposals that have been made to the planters.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, at the very outset, I wish to remind the House of the circumstances in which we have been able to attract investment of such magnitude to Mauritius.

At the Beijing Summit of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation in November 2006 attended by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister, the President of China announced eight measures to strengthen China-Africa cooperation, including the establishment of three to five trade and economic cooperation zones in Africa in the next three years, and the setting up of a China-Africa development fund amounting to 5 billion USD.

Mauritius, which has been recognised by the Chinese Authorities as one of the best investment destinations in Africa, has been selected as one of the countries in Africa to implement such an economic zone. Thus, the Shanxi Tianli Enterprise Group will soon create an Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone in Mauritius over an extent of approximately 211 hectares (500 *arpents*) of land situated at Riche Terre and Terre Rouge. These lands are State lands which have been found suitable due to their proximity to the Port area. The project will bring foreign direct investment to the tune of Rs17 billion (500 million USD) spread over a five year period and the economic zone is expected to generate over 5,000 local direct jobs.

Given our economic situation and the urgent need to create employment, we must do all we can to facilitate such an investment.

As regards part (a) specifically, in order to release the area for Trade and Economic Cooperation Zone (TECZ), Government has offered to the small planters who have been occupying leased land for agricultural products, to move to alternative sites.

As regards part (b) this zone covers two land settlements –

- (i) 51 hectares at Riche Terre leased to members of the Riche Terre Mixed Cooperative Society up to 13 July 2015. The lease has been drawn in the name of the 120 individual members of the Cooperative Society. Out of the 120 planters, only 51 are active or *bona fide* planters;
- (ii) 160 hectares at Terre Rouge leased to 103 individual planters with all leases expiring on 30 June 2007.

As regards part (c), in regard to planters of Riche Terre Land Settlement, it is relevant to mention that the lease agreement provides that Government may take back the land at any time during the lease period provided that a fair and reasonable compensation is paid to the planters. The quantum of compensation to be accordingly paid has been worked out by the Chief Government Valuer. After consultation with the State Law Office, a letter was issued to all leaseholders on 06 March 2007 requesting them to leave the land by 30 April 2007.

In addition to this compensation, the Government has also decided to relocate the active planters, to give them prime agricultural land belonging to the Agricultural Services to enable them to apply land in respect of revenue obtained in the Riche Terre Land Settlement.

In fact, Government has agreed to -

- (i) a total compensation of Rs12m to be shared pro-rata among the 120 planters based on the extent of land occupied, and
- (ii) relocate the 51 active planters to prime lands found within –

- (a) Arsenal Agricultural Centre for production of seeds (30A);
 - (b) Bois Marchand Agricultural Centre for planting materials (25A);
 - (c) 5A of agricultural State land at Pte aux Piments for foodcrops;
- (iii) Irrigation and CEB dues amounting to approximately Rs1.5m will be written off, and
 - (iv) consideration for payment due by planters to Development Bank of Mauritius to be rescheduled.

These sites are, Mr Speaker Sir, secured areas and the land is immediately cultivable with the advantage that those 51 active planters can immediately engage in production of seedlings and plant materials which have a ready market.

As for Terre Rouge Land Settlement, Mr Speaker Sir, since their lease agreement expires on 30 June 2007, they are normally not eligible for any compensation in accordance with the law.

The State Law Office was also consulted and a letter was issued on 07 March 2007 asking the planters to release the land by 30 June 2007.

However, Mr Speaker Sir, Government understands that their cultivation of sugarcane on these lands have contributed to their livelihood. We have thus proposed –

- (a) their relocation at Côte D’Or where State lands under cane plantation can be made available immediately to them and, of course, the land is prime agricultural land;
- (b) payment of a compensation of Rs50,000 per hectare.

Mr Speaker Sir, I would like to inform the House that I had two meetings with the representatives of the Riche Terre Mixed Cooperative Society and one meeting with the representatives of the Terre Rouge Land Settlement to explain to them the importance of the Tianli Project and the facilities which Government in return would give to them in terms of cash compensation, relocation to prime State lands and the writing-off of

irrigation and CEB dues. As regards the Terre Rouge Land Settlement, the planters will be allowed to harvest their cane this year.

A technical committee has also been set up under the chair of the Ag. Permanent Secretary of my Ministry and three meetings have been held with representatives of planters of Riche Terre Mixed Cooperative Society where all the issues have been discussed. My Ministry is proceeding this week with the finalisation of the modalities concerning payment of compensation and relocation of the planters of Riche Terre Land Settlement. They would be convened by third week of April 2007 for payment and relocation exercise.

Concerning the planters for Terre Rouge Land Settlement, my Ministry is finalising the compensation aspect which would amount to Rs8m with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and they will be convened at a later stage for payment of compensation and relocation exercise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the House will agree that this is a very fair solution for all parties concerned, as it will not only ensure that the planters have been relocated to other alternative sites, but it will also ensure that job opportunities are going to be created in the new economic zone to wage war on poverty.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can tell us what kind of activities, what type of enterprises are going to be set up by Tianli on this land and whether that includes casinos?

Dr. Boolell: Sir, I do not have the information sought by the hon. Member, but, as far as I know, the Economic and Trade Co-operation Zone will be created of an extent of 500 arpents of land situated at Riche Terre.

(Interruptions)

I do not have that information. The question can be put to the Ministry concerned. I am dealing with the issue of land. As far as I know, there will be no casinos, we are talking of enterprises which are going to be set up to create employment, and Mauritius has been chosen because of its location, we have a stable Government, and also because of the lobby waged by the

Prime Minister to see to it that this investment flows to Mauritius; we are talking of Rs17 billion that are going to be invested.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think you'll agree that it is quite astounding that we talk of this kind of project and we do not know at all what kind of enterprise is going to be set up...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! I said order! Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether it is a fact that the company concerned has been granted the right to sublet to others?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is an industrial zone. The information being conveyed is not relevant and I can ask the Ministry concerned to do the needful.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask a last question? Can the Minister say whether the hon. Minister is in presence of a proposal to set up a Trust Fund – apart from the compensation issue – to better prepare the land of these people who have been there for generations?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are concerned with the welfare of those planters. We have identified prime agricultural land and they are going to be relocated to these lands.

(Interruptions)

We are taking care of those planters, discussions are ongoing, and they are agreeable to our proposals.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to what has been said, and concerning 20 families who have been granted a residential lease since 1947, I would like to know what Government is proposing to these families?

Dr. Boolell: As long as the construction does not encroach upon the land which is going to be developed, we are going to give them a sympathetic hearing.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister how does his Ministry classify the land under reference at Terre Rouge and Riche Terre? Is it marginal or prime land? Secondly, I heard the Minister referring to compensation, can I know how has the compensation been worked out and whether the Valuation Office has been involved in the working out of the compensation to the planters concerned?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the quantum of compensation has been worked out by the Chief Government Valuer. The land which is going to be allocated and leased to those planters is prime agricultural land. Where they are, the yield is low, except in areas where there is irrigation.

Mr Gunness: Can I know from the hon. Minister when was the Letter of Intent issued to Tianli?

Mr Speaker: The question is 'in regard to the resumption of possession of land from planters at Riche Terre and Terre Rouge; the reasons therefor, the acreage of land involved and the alternative proposals'. The hon. Minister has already answered. The hon. Member should come with a substantive question.

Mr Gunness: Sir, we are referring to the same land which the Minister has said will be an economic zone. Can I know when was a Letter of Intent issued for that economic zone of 500 acres to Tianli?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the letter was given at the appropriate time. I don't have the date. But one thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking of massive investment, creation of employment.....

(Interruptions)

We will see to it that this project be implemented. We are going to.....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Gunness, order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Guinness, I am on my feet!

Mr Guinness: Can I put my next question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Yes, provided it is relevant.

Mr Guinness: My questions are always relevant, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister how is it that on 15 December 2006, an offer was made to the same planters for the renewal of their lease from Rs165 to Rs4,500, then, on 08 February 2007, it was reduced to Rs2,000, that is, the finalisation of the lease agreement and one month later, that is, on 09 March 2007, they got their letter to vacate the land. Can I know from the hon. Minister whether he was not aware that the land was to be given to Tianli?

Dr. Boolell: We are going to see to it that they are going to be relocated on prime agricultural land, but the cost of the lease will be reduced further, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether the rezoning of the said land has already been done?

Dr. Boolell: It will be taken care of. Our main concern is to see to it that investment flows quickly, that construction starts and that jobs are created, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that once this land has been rezoned, one acre of land will be sold at Rs4m? Therefore, we are giving twenty billion rupees worth of land to Tianli.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would invite my friend, before he makes any blatant statement, to read the lease agreement, otherwise, it is a figment of his imagination and he is not worth putting any relevant question because he is dead to the creation of employment.

Mr Speaker: Last question!

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister said that these planters have up to June to have their harvest. Can the Minister explain why this company has already encroached on the land, has cut the cane and is having soil test? I am laying the document on the Table of the Assembly. Can the Minister explain who will compensate these planters for this?

Dr. Boolell: Let me reassure my friend that they will be allowed to harvest their cultivation. There would be no problem. They will move to Côte d'Or where it is prime agricultural land under cultivation of sugar cane with a high yield of 35 tonnes per arpent, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

That is not true! Over and above that, they are being allocated land which belongs to the State, to the Ministry of Agro Industry and there, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, they can carry on with ongoing activities and the accrued benefits will go to those people.

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS – FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

(No. B/113) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) ask the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the University of Mauritius, information as to whether it is currently facing financial difficulties and, if so, the remedial measures that will be taken.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker Sir, I am informed by the Tertiary Education Commission which has the statutory responsibility of allocating funds to tertiary educational institutions in the light of their annual and long term programmes as follows -

- (a) The University of Mauritius, while reviewing its 2006/07 recurrent budget in February 2007 as part of its routine annual budgetary exercise, indicated that it had an anticipated deficit of Rs49.2 m, out of which Rs25.0 m was due to shortfall in revenue resulting from a lower student enrolment than projected. The projected number of students for Academic Year 2006/2007 was 8658 whereas the actual intake was 7849 resulting in a shortfall of 809.
- (b) After several rounds of discussion between TEC and UoM, the deficit was brought down to Rs23.0 m, which is being provided by TEC. The total amount of recurrent grant to the UoM to fund its recurrent budget for the year 2006/07 will therefore be Rs264.0 m against Rs241.0 m as originally provided.
- (c) The whole issue of anticipated deficit, resulting from the shortfall of the UoM recurrent budget, has now been resolved.
- (d) It is to be noted that the anticipated deficit was only a budget deficit. There is no cash flow problem, and the UoM does not have any liquidity problem to complete the financial year 2006/07.
- (e) The UoM has been requested to diversify its funding sources and to manage its financial and human resources more efficiently and effectively.

I wish to inform the House that my Ministry has approached the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for an audit of the financial management of the UoM to be carried out by the Management Audit Bureau.

Mr Guinness: Can I ask the hon. Minister how does he explain that lower intake at the University when we know the number of students who normally do not get seat?

Mr Gokhool: The information I have been given is with respect to part-time courses where the demand was low and, therefore, the projected figures did not materialise and that resulted in a shortfall of the revenue of the University.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS – PRICE

(No. B/114) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) ask the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to the last exercise for the revision of the price of petroleum products, he will give a breakdown of the different cost elements taken into consideration for the fixing of the final retail price.

Dr. Jeetah: I am informed by the State Trading Corporation that the main cost elements that form part of the price structure which impact on the retail price of petroleum products are –

- CIF (Import Price)
- Exchange Rate (MUR/USD)
- Volume (Imported)
- Apportionment between local sale and bunkering (in case of gas oil)
- Windfall gain/(loss) on stock
- Gain/(Loss) of the quarter
- Gain/(Loss) below 2.5% or above 20% brought forward

The above cost constitutes the basic value of the petroleum products. The other items that are added to the basic value to arrive at the retail price of petroleum products are as follows –

- (1) expenses incurred by STC in connection with the importation of petroleum products;
- (2) contribution to the Road Development Authority;
- (3) subsidy given for the transportation and storage of petroleum products in Rodrigues;
- (4) operating and marketing expenses (for oil companies);
- (5) wholesale margin (for oil companies);
- (6) value added tax payable;
- (7) retail margin

I am tabling the following documents –

- (1) Quantity of mogas and gas oil imported and apportionment
- (2) CIF trend for prices of mogas, gas oil and brent;
- (3) Evolution of US dollars in relation to the rupee.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister by how much the STC expenses were increased on 03 January 2007?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, STC expenses account for eight items, namely, ocean loss, shifting charges, demurrage charges, survey fees, offloading expenses, bank charges, administrative expenses and depreciation. The price structure for January/March 07 was R1.1589; for April/June 07, it was R1.6189 to the litre.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Minister explain why there was the need for a first increase in STC expenses from September 2006 to January 2007 and another increase from January 2007 to April 2007?

Dr. Jeetah: Is the hon. Member referring to the price of petroleum products?

Mr Guinness: When the price is increasing or decreasing, there is an item as STC expenses in the structure. My question is: from September 2006 to January 2007, there was an increase, from January 2007 to April 2007, there was another increase - the Minister stated the whole amount, but if we can get it per litre, fair enough! - why have STC expenses increased?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did mention that there was an increase from January/March to April/June and I did mention the list of items that is covered through STC expenses. They are ocean loss, shifting charges, demurrage charges, survey fees, offloading expenses, bank charges, administrative expenses as well as depreciation.

Mr Jhugroo: Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House whether there has been an increase in the price structure relating to expenses incurred in connection with the importation of petroleum products and, if so, by how much? Will he give the additional revenue that this increase will bring to STC per year?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just answered the question.

Mr Guinness: The hon. Minister gave different breakdowns for STC expenses. Can we know which one has gone up for the need to have an increase in the STC expenses?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is that all the above expenses are incurred on a consignment to consignment basis. At the time of preparing the annual final accounts, these expenses are reconciled with the total amount received for these items on the price structure under the item STC expenses.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is prepared, for the sake of transparency, to circulate the breakdown of the price structure for the last three increases - all the details of the price structure which he has given, but with the figures for the last three price increases? (**Appendix VII**)

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Can the Minister confirm whether - if the Minister does not know, he can check - the increase in STC expenses is being used to subsidise flour?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just answered the question that was asked. I was given notice for this period and I have mentioned the eight items that are taken care of in the STC expenses.

Mr Guinness: In the last revision of April 2007, my information is that STC expenses have been increased again, and this time to pay for what has been done in the case of cement. Can the Minister confirm this?

Dr. Jeetah: I did answer the question and I have mentioned the items, Mr Speaker, Sir.

MAURITIUS TOURISM PROMOTION AUTHORITY - BUDGET

(No. B/115) **Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, following the decision of Government to reduce the Budget of the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority to subsidise the SC and HSC examinations fees, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to the impact such a reduction will have on the tourism promotion activities.

(Vide reply to PQ B/105)

DESBRO LTD – CLOSURE – JOB LOSSES

(No. B/116) **Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, following the recent closure of Desbro Ltd., he will state the number of job losses, indicating the amount of compensation, if any, paid to each of the employees who have been laid off.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a letter dated 26 March 2007, Desbro International Ltd gave me notice under Section 39(2) of the Labour Act of its intention to terminate the employment of all its workers, that is, 181 in total.

I have, as required under Section 39 (3) of the Act, referred the matter to the Termination of the Contract Service Board (TCSB) for consideration. The amount of compensation to be paid to the employees can only be determined after the conclusion of the case by the TCSB.

Mrs Perrier: *Est-ce que le ministre peut nous dire s'il est confiant que s'il y avait eu la libéralisation des prix avant, on n'aurait pas ...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am not allowing this question.

Mr Cuttaree: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether, with the takeover of Desbro by the new company of Murray and Roberts, efforts are being

made by his Ministry to ensure that those people who found themselves losing their jobs as a result of deliberate Government policy, are taken over on the same terms and conditions as they were enjoying by the new company?

Dr. Bunwaree: The hon. Member is a lawyer, he knows that when the termination is over, it will have to be on other conditions. But we are doing our level best to see to it that the maximum number of people be redeployed in the new company taking over.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, has the purchaser, Murray and Roberts, given a clear answer or, at least, an indication of whether it will keep all or, at least, some, and if some, how many of the ex-employees?

Dr. Bunwaree: What I can give as reply to this question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the management of Desbro International Ltd has informed the union, in the presence of high technicians of my Ministry, that it will endeavour to persuade Murray and Roberts to offer employment to a substantial proportion of the workers. According to information I could gather, about more than 60% of the workers will be able to be taken over by this new company, and efforts are also being done in sister companies and other companies which are in the same business.

DESBRO LTD – CLOSURE – SUPPLY OF IRON BARS

(No. B/117) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, following the recent closure of Desbro Ltd., he will state the measures taken by his Ministry to prevent the occurrence, on the local market, of –

- (a) any shortage of iron bars, and
- (b) a monopoly situation.
- (c)

(Vide reply to PNQ)

APPASAMY, MR TEEREN - EXTRADITION

(No. B/118) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Attorney-General, Minister of Justice and Human Rights whether in regard to the request for the extradition of Mr Teeren Appasamy, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, further to the reply given by me on two previous occasions, B/117 and B/1065 in relation to the same matter, I am informed that the situation has, unfortunately, not changed.

However, I am informed that the ICAC has been and is constantly in consultation with the Home Office with a view to expedite matters as far as the execution of the warrant is concerned.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Attorney-General whether we have a lawyer because we were informed earlier on that Mr Appasamy is challenging the extradition order before the Court. If that is the case, do we have a lawyer representing us before that Court and what brief does he hold?

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is up to ICAC to see whether they will have a lawyer or not.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think in his last answer, the hon. Minister made it clear that Mr Appasamy was contesting this warrant. Is it the duty of ICAC or the office of the Attorney-General, that is, Government, to look into that? Can I know from the Minister what is the stand of Government regarding the contestation of Mr Appasamy?

Mr Valayden: At the moment, it is ICAC which is following closely the matter with the Home Office and, if need be, my Ministry will look into whatever thing which has to be done.

Mr Cuttaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not understand one thing. The hon. Attorney-General was the legal adviser of Mr Appasamy before he became Minister. The Minister of External Affairs wrote to the Foreign Office to ask for the extradition of Mr Appasamy. Mr Appasamy decided to challenge that. This is a 100% involvement of the Government of Mauritius,

because the Government of Mauritius asked for the extradition. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Attorney-General, as the chief legal adviser of Government, if he does not believe that it is his office which should have been following this issue and that he should make sure that there is a lawyer who is representing the Government of Mauritius at the proceedings in London, because ICAC has no standing with the British Government?

Mr Valayden: We are following it through ICAC and, at the moment, there has not been any development from the Home Office in England.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask whether we have information, because we were informed by the Attorney-General in the House that Mr Appasamy had challenged the extradition before the Court and that, therefore, it was *sub judice*? We can't really know whether Government or ICAC has a lawyer before that Court. Can I ask confirmation that this did take place, that he challenged the warrant for extradition before the Court and is he on bail?

Mr Valayden: My information is, as I said, in the last PQ.

Mr Cuttaree: Can I ask the hon. Attorney-General whether he is aware that the request for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to ask for the extradition of Mr Appasamy did not come from ICAC? It came from the Attorney-General's Office. Can I ask him, therefore, why is it that it seems that the Attorney General's Office has washed its hands of this problem and is now putting it on the back of the ICAC?

Mr Valayden: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not true to say that we have washed our hands. This is the only thing that we have not been doing. Things are being followed closely and we are saying that there is a *status quo* with the Home Office. We will do the needful to make sure that things are done.

Mr Speaker: Questions Time is over.

I have to inform the House that PQ No. B/133 has been withdrawn.