

Debate No. 10 of 15.05.07**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****CONSUMER PROTECTION UNIT - COMPLAINTS**

(No. B/353) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare & Consumer Protection whether she has been made aware of the abusive practices of some traders and, if so, will she state the measures that will be taken for the protection of the consumers.

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am fully aware that there are quite a number of complaints that have been registered by the Consumer Protection Unit of my Ministry. For the past 6 months, 481 complaints have been received for abusive practices such as -

- (i) selling a controlled commodity at a higher price than that fixed by Government;
- (ii) hoarding/refusing to sell essential commodities;
- (iii) the non affixing of price labels on specimens of commodities offered for sale;
- (iv) misleading information on commodities;
- (v) sale of defective goods;
- (vi) sale of goods beyond expiry date; and
- (vii) manufacturing/sale of underweight loaves.

Whenever such cases are reported to the Ministry, an enquiry is immediately carried out by the officers of the Consumer Protection Unit on the veracity of the allegations, and if same are founded, contraventions are established accordingly. These cases are thereafter referred to the Director of Public Prosecution.

Moreover, to ensure that traders do not indulge in abusive practices, my Ministry regularly carries out surprise checks and inspections in trade premises across the island. For the past six months, 2150 checks were carried out and 57 contraventions were established for abusive practices.

Furthermore, whenever there are indications of malpractices by unscrupulous traders, *opérations coup de poing* are carried out by officers of the CPU in various trade premises with a view to tracking down any such traders and also to discourage traders from exploiting consumers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the role of the Consumer Protection Unit is not only limited to enforce the various consumer legislation, but also to make consumers aware of their rights so that they do not fall easy prey to unscrupulous traders. To that effect, booklets and flyers are regularly published and disseminated. Talks in schools/colleges, Social Welfare Centres, Women Centres, on radio and TV are also regularly delivered by officers of my Ministry.

The sensitisation programme of the Consumer Protection Unit will be further enhanced with the organisation of regional seminars island wide. To that effect, a meeting was held on the 07 of May.

I wish to inform the House that the public can also report any case of abusive practices by traders on the hotline 217 6129 which will shortly be converted into three-digit to facilitate retention.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, being given that some importers have a dominant position in a small market like Mauritius, will the Minister state what mechanism her Ministry has in place to check whether these dominant importers are not directly or indirectly imposing unfair selling prices on the consumer?

Mrs Seebun: I do agree that we have many importers importing from different countries and the distribution costs are not the same. Sometimes, there are sales being made at different prices at different selling units. I have already replied to a PQ last week, however, we are doing constant follow-up to see to it that consumers are not exploited.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that section 5 subsection 1 of the Consumer Protection (Price & Supply Control) Act of

1998 gives her the power to establish a code of practice to provide for the determination of the maximum retail price of goods for uncontrolled goods?

Mrs Seebun: Surely, we are envisaging reviewing certain prices where consumers are being greatly affected.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I kindly request the hon. Minister to ensure that the forthcoming Competition Bill to take care of all the differences with regard to importers and pricing?

Mrs Seebun: I thank the hon. Member and rightly so, the Competition Bill will ensure that such malpractices are not seen again.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I put it in a different way? Will the Minister state whether she will establish a code of practice for the protection of the consumer and can she give the time-frame?

Mrs Seebun: I cannot exactly give a time frame, but, as Minister responsible for consumer protection, I shall ensure that this comes up as soon as possible, that is, very fast.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether she will consider reviewing the Fair Trading Act in order to take into consideration these difficulties?

Mrs Seebun: I thank the hon. Minister for the question. Of course, I am going to ensure that this is done.

Mrs Martin: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that the hotline number is going to be three-digit. May I know when exactly that is going to take place and whether the current number is available only during office hours or on a 24-hour basis?

Mrs Seebun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the current number is available on a 24-hour basis and the hotline will be available as from tonight itself, because I have already given instructions.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister what are the current prices of the following iron bars: 8mm, 10mm and 12mm.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry! This question is out of order. Next question, hon. Dayal!

BANK OF MAURITIUS – HEADQUARTERS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/354) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the construction of the new headquarters of the Bank of Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) the date on which the contract was awarded;
- (b) the name of the contractor;
- (c) the value of the contract;
- (d) the final amount paid on completion of its construction, and
- (e) the reasons for the increase in the cost thereof, if any.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the main contract for the construction of the new building of the Bank of Mauritius had been awarded to General Construction Co. Ltd Group Five JV on 04 November 2003 for the sum of Rs1,083,678,264.90. The total amount has not yet been finalised as there are still some works in progress. As at date, a sum of Rs1,066,226,294.55 has been paid to the contractor.

Mr Dayal: Can the hon. Minister give clearly the detailed reason of the escalation of the costs thereof?

Dr. Bunwaree: This can be looked into, Mr Speaker, Sir, but the work is not over. We will have to wait for the work in progress to end, then we can give the information. To be fair to my hon. friend, I must say that I have referred to the main contract, but there are some other small contracts. These are being compiled. Maybe if a proper question is put, we can come back to them.

Mr Dayal: Can the hon. Minister state whether there was a major change in the drawings and designs of the original plan of the bank and if yes, will he give a list of the major changes?

Dr. Bunwaree: I take note of this question, Mr Speaker, Sir. There have been some changes. These have to be looked into, but as I said, when my colleague is going to come back, I am going to discuss with him and see to it that all information is given to the hon. Member.

INDIA - DRUGS - STANDARD

(No. B/355) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to drugs purchased recently from India, he will state if they have been found to be of substandard quality and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the name of the suppliers, indicating since when purchases are made therefrom;
- (b) the diseases for which the drugs were purchased;
- (c) the mechanism, if any, existing at the Ministry to verify the credentials of suppliers of drugs, and
- (d) if any survey has been carried out to assess the impact these drugs had on the patients.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Dr. A Kasenally): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to PQ Nos B/355 and B/378 together since they relate to the same subject.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that in July 2006 a lot of seventeen drugs were sent to a Quality Control Laboratory in South Africa for routine testing. The Laboratory submitted the test results in February 2007. There were four drugs which were returned with an apparently adverse report.

The names of the four drugs concerned and their respective suppliers are as follows –

Salbutamol 2 mg tablets	BDH Industries Ltd, India
Salbutamol 4 mg tablets	FDC Ltd, India
Metformin Hydrochloride 500 mg tablets	Medopharm, India
Enalapril Maleate 5 mg tabs	Jackson PVT Ltd, India

I am also informed that Messrs FDC Ltd, BDH Industries Ltd and Medopharm are long time suppliers of drugs to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. They have been regularly supplying drugs for the past 10 years. Messrs Jackson PVT Ltd started supplying drugs to the Ministry as from the financial year 2004-2005.

Salbutamol is used for Asthma and other conditions associated with reversible airway obstruction, Metformin for the treatment of diabetes and Enalapril Maleate for hypertension.

I am informed that orders for Salbutamol 2 mg tablets were placed in April 2005 and the drug was supplied in July 2005 while the 4 mg tablets were ordered in August 2004 and received in May 2005. As regard Metformin Hydrochloride 500 mg and Enalapril Maleate tablets 5 mg, these were ordered in September 2005 and received in December 2005 and January 2006 respectively.

As soon as the results of the laboratory were known the following actions were taken –

- A survey of existing stocks of the incriminated drugs was carried out. However, all stocks had been used up since the time the drugs were sent to the laboratory.
- The suppliers were informed about the adverse reports and were required to submit their explanations. They were also warned that they would be blacklisted if their explanations were not satisfactory.
- The suppliers have submitted their comments and counter-analysis reports which were sent to the Quality Control Laboratory for their comments. The laboratory has submitted its final conclusion regarding three of the drugs. As per their report, Salbutamol 2 mg and Metformin Hydrochloride 500 mg passed the test, whereas Salbutamol 4 mg tablets were found to contain more of active ingredient than permitted by the pharmacopoeia. As regards Enalapril Maleate 5 mg, the investigation is still ongoing. These are reports which were received yesterday afternoon at the Ministry of Health.
- The Central Tender Board has been informed of the situation.

- New procedures have been worked out to enhance quality assurance.
- In view of reinforcing its quality assurance system over the procurement of drugs, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life will be implementing a number of measures centred on the analysis of a larger number of drugs and the development of its own National Quality Control Laboratory.
- Five new chemists, some of whom have experience in drug analysis, have been recruited and necessary equipment and chemicals are being purchased.
- More samples will be sent for analysis as soon as the drugs reach the Central Supplies Division. Arrangements are being made to shorten the time lag between the dispatch of samples and the receipt of the results. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life will hire the services of more laboratories overseas to enable the crosschecking of results and arrangements are being made with local laboratories for quick identification of the products as soon as they are received.

Furthermore, I am informed that the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life is proposing to set up a Fact Finding Committee to inquire into the procurement of the incriminated drugs, to identify any shortcomings in the procurement system and to make recommendations as appropriate to ensure the good quality of drugs procured by the Ministry.

A survey to assess the impact that the above drugs could have had on patients would not give any conclusive results as the methodology would be loaded with flaws introduced by such variables as lack of information on drug compliance, concomitant treatment followed by the patients, living habits including diet and exercising. In this context, it would be impossible to establish the causality of any adverse event with the consumption of any particular drug.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the procedure for the purchase of these drugs has been the same as for all the drugs during the previous years. In fact, I am informed that each year, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life calls for public tenders from both local and international tenderers for its supply of drugs.

The usual procedure is as follows-

Tenders are floated, with the approval of the Central Tender Board, at the beginning of each calendar year for the supply of drugs to the Ministry for the following financial year. Upon receipt of the bids, a preliminary verification is carried out by a team comprising pharmacists, principal dispensers and stores officers. This team verifies the validity of the specifications, the conditions attached to the bids, the documents submitted in support of quality, the licensing status of the respective bidders, their past performance as suppliers, and their activity on their local market in the field of the category of drugs that they offer to supply.

An in-depth evaluation exercise is thereafter carried out by the Pharmaceutical Tender Committee (PTC) of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life under the chairmanship of a Principal Medical Officer. The Committee also comprises personnel from the pharmacy, finance, purchasing and supply cadres. Specialists in different fields of medicine are co-opted whenever needed to advise on specific drugs or treatments.

The recommendations of the Pharmaceutical Tender Committee are then sent to the Departmental Tender Committee of the Ministry under the chairmanship of a Principal Assistant Secretary.

The recommendations of the Ministry are thereafter sent to the Central Tender Board for approval. Awards are then sent to the successful bidders.

The choice of a supplier is based on a number of criteria such as his capacity to supply the drug in the required quantity, his experience in the manufacture of a specific item, delivery time as per the requirements of the Ministry, his past performance evaluated on the basis of records, his listing on a number of national or commercial formularies and the price quoted. The Ministry also requires suppliers to give evidence of good manufacturing practice and to submit a Certificate of Pharmaceutical Product (COPP). The COPP ensures that the manufacturing plant of the firm is regularly inspected by the National Drug Regulatory Authority of the country of origin and it also indicates whether the drug is allowed for sale in the country of manufacture.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that suppliers are never chosen on the basis of cheapest price quoted.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that there are many bogus, fake and unreliable laboratories which provide drugs to the hospitals and to the local market and will he state what precautionary measures his Ministry has put in place to identify these fake and unreliable laboratories?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned, in this system there is no place for bogus manufacturers. They are eliminated as far as the hospital services are concerned.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that many doctors working in the hospitals had reported to his Ministry that some drugs prescribed by them were not showing the expected results?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as drugs which are prescribed by doctors are concerned, there are many factors which are involved and which may not have the required effect for what it is prescribed. First, it is in compliance with the drugs, the conditions under which the drugs are taken. For example, if a drug is supposed to be taken *à jeun*, and it is taken after a heavy meal and if that meal has got heavy fat content, it will not be absorbed. There are other factors also about what we call bio-availability of the drug in the blood stream. When a drug is consumed, it is metabolised and absorbed by the blood stream and it is sometimes detoxified by the liver. But there are many mechanisms, for example, if somebody has got diarrhoea, the drug may go right down to the drain.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, doctors know what they prescribe and what result they expect. In the light of this, I'll ask the hon. Minister whether he will include in the terms and conditions of the Fact Finding Committee which he intends to establish, any patient who was following treatment in the hospital and who has been prescribed sub-standard drugs and has been victim of such drugs?

Dr. Kasenally: As I mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is very difficult to assess, because these are things which have happened over a year. As I said, there are many difficulties in getting an appropriate and a correct evaluation of whatever effects they may have. What can be done is, in future, we can evaluate these drugs at random for people who are taking the drugs, but we also have to make sure that there is a policy of compliance. You have to

have a well-defined population of patients who have to take drugs according to the prescription and then you have to take large samples and other parameters to ensure reliability. It is a very tedious experience, but certainly, I will pass on the message to my substantive colleague when he comes back.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he does not consider it to be more acceptable to have the drug tested before being given to patients in the hospitals?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, drugs which are brought in are already coming with a certificate of reliability. We are proposing to have a double-check. I think by the time the drug comes, as my colleague said, they will be taken immediately on board when we have set up our laboratory. I hope then it will give quick result so that we can get it as fast as we can and ensure that drugs which are not appropriate or are not of the proper bio-availability or chemical content be not put in circulation to our patient.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to lay on the Table of the Assembly a study done in UK, Volume 15 No. 4, August 2003, which will definitely enlighten this House about the inferior quality and possible health risk with generic products.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is making a statement. He has to lay the paper.

Mr Dayal: I am going to table the document and I will just say that the ceftriaxone generic is being widely used in the hospitals for life threatening infection. That is why I am going to table a copy which is going to enlighten the House and, of course, the responsible people in his Ministry.

Dr. Mungur: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister said that there were 17 drugs which had been sent in July 2006 and the result came only in February 2007. Can the hon. Minister explain us why this time lag?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would concur with my colleague that this is not acceptable, but I understand that there has been a problem of methodology, and the lab in South Africa had to know what methodology the manufacturers had used. There was an exchange of correspondence between South Africa/Mauritius to India and it did take time for the Indian counterpart companies to respond and this explains a bit the delay. However, my colleague is setting up a better mechanism so that we could

have prompt results. But with the setting up of the national laboratory, perhaps, we will have to abort this long procedure.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is no need for the hon. Member to make that remark.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether there is any shortage of Salbutamol 2mg, Salbutamol 4mg, Metformin Hydrochloride 500 mg and Enalapril Maleate in the hospital actually?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not been informed about it. I need notice of that question; perhaps if the hon. Member puts a substantive question, my colleague will answer it with facts and figures next time.

Mr Speaker: The Table has been advised that Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/364, B/365, B/367, B/368, B/374, B/376 and B/392 have been withdrawn.

At 1.00 p.m the sitting was suspended.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

THE MINISTER OF ARTS AND CULTURE – APOLOGIES

The Deputy Speaker: I have a short announcement to make.

Hon. Members will recollect that during Prime Minister's Question Time of today's sitting, Mr Speaker ordered that the hon. Minister of Arts and Culture withdraws from the House during the remainder of today's sitting.

The hon. Minister has since tendered his unreserved and unqualified apologies to Mr Speaker and Mr Speaker has agreed that he resumes his seat.

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

(No. B/356) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Chairperson of the Human Resources Development Council, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Council, information as to his qualifications and terms of employment.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in accordance with section 7 of the Human Resource Development Act 2003, Mr Deepak Tulsidas was appointed Chairperson of the Human Resources Development Council on 16 December 2005 for period 2006-2007. This position is occupied on a part-time basis. Mr Tulsidas is the Managing Director of PC World Ltd. and he holds an MBA in International Marketing and Business Policy from the University of Miami, USA. A monthly fee of Rs15,000 is paid to the Chairperson, as provided for in the 2003 PRB Report.

Dr. Hawoldar: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given the importance of the Human Resources Development Council at present, in relation to what Government plans to do, would the hon. Minister see to it that, at least, Mr Tulsidas has the same facilities as the Chairman had before him, for example, an office where he can do his job and meet people who come to meet him?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the provision are as per laid out in the PRB Report 2003 and this is a part-time position. I don't think these facilities form part of the package.

Dr. Hawoldar: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the salary of the previous Chairman of Human Resources Development Council was the same as that of Mr Tulsidas this year?

Mr Gokhool: In fact, the previous Chairpersons had a monthly fee of Rs30,000 before July 2005, but after July 2005, in the context of the economic situation and also in line with the PRB 2003 Report, the fees that were payable were brought in line with the recommendations of the PRB.

In the past, there were departures from the PRB. I could not continue with the departures, that is why the fee was aligned to what is contained in the PRB.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister kindly confirm whether there are different categories of Chairpersons and, if so, in which category does the Chairman of the HRDC fall?

Mr Gokhool: Yes, I think there are different categories of Chairpersons and the case in point refers to a part-time Chairman. The provisions are there in the PRB Report 2003, paragraph 18.20, which reads as follows –

“We recommend that, on the basis of the new formula introduced, the monthly fees payable to part-time Chairpersons of Statutory Boards and Committees previously categorised as in A, B and C should be at the rate of 30% monthly basic salaries of a respective full-time Chief Executives, subject to a maximum of Rs15,000.”

**AIRPORTS OF MAURITIUS (LTD) – CHAIRPERSON –
QUALIFICATIONS, TERMS AND CONDITIONS, ETC.**

(No. B/357) Dr. R. Hawoldar (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the Chairperson of the Airports of Mauritius (Ltd), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the AML, information as to his qualifications and the terms and conditions of his employment

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, with your permission, I shall to reply to PQ Nos. B/357 and B/379 together as they relate to the same subject matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in accordance with the provisions of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of Airports of Mauritius Ltd., its Board of Directors was reappointed at the Annual meeting of its shareholders held on 29 December 2006.

I am tabling the information requested.

Dr. Hawoldar: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether the package of the Chairperson of the Airports of Mauritius (Ltd.) includes also a uniform or dress allowance?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information requested. I don't see that in here, but perhaps it would be good for me to mention, in fact, that the present Chairman is earning considerably less than the previous Chairman of the Board of AML.

The previous Chairman of the Board of AML, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was earning a total of Rs117,500 with a BMW 7 series car.

(Interruptions)

This present Chairman earns R57,000 with a much small car series C Mercedes.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how many sub-committees do we have at the AML and in how many sub-committees each member sits, and what do they earn in each sub-committee?

Mr X.L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.....

The Deputy Speaker: No, there is no need to answer.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my question relates to PQ. No. B/379 and it has been answered together with PQ. No. B/357.

The Deputy Speaker: No, there is nothing pertaining to sub-committees or committees. The question is about a list of qualifications and terms of conditions of appointment.

(Interruptions)

No, this has nothing to do with it! This is my ruling. Next Question!

STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS – BURGLARIES

(No. B/358) **Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to burglaries in State Secondary Schools since July 2006 to date, he will -

- (a) state the name and locations of the schools;
- (b) table a list of the items stolen, indicating their estimated value, and
- (c) where matters stand in relation to the inquiries.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I need to inform the House that in the context of reforms in the education sector, special emphasis is being placed on ICT in schools. This has necessitated the scaling up of equipment in schools but has, unfortunately, also led to an increase in burglaries.

I wish to inform the hon. Member that I have already placed, in the Library, the information in reply to PQ No. B/236 on Tuesday 24 April 2007, with respect to the period from 01 July 2006 to 20 April 2007. The information relating to period 21 April to 11 May 2007 is now being tabled.

As regards part (c) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that out of 49 cases of thefts reported during period July 2006 to 11 May 2007, one is awaiting Court's decision, 7 cases have been filed due to the accused being unknown and the remaining 41 are still under Police scrutiny.

In view of the fact that an analysis of recent cases of larceny has revealed that the pattern and mode of commission of these larcenies are more or less similar, my Ministry, in collaboration with the Commissioner of Police, is examining a number of remedial measures for reinforcing security at the level of the schools and to prevent further thefts. Frequent Police patrol is one of them.

Other measures relate to security being stepped up at the level of the schools, the State Law Office being consulted with a view to rendering the terms of contract more rigorous and placing greater responsibility on contractors, with a view to making good the lost equipment. The specifications for tender documents for awarding future security contract are also being revisited.

Meanwhile, except for the 3 recent cases of thefts, all the lost PCs have been replaced by my Ministry in order not to penalize the students.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I refer to the information that the hon. Minister laid down in the Library. Since there has been a lack of prompt response, because from the information we see, for example, that for the SSS, Palma, there have been three cases of thefts within six days. In Quartier Militaire, there were four burglaries in two months. In Belle Rose, there has been one case of burglary each month, that is, from July, August, September, October and November. The pattern repeats itself, so, obviously, there has not been any prompt response.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, we are aware of this problem, which is a recent one. The situation is being closely monitored. We have liaised with the Police authorities, the patrol is one of the measures which we have taken. The other measure we have taken is that we have established a handing over procedure between the school staff and the security staff. At the level of my Ministry, there is a unit which is regularly monitoring the situation. I cannot say all the other measures that we are taking, but there are a few ones which we are taking to ensure that this problem is minimised.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister kindly inform the House whether there has been any internal investigation at the level of his Ministry as regards these burglaries?

Mr Gokhool: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If there is a case of burglary which happens in a school, the first report comes to the Ministry. At the level of the Ministry, there is an inquiry which is carried out to establish the nature of the burglary and the extent of equipment which is involved. The matter is immediately reported to the Police.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for example, in the case of SS La Gaulette, 21 hard disks to the tune of Rs420,000 have been stolen. Does the hon. Minister have information about the time lag from the moment that those PCs have been stolen and the time they have been replaced? Because these children have been penalised.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said in my reply, we are concerned with the fact that the students should not be deprived with the PCs and, therefore, they have been replaced. In fact, in the contractual obligations of the company, it is laid out that they must make good for whatever is lost. Otherwise, the money is retained. We expedite matters, so that the duration where the students do not have the PCs is the shortest. In any case, we need some time to get back the PCs into the schools.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister confirming that security services were available at these different schools? Were these companies requested to submit an interest cover – I think it is a public liabilities cover – before being allocated the contract?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a requirement of any contractor. But, beyond that, we have a clause in the contract, where it says ‘any item lost during the time school institutions are guarded by the company, whether involving breakage or not, will be chargeable on the contractor’. So, we have got enough measures, but, in spite of that, the problem is there, and we are taking additional measures.

Mr Babajee: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the schools are equipped with security officers. I would like to ask the hon. Minister what are the responsibilities of these security officers in these cases of burglaries?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they have to be on duty and watch after the security of the schools. But, as I said, this is a recent phenomenon, and we are taking a number of steps, in order to ensure that even the contractual obligations are stricter.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Minister which company has been awarded the contract for security?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the company which has been awarded the contract is Keep Pace Security Guards Ltd.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the Keep Pace Security Guards Ltd is in charge of the security for all the schools where the thefts have occurred? If this is the case, what action has been taken against the security company, and what measures are being taken for this company to reimburse all these items?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a report is made of all the thefts, and this is put on file so that the next time this company applies for a contract, this is taken into consideration. We are seeking advice from the SLO, to ensure that proper action is taken when new contracts are floated. As regards making good the computers, as I said, there are clauses and the money is retained to buy the computers and put them back in the schools.

CANDOS LANE – CONVERSION INTO ONE-WAY

(No. B/359) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he is aware of the traffic difficulties faced by the residents of Candos Lane, off Cossigny Avenue and SSR Avenue, and, if so, will he state if it is proposed to have it converted into a one-way lane.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for drawing attention to the traffic difficulties at Candos Lane.

The Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit of my Ministry is taking steps to convert it into a one-way lane by the end of this week.

MAURITIUS SUGAR AUTHORITY – ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

(No. B/360) **Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Sugar Authority, details of its organisational structure.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the information sought by my hon. friend will be tabled.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister what is the mechanism by which there is sharing of information from the Director to the other level of the management within that organisational structure?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as I know, there has been no complaint, although I do understand that sometimes there have been complaints that the Executive Director acts with a tight fist. But, there has been no formal complaint filed. Otherwise, I would have seen to it that the matter be addressed and corrective measures be taken.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my question was not about whether there was any complaint. My question was: what is the mechanism through which the Director shares information with the next level of management?

Dr. Boolell: As I said, as far as I know, there has been no complaint. I have been told that, in respect of sharing of information, there is no problem. But, I do concur that, sometimes, relations can be a bit sour at the Mauritius Sugar Authority. When complaints are filed, I take the corrective measures.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether all meetings that are held between the Director and the members of the MSPA are minuted?

Dr. Boolell: I can seek the information and relay it to my hon. friend.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that, within this organisational structure, when officers accompany the Director to meetings with people of the MSPA and ask pertinent questions, the Director sees to it that these officers do not accompany him again to these meetings? Is he aware of that?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if this is the case, the matter should have been reported to me. There has been no such information relayed to me. But, I can assure the hon. Member that when meetings are held in my office, all information are minuted and appropriate measures taken to ensure that there is transparency and accountability.

FARMERS SERVICE CORPORATION – CANE SETTS – PRODUCTION

(No. B/361) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether, in regard to the production of cane setts, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Farmers Service Corporation, information as to if the Corporation has stopped producing same and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed by the Farmers Service Corporation that the production of cane setts has not stopped.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that in Forbach, it is Belle Vue that has produced the cane setts and that they are of subnormal quality?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the complaint was made to me personally, and corrective measures were taken. But, it was only complaint from a single farmer. Let me reassure the hon. Member that when it comes to logistic support, we have to rely upon the sugar producers in that particular area, because they have all the logistic support. There is collaboration between the planters and the sugar producers. There has been the odd complaint, but whenever there is a complaint, corrective measures are taken.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the FSC is planning to stop, in the near future or in the mid-term future, the production of cane setts?

Dr. Boolell:No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Guinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that, for example, farmers giving their land to the FSC for production of cane setts are not covered by the SIFB? Is this the case and, if so, will the hon. Minister see to it that the situation is remedied?

Dr Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it's not to my knowledge, although there is a host of incentives and facilities that are granted to the planters. As far as I know, there is no problem, but I will look into it and report.

FIELD OPERATIONS PROJECT - SMEs

(No. B/362) Miss K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the Field Operations project referred to in the Multi-Annual Adaptation Strategy of the Sugar Industry, he will state –

- (a) the number of Small and Medium Enterprises currently providing their services as part of the project, and
- (b) the list of Small and Medium Enterprises who have been approached as potential suppliers of services for the project.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the Multi-Annual Adaptation Strategy (MAAS), section 96 clearly outlines the objectives of the field operations and regrouping project.

I am informed by the Project Implementation Committee that with regard to part (a), ten SMEs have provided their services in phase 1 of the project. The list of these SMEs together with the type of services they provided is being tabled.

As regard part (b) of the question, I am informed by the Project Implementation Committee that the Farmers Service Corporation has already, through the press on 06 May 2007, invited potential service providers to register themselves with the Farmers Service Corporation for

land preparation, derocking, transport costs and harvesting. The last date for registration is 31 May 2007. After that, the FSC will examine the different proposals received and will shortlist those who satisfy the requirements. At this stage, it will not be possible to provide any list of small and medium suppliers of service who have been approached.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he can confirm to the House that the advertisement that was put in the press by the FSC for field operations was made after protests by some small planters for the level of service they had obtained so far?

Dr. Boolell: No, not to my knowledge.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that some small planters are paying Rs84,000 per hectare for these derocking whereas they could get this done from an SME for Rs70,000? Is he aware of that?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what we are doing is that we are seeing to it that the best services are offered to the planters. We cannot take risks and we have to make sure that the services being dispensed are good, with the collaboration of all partners concerned.

Dr. Hawoldar: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether at the level of his Ministry, he has got a system whereby he can make sure that the small planters' fields are derocked properly as it should have been done, because there are complaints that many small planters have made on this issue and on sugar cane setts that have been planted?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the work carried out is related to coarse or fine derocking, depending on the request made by the planters and the costs vary between 7% to 38%. As far as monitoring is concerned, planters are part and parcel of the Project Implementation Committee and before the work is entrusted, we would make sure that everybody is on board. There is proper interaction. If there is any complaint coming from any particular planter, we certainly would look into the matter and corrective measures would be taken.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question!

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that some small planters have asked that these derocking projects be given directly to the small operators rather than going through the millers, who are then taking a fee for being intermediate? Is he aware that there is a request from the small planters to disintermediate these millers from this project?

Dr. Boolell: No, we cannot disengage the millers. In fact, there is no management fee as far as the millers are concerned, but when it comes to enlisting the services of small entrepreneurs, we have to make sure that they have the equipment and that they can deliver. We cannot compromise on this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Mungur, last question!

Dr. Mungur: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm that in the Government Programme of 2005/2010, Rs5 billion have been earmarked for the derocking of the small planters' fields?

Dr. Boolell: I don't know exactly, but let me remind my hon. friend that we did not wait for accompanying funds to be released. Right from the outset, Government released Rs500 m. for derocking and land preparation project, a sum of Rs265 m. has been used for the purchase of equipment.

LA CITADELLE - FESTIVAL REGGAE DONN SA 3

(No. B/363) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether he is aware that *Live n Direct* entertainment cancelled the concert *Festival Reggae Donn Sa 3*, which was to be held at *La Citadelle* on 28 April 2007 and, if so, will he state the reasons therefor.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr. X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question.

I am informed that on 07 March, Live N Direct entertainment Ltd made a reservation to Discover Mauritius Ltd for the renting of *La Citadelle*

for the purpose of organising a concert, *Festival Reggae Donn Sa 3*, scheduled to be held on Saturday 28 April 2007.

As hon. Members of the House may be aware, Discover Mauritius Ltd is a 100% Government owned company, which has been entrusted with the responsibility of managing, promoting and maintaining *La Citadelle*.

Discover Mauritius Ltd informed the organisers that there was no objection to their application, provided that they obtain an Occasional Licence for Public Entertainment Organiser from the Municipal Council of Port Louis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, any organiser of any occasional public entertainment event in Port Louis requires such a licence from the Municipal Council in accordance with the 8th Schedule of the Local Government Act. This licence is, however, granted upon production of clearances obtained from relevant Authorities, namely, Police Department, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Health, Mauritius Revenue Authority and Mauritius Society of Authors.

Subsequently, Discover Mauritius Ltd was informed two days before the event by the organisers that they could not proceed with the organisation of their concert since they had not obtained the necessary clearances and licence from the Authorities concerned. The event was accordingly cancelled.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the Police and other Authorities concerned did not give the necessary authorisation for the holding of the concert on account of various representations made from people residing in the vicinity of *La Citadelle*.

I personally believe that *La Citadelle* is a major historical/cultural attraction which needs to be exploited for the promotion of leisure activities as well as an added tourist product. I am, therefore, proposing to arrange for necessary noise tests to be carried out at *La Citadelle* to determine the type of events that could be safely organised there and which would be in compliance with the noise level authorised under the Environment Protection Regulations 1997.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware that artists from islands of the Indian Ocean turned up to participate in the concert, that members of the public have already bought their tickets and preparations were already finalised and, at the last minute, they were told that permission has not been granted and the organisers had to cancel the whole thing, causing losses of approximately Rs200,000 to them? Will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism agree that such a situation can affect the reputation of our country? Are we to understand that the sad days when football matches had to be played...

The Deputy Speaker: This has nothing to do with the question.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: ...in Reunion Island are back again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also regret the fact that the concert did not take place. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, the organising of a concert in Mauritius, according to law, is so onerous, people have to get so many clearances and I presume that, right to the last moment, they were expecting the clearances and did not receive them. I think there is a case for looking at how these events can be organised and streamlining and certainly cutting out some of the redtape. But the other issue that the hon. Member needs to take into account is the fact that the present noise regulations are so stringent that, in fact, it would be very difficult for any activity at *La Citadelle* to meet the 50 decibels that are required at night there.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: According to the information, the organisers were told to go and organise their concert at Germain Comarmond Stadium, Bambous and, then, at the last minute, they were told that authorisation could not be granted because the grass would be damaged. This is adding insult to injury.

The Deputy Speaker: In that case, hon. Member, this question has to be addressed to the Minister of Youth and Sports, if I may say.

Mrs Labelle: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister on which date the organisers were informed by the various authorities that their request could not be acceded to?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am responding because Citadelle is under the Ministry of Tourism. I cannot answer for the Municipality of Port Louis or what the Police authorities did or did not do. All that I know is that there are so many permits that need to be obtained and some of the regulations as to noise are so stringent that it is now going to be very difficult to hold anything of the sort at the Citadelle.

Mr Barbier: The hon. Minister just mentioned that the organisers had a refusal from the Police because the Police had received representations from the inhabitants living in the vicinity. What about the other authorities involved, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which the Minister mentioned, that is, the Ministry of Environment, the Municipality of Port Louis, the MASA? Have the other authorities already granted the authorisation to the organisers?

Mr X. L. Duval: I am not sure, but, again, the information I gathered is that the Ministry of Environment also objected to the noise level.

The Deputy Speaker: I wonder also whether the hon. Minister can respond for the Police, for the Ministry of Environment and for all the other authorities.

Mrs Perrier: Le ministre est d'accord avec moi que la Citadelle a accueilli dans un passé récent beaucoup d'autres concerts aussi bruyants, sinon plus bruyants, sans qu'il y ait eu aucune protestation de la part des habitants des environs. Alors, peut-il réconcilier le fait que juste pour ce concert-là, il y a eu des protestations?

Mr X. L. Duval: I must say that recently since the "privatisation" of the Citadelle, it has been organised much more often than previously. So, I can understand that part of the population around Citadelle has objected because there have been many more events. I can see it in that light one particular event which, I think, went into the early hours of the morning and disturbed the population around there. I can understand that. I don't think there is anything particular with that concert. I don't think we ought to give the impression that it is that particular concert which has been aimed at because it is for reggae or whatever. It would not be the right attitude, I think, because we are blocked now at the Citadelle until we find a solution.

Mr Lesjongard: Do we understand from the hon. Minister, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Citadelle will no more be used for such activities and may I ask him *cotte nou pour alle faire la faya dans ça pays là?*

Mr X. L. Duval: *A nou guetté!* As I have mentioned in the last part of my reply, we are going to carry out noise level test according to law, to see exactly who is right and who is wrong and what are the permissible activities at the Citadelle.

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD - DEFICIT

(No. B/364) Mr S. Soodun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Agricultural Marketing Board, information as to if, in view of its present deficit of Rs71m, it will consider reviewing its management and occupational costs.

(Withdrawn)

SMALL PLANTERS – LAND PREPARATION

(No. B/365) Mr S. Soodun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the small planters who have regrouped themselves and having over 2000 acres, he will state if the preparation of their land has been completed in December 2006, as stated in the Roadmap for the Sugar Industry, and, if not, will he give the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

EX-CHA HOUSES – SALE

(No. B/366) Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the sale of the ex-CHA houses, he will give the details of the expenses that the buyers thereof will have to incur before their title deeds are finalised.

Mr Dulull: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as opposed to the sale of land on which the ex-CHA houses, I am advised that in regard to the sale of the ex-CHA houses, the buyers have to call at the Housing Management Unit at Mère Barthélemy street, Port Louis to obtain a payment form in respect of the value of the house and thereafter call at the cashier's office of the Ministry for payment.

These houses may be purchased at nominal amount of –

- (a) Rs500 for houses built before the year 1980;
- (b) Rs800 for houses built between 1981 and 1991, and
- (c) Rs1000 for houses built between 1991 and 1993.

Subsequently, the buyer should call at a notary –

- (a) for the drawing up of a deed of acquittance against payment of Rs1000;
- (b) for the transcription of the deed of acquittance against payment of Rs1000, and
- (c) to obtain a copy of the document against a fee of Rs500.

HIGHLANDS – FOOTBALL GROUND

(No. B/367) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Local Government whether, in regard to the football grounds donated by the Highlands Sugar Estate following its closure, he will state their present condition, indicating if any upgrading projects are being envisaged.

(Withdrawn)

LA CAVERNE AND PHOENIX - ROADS, DRAINS AND SPORTS COMPLEXES – CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/368) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to projects for the construction of new roads, drains and sports complexes in Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, he will give a list thereof –

- (a) being implemented, and
- (b) to be implemented, indicating in each case the nature of the works being carried out.

(Withdrawn)

MIE – DIRECTOR - POST

(No. B/369) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he is aware that Mr P. P., former Director of the Mauritius Institute of Education, has resigned and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Institute, information as to the reasons therefor.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the former Director did not resign; he made a request to be retired, and this was agreed upon.

The former Director had been appointed in a temporary capacity in August 2004 by the former Government.

A call for applications for the post of Director had been made. However, no interview was held. It was the former Prime Minister who appointed the former Director.

It is to be noted that the then Deputy Director, who had acted as Acting Director, was not considered for the post.

The new Government decided to terminate the appointment of the former Director in a temporary capacity with effect from 14 February 2007 in accordance with Section 113(4) of the Constitution and Section 37A of the Labour Act.

As I stated before, he decided not to go back to his substantive position, but preferred to retire.

He made a request to retire not as Associate Professor, his substantive post, but as Director. This was agreed.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm who is the Director now of the MIE?

Mr Gokhool: We do not have a Director now. We have an acting Director.

Mr Varma: May I know who is the acting Director?

Mr Gokhool: It is Mrs Thancanamootoo.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister confirm when will the Director be appointed?

Mr Gokhool: I cannot confirm, but we are paying attention to this issue.

Mrs Labelle: Will the hon. Minister confirm whether Mrs Thancanamootoo has been acting Director in the past and for how long she has been working as acting Director?

Mr Gokhool: As I said, in the past - I cannot say exactly - she is the substantive Deputy Director and whenever the Director is absent, she acted as acting Director.

Mrs Labelle: What I wanted to clarify is whether Mrs Thancanamootoo was acting Director previous to the appointment of Mr P.P.?

Mr Gokhool: This is what I said. In fact, this is some kind of injustice that may have been done to the Deputy Director and acting Director and in a way, there is some kind of remedial action which has been taken.

FORT GEORGE POWER STATION – ENGINES - MAINTENANCE

(No. B/370) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the fault which occurred, on 25 April 2007, on one of the engines at the Fort George Power Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –

- (a) the nature thereof;
- (b) when the engine was last maintained, and
- (c) the cost incurred for the running of the gas turbine at the Nicolay Power Station during the period when that engine was out of order.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in regard to the fault which occurred, on 25 of April 2007, on one of the engines at Fort George, I am informed by the CEB that –

- (a) the Generator Unit No. 2, at Fort George failed on the 25 of April 2007 at 16.03 hours, owing to a mechanical failure of an exhaust valve hydraulic activator, in fact, which cracked and burst open and which in turn caused damage to an exhaust gas turbocharger. This generator unit, which was commissioned in May 1993, has run for 102,779 hours as at 25 April 2007. This fault can, therefore, be attributed to the fatigue of these parts;
- (b) In line with the maintenance policy of the CEB to have all generating units maintained as per a scheduled maintenance programme based on the number of running hours, this engine was overhauled over the period 31 July to 12 September 2006;
- (c) To offset the deficit on the supply side as a result of the breakdown of this engine, the gas turbines at Nicolay Power Station were used on the 25, 26, 27 and 30 April with a cumulative generation of 597,700 kWh. The cost incurred by the CEB to run the gas turbines is Rs3,986,659, amounting to an additional cost of Rs2,671,719.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me thank the hon. Minister for his reply. Since the Minister said that the engine was overhauled in 2006, but at the time they did the overhauling, did they not see any cracking on the engine?

Dr. Kasenally: No, there was no cracking on that part of the engine. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I paid a visit there and it appears that the cracking happened spontaneously.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister what was the maximum demand on the network at that time and whether we near miss a load shedding because of that failure?

Dr. Kasenally: I need notice of that question, but I can assure the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there were no load shedding at that period of time. In fact, the CEB managed to rearrange its load and the combined effect of Unit II and Unit III generators at Fort George were on schedule. In fact, there were two generators; one of them was on scheduled maintenance, and there was also the CTBV unit which was on scheduled maintenance. This has caused a lack of about 90 MW on CEB grid, but there was no schedule shedding. In fact, we had to go all the way through on the gas turbines. But in order to minimise the use of that gas turbines at Nicolay, which the hon. Member may know is very expensive, the CEB requested CTBV to reschedule the maintenance of its second unit generator which was due on 11 May to 18 May. In the meantime, the CEB has expedited maintenance of the Unit III generator and repairs to Unit II generator at Fort George. The repairs to the Unit II generator at Fort George are expected to be completed by the end of the week.

Moreover, the CT SAV 2 which was on a reliability testing as per contract has contributed to abating the problem by providing 37 MW on the CEB grid. This allowed the CEB to use the gas turbines at Nicolay station sparingly. They were run at peak time only, thus mitigating the extent of extra expenses.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether it is normal for the CEB to have recourse to turbo generators which have not gone through the full sequence of commissioning?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a highly technical question. As far as the turbo generator is concerned, it was not damaged. In fact, oil splashed on the alternator. Not being an electrical engineer as the hon. Member, I think it would be difficult for me to answer this highly technical question.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will put one last question which is important. Why I put this question to the hon. Minister is because he said that the CEB had recourse to CT SAV for an additional of 37 MW on the network. It is known that at time CT SAV was going through the commissioning phases. That is why I asked whether it is normal for CEB to have recourse to an engine which has not been fully commissioned and have that engine deliver power on the grid?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of course, CEB did take what we call a calculated risk. But, since electricity was available, why not make use of it? It was on a reliability test. In case that generator failed, we would have had to resort to the gas turbines which would have been more expensive. But, by so doing, we have saved the country substantial sums of money. In life, we have to take a calculated risk. If we do not take any risk, we will never be able to achieve anything. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are many incidents in life where we have to take a calculated risk. As a surgeon, I have taken many calculated risks to save lives of people.

POINTE AUX SABLES - COAL FIRED POWER PLANT

(No. B/371) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether, in regard to the coal fired power plant to be set up at Pointe aux Sables, he will state if sea water will be used as a cooling medium, indicating if any study has been carried out to assess how this will impact on the marine eco system.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the CEB that the Coal Fired Power Plant, to be set up at Pointe aux Caves, will make use of sea water as a raw water cooling medium for condensers associated with the two units of 65 MW steam turbine.

Moreover, I am informed by the CEB that an Environment Impact Assessment, which covers all environment impacts associated with the project, has already been submitted to the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister the volume of sea water to be used per day for cooling purposes?

Dr. Kasenally: I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do not have this information available, but I shall certainly seek this highly technical information from the CEB.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister at what temperature that water will be rejected in the sea water?

Dr. Kasenally: I am prepared for this one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The differential in temperature of intake and outlet sea water will be at most 9⁰ celcius. I must point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that sea water cooling system has been in operation at the CEB – being an engineer, the hon. Member may well be aware of it – at Fort Victoria power station since the early 60 without any apparent adverse impact on the environment and marine life. It is sea water.

Mr Lesjongard: One last question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I understand that that company has already been delivered a Letter of Intent. May I know what are the specifications that have been taken into consideration with regard to what I have put as question, that is, the cooling medium, before the issue of that Letter of Intent?

Dr. Kasenally: Again, this is a very technical question, and if the hon. Member puts a substantive question, I will seek the information from the technical department of the CEB and inform my hon. colleague about it.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my question relates to the previous question. Can the hon. Minister lay on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the Letter of Intent issued to the promoters?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as the Letter of Intent is concerned, it refers to the BOI and the question should be addressed to the Minister of Finance.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that a rise of 9⁰ in the water body, in the water that is going to be returned to the sea, will affect the amount of oxygen contents of the water body and will, without any doubt, affect sea life in that particular area where it is being returned to?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as I know, my limited knowledge in chemistry and science does not make me believe that a rise in temperature can cause a dissociation of the oxygen water content. However, we have had experience of sea water being used since the early 60 as I have mentioned and so far, apparently, there has not been any adverse effect. Nevertheless, I think the Ministry of environment, through its technical laboratory experts, would undertake a study to see exactly to what extent, if any, oxygen is dissociated from the water and, therefore, may not be available to marine life.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my question was not related to the dissociation of sea water, but any rise in temperature normally causes expulsion of dissolved oxygen from the water. This is why I am saying that even without having to go into deep chemical analysis, we can assess that there will definitely be some impact on the water life in that area.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if you take the amount of water that is being discharged into the sea and calculate its dilution effect, the net rise in temperature may not be 9⁰, but considerably less and I would dare to make an approximation. It might be no more than one or two degrees, because of the vast amount of dilution.

Mr. Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether the officers of the Ministry has got the expertise to assess this project?

Dr. Kasenally: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not only we have got the expertise, but there have also been consultants of international repute which the CEB has contracted to ensure that this project goes on to completion without adverse effect on environment, but with positive effect on the availability of cheap electricity to this country.

The Deputy Speaker: Last question, hon. Lesjongard.

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House that it is only now that the CEB is envisaging sending engineers to China to see how such a system is working? China is the only place in the world where we have such a system.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is never too late to learn and to perfect oneself. This is a new technology compared to the one we have at CTDS. As I mentioned previously, we are using clean coal technology which is pulverised and there are new elements involved in it and, therefore, it is at the behest of the company putting this plant in Mauritius that the CEB has been invited to send a delegation of technical people to be able to understand how the system works and what may be the impact and what measures can be taken to ensure that we have a clean technology.

PORT AREA – SECURITY NORMS

(No. B/372) Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the security norms in the port region, he will state if changes have been brought thereto and, if so –

- (a) if these changes have given rise to operational problems;
- (b) the impact of the changes on the export manufacturing sector, and
- (c) if the incoming vessels have suffered any delay as a result thereof.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the Port is a highly secure area and matters pertaining to security are embedded in the Ports Act and the Ports (Operations and Safety) Regulations.

Recently, the Mauritius Ports Authority has implemented a number of projects with a view to reinforcing security over the port area. Such projects estimated at approximately Rs100 m, include –

- (a) the construction of a perimeter fencing;

- (b) the construction of 5 control gate houses at the entry/exit points, and
- (c) the installation of 55 CCTV cameras at strategic locations which will be operational by December 2007.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to reassure the House that the implementation of these projects have not given rise to any operational problems.

However, may I also inform the House that recently some operational problems have been encountered at the Mauritius Container Terminal –

- (i) port activities were disrupted between the period 23 February and 03 March and 13 to 17 March 2007 because of persistent bad weather conditions;
- (ii) during the period 13 to 17 April 2007, gusts in excess of 58 kilometres per hour were registered, which seriously affected port operations, leading subsequently to a bunching of vessels and pre-berthing delays, and
- (iii) the safe limit for crane operations at the MCT which is 72 kilometres per hour, had to be temporarily reduced to 58 kilometres per hour during the period 13 March to 18 April to enable a safety audit of the three cranes to be carried out and remedial measures to be taken by the contractor, Messrs. SOMIM.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must stress that operational problems at the MCT as a result of bad weather conditions is not new. The House may wish to know that the Indian Ocean region was badly affected by exceptional climatic conditions since February. Ports in regions such as Réunion, Tamatave and Durban also have to stop operations because of the bad weather conditions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, however, the situation in the Port has now returned to normalcy since 01 May 2007 as a result of –

- (i) the commitment and goodwill demonstrated by the port workers to provide a 24-hour service at the SSR Terminal;
- (ii) additional equipment, particularly, forklifts which were leased on a fast track basis;

- (iii) and the reinstatement of the original safety limit for the operation of the cranes as from 18 April 2007.

The waiting time for vessels has also been restored to its previous level, that is, 5 to 6 hours, which is well within international norms and this notwithstanding the fact that transshipment trade has experienced a growth of 22.5% over the past nine months to reach 81,465 TEUs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I inform the House that following the maintenance and repairs issues pertaining to the three cranes, the following steps are being taken–

- (i) appointment of an international crane expert to carry out a technical audit of the three cranes to ensure their optimal and safe operation, and
- (ii) transfer of the cranes after upgrading to Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd as from 01 January 2008.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, finally, may I take this opportunity to inform the House that following –

- (i) the implementation of the project for the dredging of the English Channel up to 4.5 metres;
- (ii) the decision to upgrade the SSR Terminal which is a natural harbour to a fully-fledged container terminal, and
- (iii) procurement by CHCL of 2 additional ship-to-shore cranes, amongst others, our port is regaining the confidence of the major shipping lines operating worldwide, in particular, Maersk, MSC, CMA, CGM/Delmas which have confirmed their intention to increase the number of services through Port Louis. The total transshipment for year 2007 is thus expected to increase by over 40% compared to last year whilst, in fact, during the last year of the previous Government, it had fallen by 15%.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am confident that the implementation of the ongoing measures will go a long way to position Port Louis as a major regional container hub.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning resistance to gusts, the hon. Minister mentioned that the norms have been brought down. May I ask the Minister whether this was recommended by the company responsible for maintenance and whether the norms in force now are as per international norms?

Mr Duval: I have answered to the question, but I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that we have not been too happy with the maintenance situation of the cranes. They are getting old and there is a local contractor here. There are three things happening. Last time, I answered in Parliament that there is an independent expert which is coming to have a report on the incident involving, I think, crane 101 and, secondly, as I have mentioned, we are having a full audit of the three cranes - it is costing a bit of money - so that we can sort out the problems, and, thirdly, there is a structural problem in the operation of the cranes. The cranes belong to the MPA, but they are actually operated by the Cargo Handling. So, the MPA does not have all the necessary incentives to maintain the cranes up to top level. This is why the cranes, will be transferred over to Cargo Handling so that the user will also be the owner of the cranes.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I understand the hon. Minister, but what I wanted to know was: which Authority decided that the norms with regard to gusts, should be brought from 70 kms per hour to 50 kms per hour?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can't be expected to know all the technical problems at the port. The questions related to security norms and safety consideration at the same time. If the hon. Member asks a precise question, I'll provide all the information, because it is in the interest of all that the cranes work properly.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I put that question because this is a major change. Almost every day, in this country, we have gusts of at least 50 to 60 kms/hr, that is, most of the time, the crane at the port is not in working condition, or because of security reasons the crane cannot be operated.

Mr X. L. Duval: The information I would like to provide is this: there was this slipping of the crane; it was decided that the local contractor would have a complete look at the whole three cranes and see whether there were any problems which had to be repaired. During that one month or so that the limit was brought down from 70 kms to about 58 kms, this was the time that Messrs SOMIM, I understand, were working on the cranes to get matters right. Once they were satisfied, then, the safety norms were brought back to 72 kms/hr. This is what I know.

QUARTIER MILITIAIRE/WOOTON -ROADS UPGRADING

(No. B/373) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire and Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the project for the widening of the road leading from Quartier Militaire to Couacaud, *via* Valleta, he will state where matters now stand.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the project consists of upgrading the Quartier Militaire Road from Quartier Militaire to Wooton and includes widening, the improvement of curves, construction of footpaths and drains, upgrading of Couacaud and other bridges and culverts. The project will be carried out in phases.

Phase I of the project, that is, the upgrading of the road from Wooton to Belle Rive (2.4 km) has been included in my Ministry's draft estimates for financial year 2007-2008, which have been submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Once the estimates are approved, the project will be implemented next financial year and works would start in May 2008.

Mr Dayal: Is the hon. Deputy Prime Minister aware that this road is a very important link road - in fact, it connects Plaine Wilhems to the East - and that there have been many accidents and some of them fatal? Will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister see to it that the project really materializes in the next financial year?

Dr. Beebeejaun: I'll do my best, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the narrowness of the road all the way through to Quartier Militaire and the fact that the road is presently being used extensively by people from the east coast of the island, could the hon. Deputy Prime Minister impress upon his colleague, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, so that funds be made available for the construction of the road all the way through from Wooton roundabout to Quartier Militaire?

Dr. Beebeejaun: This is in the first part of my answer.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is why I said that it be done in the next financial year.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think we must be realistic. This project is going to cost above Rs500 m. and I cannot give any guarantee that we will be able to do it in one year.

Mr Guinness: Can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to be realistic? Is he aware that, in the 2005/2006 Budget, there was a provision of Rs25 m. and then in 2006/2007, the provision has completely disappeared in the Budget? Therefore, I'll appeal to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to plead the case, because it is an important road.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is quite right. There has been a revision because we are not happy with the provision estimates of the consultant previously.

STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL - PHOENIX – PROBLEMS

(No. B/374) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if he has received letters in regard to the problems existing at the Phoenix State Secondary School from –

- (a) the former Rector, dated 20 March 2007, and
- (b) the President of the Parent Teachers Association, dated 06 April 2007 and if so, will he state the remedial measures that have been or will be taken, if any.

(Withdrawn)

LE BOUCHON – COMMUNITY CENTRE

(No. B/375) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the proposed construction of a community centre at Le Bouchon, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as stated in the reply to PQ No. IB/236 on 06 September 2005, the Ministry of Housing and Lands had identified a plot of private land for the project.

I have now been informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that, that land of an extent of 1,082.93 m² was compulsorily acquired and was vested in my Ministry on 11 May 2007.

Arrangements have been made to include the construction of the community centre in the development programme for the next financial year on condition that the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund (SILWF), which falls under the responsibility of Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions, will take necessary measures for the running and maintenance of the community centre on its completion.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, OSAKA – ATHLETES

(No. B/376) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether, in regard to the World Championship to be held in Osaka, he will state the different forms of assistance, including financial and technical, that will be provided to the high level athletes who will participate therein, and especially, to Mr S. B. and Mr E. M.

(Withdrawn)

HOSPITALS & HEALTH CENTRES

– MEDICINE/DRUGS - STANDARD

(No. 378) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to the medicine/drugs provided to the outpatients in the hospitals and health centres, during the past year, he will state if any of them have been found to be below standard and, if so, will he state –

- (a) the names thereof;
- (b) the procedure used for the purchase thereof;
- (c) the remedial actions taken, if any, and
- (d) the measures that have been or will be taken to avoid any such recurrence.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/355)

AIRPORTS OF MAURITIUS (LTD.) – BOARD MEMBERS

(No. B/379) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the Members of the Board of the Airports of Mauritius (Ltd.), he will, for the benefit of the House obtain from the Board, a list thereof, indicating their qualifications and terms and conditions of appointment.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/357)

CENTRAL FLACQ - TRADE FAIR

(No. B/380) Mr G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will state if a trade fair was organized, in December 2006, at Central Flacq, in the vicinity of the Mauritius Post and Co-operative Bank and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Moka/Flacq District Council, information as to if the Council granted any occasional licence for the holding of the fair, indicating the amount claimed as licence fees and the amount collected to date.

Dr. David: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Moka/Flacq District Council that no trade fair was organized in December 2006 in the vicinity of the Mauritius Post and Co-operative Bank at Central Flacq.

**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES
AUTHORITY - MR M. – RECRUITMENT**

(No. B/381) Mr A. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Information and Communications Technologies Authority, information as to if one Mr M. has been recruited thereat and, if so –

- (a) in what capacity;
- (b) his qualifications, and
- (c) his terms and conditions of employment.

Mr Sinatambou: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the ICT Authority that no person bearing the name of Mr M. has been recruited thereat. However, there is one Mr M. who represents a company, Landmark Management and Technology Consult Ltd., whose services has been enlisted for the purpose of conducting an HR audit and making appropriate recommendations on HR issues in the absence of a Human Resource Manager at the ICT Authority.

I am further informed that the services of the consultancy firm have been enlisted after tendering exercise for a period of six months at a monthly rate of Rs100,000 as from 18 December 2006. According to records provided, Mr M. holds the following qualifications: he is a Certified HR professional from Canada, a Certified Compensation Professional from Canada, he holds an LL.B (Honours) from the University of London, he holds an MA from the University of Canterbury and a Phd. from the University of York.

AIRPORTS OF MAURITIUS (LTD.)

– FIRE FIGHTING ENGINES

(No. B/382) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the fire fighting services at the airport, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Airports of Mauritius (Ltd.) information as to –

- (a) the number of the major fire fighting engines, known under the name of "Cobra", presently in service;
- (b) the spare parts and tyres in relation thereto, presently in stock, and
- (c) if all the firemen operating these engines have received their protective equipment.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, the company has two major firefighting engines of make Carmichael Cobra. These vehicles are specifically meant for prompt intervention in cases of emergency and are usually kept on standby.

As regards part (b) of the question, upon recommendation of the supplier of the fire fighting engines, a list of some 35 mechanical spare parts comprising different types of filters, bulbs and air cleaner, etc. and in varying quantities is kept in stock. Other spare parts are procured as and when required from Messrs Iframac Ltd., the local representative of Carmichael Cobra.

Concerning the tyres, it is the recommendation of the supplier that they should be of make Michelin 475/80R20. For reasons of operational efficiency, the company usually maintains a stock of some four such tyres.

However, due to unavailability of the tyres from the local supplier during the month of April 2007, AML could not immediately replenish its stock, after having mounted the tyres on its vehicles in the preceding two months. The situation has been remedied as the new tyres ordered have recently been received.

Insofar as part(c) of the question is concerned, all 61 members of staff on the establishment of the Airport Rescue Firefighting Service are in possession of the appropriate personal protective equipment which include protective trousers, helmets, fire coats and fire gloves. However, a batch of 13 firemen, who joined the Airport Rescue Firefighting Service in July and September 2006, and who are still on probation, are yet to be provided with fire proof gloves and boots. An order for their personal protective equipment has been placed since September 2006 with Bristol UK uniforms, the specialists of firefighting gear, but has not yet been delivered.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am further informed by AML that in the meantime the new recruits have been provided with temporary protective equipment to enable them to undertake training exercises and the secondary tasks that are allocated to them during their probationary period.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether there was the visit of an expert from the UK Civil Aviation Service about the shortcoming? Maybe now the equipment has been replenished, but, at some point in time, according to my information, there was a lack of protective equipment, lack of tyres, lack of boots, etc. Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister table a report of this expert, if any?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not aware. I have not been advised that we had the visit of such an expert. But if the hon. Member wants to ask a substantive question, it will be a pleasure for me to answer.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister say whether....

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lauthan, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister cannot give you the answer right away. Please come with a substantive question.

NATIONAL PAY COUNCIL – TRADE UNIONS - REPRESENTATIVES

(No. B/383) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the National Pay Council, he will state –

- (a) how the representatives of the Trade Unions were chosen, and
- (b) the criteria on which salary compensation will be based.

(Vide reply to PNQ)

ENTERPRISE MAURITIUS – CHAIRPERSON & CHIEF EXECUTIVE

(No. B/384) Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Co-operatives whether, in regard to the Chairperson and the Chief Executive of Enterprise Mauritius, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Enterprise Mauritius, information as to –

- (a) their terms and conditions of employment;
- (b) if they are eligible to either a company car or any other means of travelling, and
- (c) the number of overseas missions they have undertaken since their appointment.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, I refer the hon. Member to my replies to PQ Nos. B/1128 and B/152 on 31 October 2006 and 17 April 2007 respectively.

As regards part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Chairperson of Enterprise Mauritius is neither eligible to a company car nor any means of travelling. The Chief Executive Officer of Enterprise Mauritius is eligible to a chauffeur-driven company car.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Chairperson has proceeded on overseas mission on eight occasions, while the Chief Executive Officer has been on mission twice since their appointments.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether he is satisfied with the work being done by the Chairperson and the Chief Executive of Enterprise Mauritius?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the main functions of Enterprise Mauritius is the promotion of exports. If we go by the figures of exports of textiles, for the month of January/February 2007 compared with previous years, there has been an increase of 25% in exports. We would also be having an output in the EPZ to the tune of Rs40 billion, which seems to be a record value. I would assume that work is being delivered to the satisfaction of the industry.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister, at least, give to the House the figures concerning the salary of the Chairperson and the Chief Executive?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have stated, I have given this information in reply to two previous PQs. The hon. Member also needs to do his research.

ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTRE – DIRECTOR – RECRUITMENT

(No. B/385) Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Arts & Culture whether, in regard to the recruitment of a new Director for the Islamic Cultural Centre, he will state where matters now stand.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Islamic Cultural Centre that recruitment of a new Director will be on the agenda of the next meeting of the Islamic Cultural Centre Board scheduled for 17 May 2007.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I draw the attention of the House that, since some 17 months, the last Director shifted to his former post. Such an important socio-cultural centre has been left without a Director. Can I ask the hon. Minister to expedite matters?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the situation and that's why, on 03 May 2007, I met the Board members and the newly appointed Chairman. I urged them that the Board of the Islamic Cultural Centre should expedite the recruitment exercise and fill the post of Director at that centre, which has been vacant for quite some time.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the numerous problems that have arisen lately with the Hajj matters, we have now a new Chairman and no Director. That's why I am putting the question. Can I also ask the hon. Minister to table the scheme of service and salary structure for the new Director?

Mr Gowressoo: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

SEAFOOD TRAINING INSTITUTE

(No. B/386) **Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries whether, in regard to the proposed setting up of a Seafood Institute, he will state –

- (a) its objectives;
- (b) its location;
- (c) the persons targeted to follow courses thereat, and
- (d) the institutions which will run these courses.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed that there is no proposal as of now for the setting up of a Seafood Institute in Mauritius, and parts (a) to (d) of the question do not arise.

However, I am advised by the Human Resource Development Council that a Special Sectoral Committee on Seafood Hub and Land based Ocean Industry, set up under its aegis and chaired by the Mauritius Research Council, has, on 12 January 2007, submitted its report. One of the recommendations of the report is that more investment in training and research are required to provide the sector with qualified human resources, and the existing training organisation should be networked to form a Seafood Training Institute. I am further advised that the Special Committee is looking into the implementation of the recommendations.

Mr Rucktooa: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, taking into consideration these three things, namely, that Mauritius has barely scratched the surface of the ocean, the availability of our large ocean State and it is going to be our next economic pillar, why is the implementation taking so much time?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, it is not taking a lot of time. This has been identified by the Human Resources Development Council, thoroughly studied by the Research Council, and we are giving serious thought to it. If my hon. friend would refer to the reply I have just given, I have stated that the Special Committee is looking into the implementation of the recommendations. Nevertheless, in the meantime, the University of Technology is conducting courses, and we are impressing upon our officers to take advantage of these courses.

CATOVAIR AIRLINE CARRIER – REUNION ISLAND – TRAFFIC RIGHTS

(No. B/387) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether, in regard to the airline carrier Catovair, he will state the reasons as to why it has not been granted traffic rights to serve Réunion Island.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House may wish to note that IBL Aviation Ltd submitted on 15 March 2004 an application to the then Government for traffic rights to operate scheduled passenger and cargo services on the following routes –

- (i) Mauritius/Rodrigues
- (ii) Mauritius/Réunion, Réunion/Rodrigues,

as well as occasional flights, subject to demand on the Mauritius/Comoros/Seychelles/Central, South and East Africa routes.

However, in a letter dated 25 March 2004, the then Government granted to the company approval to operate scheduled services on the Mauritius/Rodrigues route only, making no mention of the other requests made by the company.

Actual operations started on that route on 01 September 2005, after the present Government approved the issue of an air transport licence in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Aviation Act and of an Air Operation Certificate to IBL Aviation, which are prerequisites for the operations of air services. The present Government has, therefore, authorised not only scheduled flights to Rodrigues, but also charter, cargo and emergency medical services in Africa and the Indian Ocean region.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we went a step further when, concurrently, with a start of services by Catovair, Government, through regulations, waived the passenger service charge of Rs250 previously levied by AML on the Rodrigues route. This represents a shortfall of some Rs10 m. annually for AML.

On 15 August 2005, IBL Aviation Ltd reiterated its application to operate regular scheduled services on the Mauritius/Réunion and Réunion/Rodrigues routes.

The House will appreciate that, in accordance with present policy, this application could only be considered within the framework of bilateral air services agreement between Mauritius and France, signed in 1978, and subsequent Memorandum of Understanding which govern the operations of air services.

As a round of bilateral air services talks were held in September 2005, the Mauritian delegation, headed by my Ministry, insisted that provision be made for dual designation of airlines on both the long haul and regional routes, and this arrangement has been incorporated in paragraph 10 in the Memorandum of Understanding signed after the conclusion of the talks. However, I am given to understand that, at the time, the Mauritian and French delegations could not determine the capacity entitlements, to give effect to the dual designation regime on the regional route and convened that that would be mutually agreed in due course.

In the meantime, my Ministry supported the application made by IBL in August 2005 for Catovair to operate on the Mauritius/Réunion and Réunion/Rodrigues route during the period December 2005-January 2006. Catovair was granted authorisation to operate two weekly flights on the Rodrigues/Pierrefonds/Mauritius route and six weekly flights on the Mauritius/Pierrefonds/Mauritius route during the period 19 December to 31 January 2006.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all these measures are clear indications that the present Government has been supportive of the operations of air services by IBL Aviation Ltd.

However, the House will bear with me that, with the outbreak of Chikungunya in February 2006 and its adverse impact on the Réunion market, where tourist arrivals declined by as much as 30% during some months, compelling Air Mauritius and Air Austral to reduce considerably their frequencies, it was hardly opportune or proper to seek an increase in seat capacity for the purpose of designating a second carrier on either side. However, the situation is being closely monitored, and signs of recovery on

the Réunion market are noted. Indeed, the market is picking up. However, even in March 2007, that is, two months ago, we had still not reached the pre-Chikungunya levels of tourist arrivals from Réunion island. In the prevailing situation, we need to exercise caution and the designation of Catovair which will entail - at the same time, it is important to note - the designation of a second airline by the French Authorities on that route may be considered in due course, when the situation would so permit.

Meanwhile, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Catovair continues to hold a valid Air Operator's Certificate allowing it to operate schedule services on the domestic route as well as, I mentioned before, non-schedule, charter, cargo, emergency medical services in Africa and the Indian Ocean Region.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister confirm whether Catovair would stop operation on the Mauritius/Rodrigues route?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think it has indicated that it is on 01 June that it will stop the operation.

Mr Varma: Why has this decision been taken?

Mr X. L. Duval: I understand them, specifically the plane that they are using for that particular operation which is a very small plane, which was designed basically for Agalega, and although now they have shifted to a slightly bigger plane, so the operations are not profitable. But, I should also mention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that despite all this I, personally, did offer to Catovair the Rodrigues/Reunion route which was, unfortunately, not accepted.

Mr Guimbeau: Etant donné que les autorités françaises sont d'accord à ce que Catovair desserve La Réunion, est-ce que le ministre peut nous dire quand IBL Aviation sera désigné *second carrier*?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the French Authorities have never agreed as far as Catovair is concerned. What they have said, in fact, is that they could welcome Catovair if we designate them. But what should be borne in mind, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that there can be no operation by Catovair until the capacity entitlements are agreed. What I mean is that you can agree on the principle of multi-designation, but then you have to also agree whether you want 10 flights, 2 flights or one flight a

week or whatever it is. That has not been agreed yet. The French are in a situation where they have a huge drop in the market, Air Austral is affected, not only from the French to the Reunion route, but now, on the Mauritius to Reunion route. Air Mauritius also is affected on that route. It's not a very viable proposition, when the market is so down, to go and negotiate with the French Authorities to obtain an increase in capacity when there is a fall in demand. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is unfortunate for Catovair, but the timing has been difficult for the company. We have done everything. We have even taken a loss of Rs10 m. to support the airline going to Rodrigues. AML has taken that decision on the same date that Catovair decided to operate to Rodrigues. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to be fair. The situation concerning Catovair has been largely as a result of the Chikungunya crisis which has and is still affecting the Reunion market where they want to operate.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, voilà une compagnie privée qui veut prendre des risques à ses frais de server La Réunion. Est-ce que le gouvernement a une objection à cela?

Mr X. L. Duval: Not at all! As I mentioned, even under the previous Government when they asked for the Reunion route, they did not accede to it. Air Mauritius has bought the planes, Air Austral has got the planes, we would be happy to accommodate Catovair. I, myself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, am very much in favour of competition where it is possible, that is my own opinion, but it has to be done in a way that will not destroy the market.

Mr Guimbeau: Est-ce que le ministre confirme qu'aussitôt que la situation s'améliore, Catovair aura la permission de desservir sur La Réunion?

Mr X. L. Duval: Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would be very happy to see another national flight carrier taking off to Reunion.

SUGAR INDUSTRY – 40-HOUR WEEK – INTRODUCTION

(No. B/388) **Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands)** asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether he is aware that the introduction of the forty-hour week for workers in the sugar industry has been referred to the Permanent

Arbitration Tribunal since October 2005 and that a decision is being awaited.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I propose to reply to Parliamentary Questions Nos. B/388 and B/389 together as they deal with the same subject matter.

For PQ No. B/388, the answer is in the affirmative. For the information of the hon. Member, the 40-hour week is already applicable in the sugar industry during the intercrop season. The case presently before the Tribunal concerns the application of the 40-hour week during crop season.

With regard to these PQs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to briefly give a chronological account of events relating to the 40-hour week in the sugar industry.

- In June 1993, the Permanent Arbitration Tribunal (PAT) made an Award for the introduction by members of the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association (MSPA) of the 40-hour week during the intercrop season as from January 1994.
- In 1995, following recommendations of the NRB, by way of an amendment to the Remuneration Order Regulations relating to the Sugar Industry, the 40-hour week was made applicable to the whole of the Sugar Industry from Monday to Friday during the intercrop season.
- In 1998, a dispute was reported against the MSPA by all the recognised trade unions for, *inter alia*, the extension of the 40-hour week to the crop season and for it to be applicable on a 5-day week basis. This entailed extensive consultations at the level of my Ministry with parties concerned with a view to the settling of the dispute. The dispute was subsequently referred to the PAT for arbitration.
- In December 2002, the Tribunal delivered its Award on this particular issue, recommending the introduction of the 40-hour week during crop season on a 6-day week basis and that the introduction of the 5-day week be borne in mind and examined in future for implementation if circumstances so permit.

- In 2003, the MSPA applied for judicial review of the PAT Award before the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court quashed the Award relating to the 40-hour week and ordered a fresh hearing before a differently constituted Tribunal.
- The current Tribunal completed hearing on the matter in October 2006 and its ruling is being awaited.

It is clear from what has taken place so far that there have been extensive consultations with all concerned parties at various points in time.

I wish to inform the House that consultations are going on at the level of a Technical Committee chaired by the Attorney-General to work out the modalities of the implementation of the 40-hour week.

Meetings are also being held at the level of my Ministry with, respectively, representatives of the MSPA, the Cane Growers Association and trade unions on the matter, in a spirit of dialogue, so as to make the modalities of implementation acceptable to all.

Mr Varma: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister kindly inform the House who are the parties in the case before the Permanent Arbitration Tribunal?

Dr. Bunwaree: They are unions and the MSPA.

Mr Guimbeau: Le principe est vivant dans un État de droit. Est-ce que le ministre peut donner les raisons pour lesquelles le gouvernement n'a pas attendu le *Award* du TAP?

Dr. Bunwaree: Je dois dire qu'on est en train de revoir les lois du travail. C'est dans le programme de l'alliance sociale, c'était déjà là avant 2000. Je pense que le tribunal est en train de faire son travail et s'il décide de donner son Award, on verra bien ce qu'il y a dedans

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, ce n'est pas logique qu'un Cabinet ministeriel *bypassed* une décision du TAP. Maintenant que le Cabinet a empiété sur une décision du TAP, est-ce que le ministre peut nous dire quel

est le rôle du TAP aujourd'hui et ainsi que le rôle de son président, M. Rashid Hossen?

Dr. Bunwaree: Je viens de dire on n'a pas empiété sur le rôle du TAP. Le TAP continue son travail, mais le gouvernement est là pour gouverner sur un programme *and it has been canvassed to the electorate during the previous election.*

Mr Varma: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the Award, when delivered, will have an incidence on the governmental decision?

Dr. Bunwaree: It all depends on what the Award will be, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

SUGAR INDUSTRY – 40-HOUR WEEK – INTRODUCTION

(No. B/389) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to Government decision to introduce the forty-hour week for workers in the sugar industry, he will state if his Ministry held consultations with other Ministries and stakeholders before that decision was reached, indicating –

- (a) the Ministries and stakeholders involved;
- (b) the dates on which the meetings were held, and
- (c) the stand taken by each of the participants.

(Vide Reply to PQ No. B/388)

IMPASSE EUGÈNE, LE HOCHET - DRAIN WORKS

(No. B/390) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the drain works carried out at Impasse Eugène, Le Hochet, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a temporary remedial measure, a Works Order has already been issued on 08 March 2007 for cleaning of Ruisseau Terre Rouge near Impasse Eugène.

Procedures are underway for the appointment of a new consultant for looking after drain and road projects. However, arrangements have been made for including drain and associated road resurfacing works at Impasse Eugène, Le Hochet, in the priority programme for the next financial year.

RICHFIELD TEXTILES - MORCELLEMENT RAFFRAY, TERRE ROUGE – SITE VISIT

(No. B/391) Mrs B. Juggoo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether he will state if he has recently carried out any site visit at the Richfield Textiles in Morcellement Raffray, Terre Rouge, and, if so, the outcome thereof.

Mr Bachoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I effected a site visit with officers of my Ministry on 09 January 2007 to make a *de visu* assessment of the situation and take stock of the problems of the inhabitants of the locality. The inhabitants complained of black smoke, soot deposition, odour, noise and discharge of wastewater.

A tripartite meeting with the representatives of the inhabitants and the factory was held on 22 February 2007 under my Chairmanship and it was decided that Richfield Textiles would –

- (i) carry out regular maintenance of the boilers;
- (ii) inform the *Police de l'Environnement* in case of breakdown resulting in black smoke emanation and odour nuisance;
- (iii) ensure proper communication and public relation with the inhabitants, and
- (iv) carry out a complete independent environmental audit of the factory including their boilers and submit a report to this Ministry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the company was not responding urgently regarding implementation of the decisions, an Enforcement Notice was served on 22 March 2007 instructing the latter to submit the report of the environmental audit which should include remedial measures to abate the pollution problems by 22 April 2007.

Following this Notice, the factory submitted a preliminary environmental audit report on 23 April 2007 prepared by the University of Mauritius, identifying the sources of problems and indicating possible remedial measures.

Subsequently, my Ministry issued a Variation Notice on 03 May 2007 asking the company to submit the final Environmental Audit Report including a programme of works specifying the time-frame for implementation of remedial measures by 18 May 2007 at latest. My Ministry will monitor the situation closely.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Next item! Time is over.

LA PRENEUSE

- TELECOMMUNICATION TRANSMISSION ANTENNA

(No. B/392) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the installation of a third Telecommunication Transmission Antenna in the same and small residential area in La Preneuse, he will state if these antennas represent security and health risks to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and of the Black River region.

(Withdrawn)