

Debate No. 07 of 17.04.07

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**VERDUN, TERRE ROUGE & EBÈNE - LINK ROAD -
CONSTRUCTION**

(No. B/150) 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 proposed construction of a link road between Verdun, Terre Rouge and Ebène, he will state –

- (a) if any feasibility study has been carried out and
- (b) when works are expected to start and to be completed.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure (Dr. R. Beebejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Road Development Authority as follows –

- (a) The feasibility study for the Terre Rouge-Verdun-Ebène Link Road was carried out by Consultant “Bureau Central d’Etude d’Outremer” (BCEOM) as from March 2006. The report was submitted in September 2006, and
- (b) The detail design report was received in March 2007 and comments of the Road Development Authority will be forwarded to the consultants by the end of April 2007. The tender documents will be ready by the end of May 2007.

The funding of this project is being identified and subsequently, a schedule for the implementation will be prepared.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he can state to the House the benefits that will be derived from this project?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I see it from now, the benefits would be tremendous. It will be a two-pronged benefit, first, in terms of congestion and traffic alleviation. It will act as a ring road and a bypass to Port Louis. The traffic on the M1 and M2, both north and south, will be alleviated. This through traffic in Port Louis will be alleviated and it is estimated to be about 15% of deviation for the through traffic from Port Louis. But also, more importantly, it will connect the North to the South and it will permit development at both ends. The one end is the Riche Terre development project of Tianli and the other end is the development of property for the new administrative city at the SLDC. Along the road, we expect to have economic development, employment creation, and there will be a whole new map of Mauritius, involving development in that area. Also, we are thinking of extending the present trajectory north-west towards Solitude and south-west towards Wooton, making it easy to connect with Plaines Wilhems and the South. It will probably, to my mind, change the map of Mauritius in terms of development and traffic congestion.

Mr Dayal: Can the Deputy Prime Minister tell the House whether the internal rate of return has been worked out?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the IRR today is probably around 37%, but I expect it will be much more than that. It is a very interesting project; it will serve the economic development of the country.

Mr Lesjongard: Can the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether the new road alignment crosses over a cremation ground at Montagne Longue?

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is not, as far as I know.

Dr. Ramloll: Can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether he will consider it feasible to make the road passing the Vishnu Mandiram Mandir a one-way along with this project? It will solve a lot of problems.

The Deputy Prime Minister: It is too early for me at this stage to project, but we will take it into consideration.

Mr Dayal: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the Deputy Prime Minister state to the House if there is any funding agency that has shown interest in the project and how long will it take to be completed?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are in a preliminary stage. The African Development Bank has shown an interest, but it is too early to say at this stage what will be the outcome.

As regards the second part of the question, it will be a minimum of thirty-two months, but it depends whether we will have a dual carriageway or a single carriageway.

Mr Dayal: In the light of the answers given by the Deputy Prime Minister regarding the benefits, I should like to appeal to Government to give urgent attention to the project.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Yes, Sir.

VACCINATION PROTOCOL - PREVNAR AND PNEMO 23

(No. B/151) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether he will state if the vaccines Prevnar and Pnemo 23 form part of the vaccination protocol.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, our national programme of vaccination which is in line with WHO guidelines is carried out to protect against infectious diseases, namely tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, Hepatitis B, Mumps, Measles, Rubella, Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus. In addition, as from March 2006, Haemophilus vaccine protecting against Meningitis and other respiratory diseases has been introduced.

I am informed that vaccines Prevnar and Pnemo 23 are indicated for immunisation against invasive diseases such as Pneumococcal Meningitis, Pneumonia, febrile bacteremia, caused by the bacteria “Streptococcus pneumoniae”.

Vaccine Pnemo 23 is also indicated as additional protection against infections in cases of:

- ◆ Sickle cell anaemia
- ◆ Nephrotic syndrome
- ◆ Thalassaemias

The vaccines Prevnar and Pnemo 23 do not form part of our Expanded Programme of Immunization.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am further informed that WHO considers vaccine Prevnar as a priority in countries where mortality among children aged below 5 years is 50 per thousand live births. The vaccine is also recommended by WHO for countries having a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. In Mauritius, this is not the case.

However, I wish to inform the House that vaccines Prevnar and Pnemo 23 are available in Mauritius. Although they do not form part of the Expanded Immunisation Programme, they are issued by my Ministry to hospitals on request by the treating clinicians in specific cases.

Mrs Perrier: M. le président, est-ce que le Ministre est au courant qu'il y a eu des cas de méningite récemment, qu'il y a, donc, des foyers de méningite dans le pays et que tous les pédiatres dans le privé recommandent aux parents de faire vacciner les enfants contre la méningite à travers le vaccin Prevnar et Pneumo 23? Ce vaccin est extrêmement couteux et, donc, n'est pas disponible pour les petites gens. À Rivière Noire, par exemple, où il y a eu des foyers de méningite, tous les enfants du village de Rivière Noire, de Tamarin et des environs ne sont pas protégés et ce serait bien que le ministre fasse le nécessaire pour rendre ce vaccin accessible au public en general.

Mr Faugoo: As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, these vaccines are not recommended by WHO for any routine immunisation programme. These vaccines are registered in 70 countries. Out of the 70 countries, only the USA has put it in their national programme. These vaccines are available on the Mauritian market. Only four cases of pneumonia were reported in 2006,

but, at any rate, this can be considered to form part of the national programme.

**ENTERPRISE MAURITIUS (LTD.) - WICKMAN MR L. -
CONTRACT**

(No. B/152) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives whether, in regard to the post of Chief Executive Officer of Enterprise Mauritius (Ltd.), he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to –

- (a) the reasons as to why the contract of Mr Laurence Wickman has not been renewed, indicating the procedure followed for his recruitment, and
- (b) if another CEO has been appointed, indicating whether
 - (i) the post was advertised, and
 - (ii) the terms and conditions attached thereto.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, with regard to both Messrs Lance Wickman and Prakash Beeharry, their appointment at the head of Enterprise Mauritius was the result of a thorough search exercise.

In the case of Mr Lance Wickman, the House may wish to note that in the context of the setting up of Enterprise Mauritius (EM), my Ministry approached the Commonwealth Secretariat for technical assistance. The services of Mr Lance Wickman from the New Zealand Trade and Enterprise was made available for a period of one year with effect from 11 March 2005.

The Commonwealth Secretariat provided financial assistance to the tune of Rs202,003 per month to cover part of Mr Wickman's remuneration which amounted to Rs408,198 monthly. Enterprise Mauritius, on its part, provided a monthly top up amounting to Rs206,195.

Towards the end of the first year of deputation, a request was made to the Commonwealth Secretariat for an extension of the deputation period of Mr Wickman for a further period of one year with effect from 11 March 2006. However, the Commonwealth Secretariat agreed to extend the deputation period for a further period of three months only.

A further request was made to the Commonwealth Secretariat in May 2006, but was turned down.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the event that Enterprise Mauritius would have retained the services of Mr Wickman, it would have had to meet the total costs of remuneration which would have amounted to Rs426,048 monthly as from 03 July 2006.

Due to financial constraints, it was considered that it would be less costly for Enterprise Mauritius to have recourse to the services of a Mauritian national to replace Mr Wickman.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the Board of Enterprise Mauritius approved the appointment of Mr Prakash Beeharry as Chief Executive Officer on 06 February 2007 on a three-year contract.

Mr Beeharry is the holder of a Masters degree in Economics as well as an LLB. He has extensive experience at senior management level in areas of international trade, industrial and export development, industrial strategy, export promotion and marketing. He has headed the Export and Investment Promotion arm of the former Mauritius Industrial Development Authority (MIDA) from 2002 to 2003 after having served as Manager, based in London from 1999 to 2002. During the latter posting, he was responsible for the UK, Ireland & Scandinavian regions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a copy of the terms and conditions governing the offer of employment of Mr Prakash Beeharry will be placed in the Library of the National Assembly along with a copy of his CV.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Minister did not answer part (b) (i) of the question as to whether the post was advertised.

Dr. Jeetah: I have replied, Mr Speaker, Sir. Both appointments were done through a thorough search exercise.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether the CEO was formerly employed by MIDA and was dismissed as he took vacation leave against established regulations and took employment at First City Bank?

Dr. Jeetah: I am not aware of this information, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister confirm whether the CEO brought the matter to Court and the Board of Enterprise Mauritius approved the Court settlement of Rs3.5 m.?

Dr. Jeetah: I have already replied to this question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

PALMAR AND BELLE MARE – PLANTERS - RELOCATION

(No. B/153) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the projects for the construction of hotels in the regions of Palmar and Belle Mare, he will state if the planters of these regions are being relocated and, if so, whether alternative plots of land have been allocated to them to carry out their farming activities.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that following meetings which a promoter had with 51 planters in the region of Palmar for a hotel project, the planters have voluntarily relinquished their rights on their leases of State land which they were occupying, against payment of compensation by the promoter. Therefore, these planters do not need to be relocated. The land in question will remain the property of Government and will be leased to the promoter against payment of appropriate rentals as may be determined by the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether any Letter of Intent has been issued to any of the promoters with regard to a hotel or other construction project in this region?

Dr. Boolell: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a letter of reservation which was issued by the Minister of Housing & Lands in respect of 20 arpents of additional State land at Palmar. The reservation is subject to, *inter alia*, the following: an agreement being concluded with the planters for relinquishing their right in the respective leases. This agreement is to be made before a notary public.

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the Minister whether the land in question is irrigation land?

Dr. Boolell: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is land which is under the Irrigation Authority.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House of the number of planters involved in this transfer of land, the amount of compensation that is being paid to these planters, and on what basis it was calculated?

Dr. Boolell: This was a private deal between the promoter and the planters. There are 51 planters involved, and from information obtained, each planter has obtained Rs400,000.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether all the planters have agreed?

Dr. Boolell: Otherwise, the hon. Member knows that there would have been no agreement.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the Irrigation Authority has invested in irrigation projects on these lands?

Dr. Boolell: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Irrigation Authority has invested in these lands. If there is any cost in respect of displacement of pipes, it has to be borne by the promoter.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand that massive investments have been done to irrigate those lands falling under the Irrigation Authority, can I know from the hon. Minister whether the Ministry has changed its policy and now the land is being given in this way?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are not talking of massive investments. If the land can be used for more remunerative purposes - provided there is an agreement between the parties concerned - we have to see to it that there is foreign direct investment, that there is job creation notwithstanding the fact that the project has to be sustainable.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the Minister who is the promoter of that hotel project?

Dr. Boolell: Yes, with pleasure, Mr Speaker, Sir. As far as I can recall, it is the promoter who submitted an application in 2002 and 2004. They were then in Government. His name is Mr Nitinand Reekaye.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if such facilities will be extended to Mauritian planters wishing to convert their land which was previously subjected to irrigation project?

Dr. Boolell: I have stated it *ad nauseum*, Mr Speaker, Sir, that these facilities will be extended to local agricultural farms.

AGRICULTURAL AND NON-SUGAR FARMING ACTIVITIES – LAND USE

(No. B/154) Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in the light of the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy Action Plan submitted to the European Union and in view of the increasing conversion of agricultural land for industrial, Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS) and hotel projects, he will state if a national plan has been prepared for land use for agricultural and non-sugar farming activities and, if so, will he state if a copy thereof will be tabled.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker Sir, I am tabling the reply.

In respect of land use for agricultural and non-agricultural farming activities, there is a revised outline scheme in the context of national development strategy and national socio-economic priorities.

The need to optimise agricultural productivity within available land resources and necessary urbanization has become important.

Land suitability maps, which I am going to lay on the Table of the Assembly, prepared by MSIRI and the Ministry of Agro-Industry & Fisheries provide for release of significant land classified as marginal.

Five maps identifying the sites of cane land in respect of ownership by different categories of planters and suitability of the land are being tabled.

With regard to industrial, Integrated Resort Scheme and hotel projects, I am informed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that provision has been made in the Four District Council Outline Planning Schemes for a flexible and responsive development management approach, instead of the prescriptive and rigid approach. A clustering and sequential approach to development planning is adopted where proposals are likely to be acceptable if they meet all the performance criteria spelt out in the various policies on industrial development and tourism. The relevant policy documents (Policies ID1 – ID4 for industrial development) and (Policies CDT1 – CDT3 for tourism) will be tabled.

PREVOCATIONAL EDUCATION - BILINGUAL EVALUATION

(No. B/155) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to prevocational education, he will state if he has received a request from the *Bureau d'Education Catholique* for a bilingual evaluation for year III in 2007 and, if so, will he state the stand of his Ministry thereon.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to PQs B/155 and B/157, which are similar in nature, at the same time.

My Ministry has received a request from the *Bureau d'Education Catholique* towards the end of January 2007 for -

- (i) a bilingual (English/Kreol) evaluation for year III prevocational, and

- (ii) a joint collaborative programme to develop and facilitate an action research strategy in Mauritian Kreol.

At the outset, I wish to state that the overall policy of my Ministry in regard to the pre-vocational education both in the State and private sectors is that there is a National Curriculum which has been developed in consultation with all stakeholders and which is premised on the use of English as a medium of instruction for all subjects except for French obviously. On the basis of that National Curriculum, all the materials, curriculum guidelines and teaching strategies are based on English which is, and remains, the official medium of instruction, in schools. However, in line with the recommendations of UNESCO for the use of the mother tongue or the language of the environment in the early stages of a child's development, my Ministry does not object to teachers having recourse to Mauritian Kreol as an aid, along with English, for children who have serious learning difficulties or lack the basic foundation skills for effective communication. However, teachers are not authorized to completely disregard English as an official medium of instruction nor should this be the case of children that will grow up, live and work in an international context.

Concerning the request of the BEC for the use of English and Kreol for the purpose of assessing student at the end of their 3-year pre-vocational course, my Ministry has already informed BEC that its request for the proposed bilingual evaluation cannot be approved. The reasons are as follows -

- (a) the pre-vocational end-of year assessment is a National examination which calls for standardization and consistency in certification;
- (b) there are no conclusive research findings at this stage on the use of Mauritian Kreol as a pedagogical tool;
- (c) the proposal will require widespread consultation and prior parental consent;
- (d) a bilingual assessment would assuredly create an undesired language divide between young students, and
- (e) it would be very difficult for a student who has been assessed in Kreol at the end of his three-year pre-voc course to take a year later the NTC Foundation Course Exams in English, or access any other educational system where Kreol is not the mode of assessment.

As regards the second broader issue of a joint collaboration programme for the development of a strategy for the use of Kreol as a medium of instruction in all schools, my Ministry has informed the BEC of its support for any research or study thereon, particularly if the MIE or the University of Mauritius or the Mauritius Research Council is/are involved. The question of a joint collaborative programme does not arise at this stage and unless and until a National policy is evolved on the basis of empirical findings. English is, and will remain the official medium of instruction in schools, with the use of the mother tongue or the language of the environment as spelt out in the earlier part of my reply.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, since the prevocational students have been taught during the past three years to use the *Kreol Morisien* and based on the findings, following a collaboration between the Ministry and BEC last year, which showed that Math concept was better acquired while using the Kreol language and that the students better expressed themselves in this language, I would like to know whether the Minister is aware of these findings and what is his position on these findings?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, when BEC presented the project, the evaluation part was not included in it. It was only submitted to my Ministry in January 2007, and my Ministry has replied, giving reasons which I have just stated. That is in regard to the evaluation part.

With regard to the findings, in fact, I attended the workshop where the findings were presented and I stated at the workshop that they should publish the findings and validate it. Because a research which is carried out by an organisation for public policy has to be widely disseminated and scientifically validated. This is the proposal I made to BEC.

Mrs Labelle: May I know from the Minister whether there is any action initiated by his Ministry for such evaluation?

Mrs Gokhool: Not at this stage! As I said, it is not Government policy for evaluation in Kreol.

Mrs Labelle: May I take it from the Minister that, despite all recommendations by UNESCO and other organisations for the use of mother tongue, specially as he mentioned, for kids who have difficulties, it is still

the policy of the Ministry not to take into account the use of mother tongue for a better acquisition of literacy and numeracy in our country?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member has listened to my explanation, I stated that we have taken on board UNESCO recommendations.

APARTMENT BLOCKS – RESIDENTIAL AREAS - CONSTRUCTION

(No. B/156) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member of Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to if the construction of apartment blocks in residential areas is permitted under the different Outline Schemes, indicating the restrictions, if any, which are imposed.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that construction of apartment blocks in residential areas is permitted under the different Outline Schemes. Such developments are also subject to compliance with the provisions of other Planning instruments, namely the National Development Strategy (NDS) and the Planning Policy Guidance on Designed Guidance (PPG). The Municipal and District Councils are the permit authorities and, acting in accordance with the provisions of the relevant legislation, have to ensure that the criteria spelt out in the planning instruments are duly complied with, prior to issuing any Building and Land Use Permit.

Generally, the Planning Instruments, which provide for the overall planning framework for land use development, recommend higher density developments where such developments are located within areas that have good accessibility or the potential for improved accessibility to public transport and where attractive quality urban environment can be achieved.

I am further advised that, when issuing a Building and land Use Permit, a Local Authority needs to take into consideration such factors as the design and density of the proposed development, the local context where it is intended to carry out the proposed development, the architectural quality, the socio-economic environment, the environmental and traffic concerns such as privacy, daylight, exposure to noise from a

greater volume of traffic and setting of the area, and the visual impact of the development.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether there is any constraint in terms of plot coverage regarding private land, especially in areas which are close to the sea or public beaches?

Mr Dulull: Concerning the regulations around coastal areas the planning guidelines allow for the construction of apartment with a maximum height of Ground + 2 + 50% of the ground floor and with a building height of 18 meters and a plot coverage of 40% of the site.

Mr Ganoo: Does not the hon. Minister think that this figure is a bit too low, when somebody is allowed to construct only 40% of his private land, especially as this is prime land near coastal areas, and this is *une entrave au développement foncier et économique en general?*

Mr Dulull: If need be, we will review to make sure that we can optimise the use of our land.

KREOL MORISIEN – RESEARCH STRATEGY

(No. B/157) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will state if his Ministry has received a request for a joint collaboration programme to develop and facilitate an action research strategy on *Kreol Morisien* and, if so, will he state where matters stand.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/155)

CITE L'OISEAU AND RIVIERE SECHE, FLOREAL – EROSION

(No. B/158) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware of the serious problems of erosion at Cité l'Oiseau and Rivière Sèche, Floreal and, if so, will he state the remedial measures that will be taken.

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

Following representations made, a site visit has been effected in March 2007 and a preliminary proposal to place gabions along the eroded part has been worked out. However, in view of the gravity of the situation, the impact of any remedial measures is being looked into in consultation with the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and the local authorities concerned before implementation during the next financial year.

Mrs Labelle: The hon. Minister made mention of gabions. Is the same action being initiated for Cité l'Oiseau and Rivière Sèche? I am talking of two different localities.

Mr Bachoo: We are looking at both sites at the same time.

CARREAU ESNOUF – WATERCRESS GROWERS

(No. B/159) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether in regard to the problems faced by the watercress growers of Carreau Esnouf in Constituency No. 12, Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, he will state where matters stand.

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

I understand the worries of the watercress planters about the lack of water at Carreau Esnouf. During site visits effected by officers of my Ministry, it has been noted that, currently, there is sufficient flow of water in the springs where the plantations are carried out. Besides, the flow in the springs is higher than what it was in average in the past ten years, excluding 1999.

The Water Resources Unit is closely monitoring the situation. There is, however, a high likelihood that the drying up of the springs is related to a natural phenomenon, that is, a deficit in ground water recharge due to lack of effective rainfall. Past records indicate that the springs still dried up even before any ground water exploitation started in the above region. Equally true is the fact that even when there was no ground water abstraction from the borehole at Union Vale, which the planters claim to be directly responsible for the drying up of the springs, during the period 2001/2002 and March – December 2006, the springs went dry.

The flow in the springs is at present above normal. However, it is to be noted that the amount of water flowing in the watercress plantation is dependent on the amount of rainfall.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am inviting the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries to set up a technical committee comprising representatives of planters, the Central Water Authority, the Water Resources Unit and the Irrigation Authority to look into the problem and find a workable solution.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to a Parliamentary Question last year, the hon. Minister of Public Utilities stated that he would request the hon. Minister of Agro Industry to set up a technical committee. Could I request the hon. Minister to inform the House why this has not been done yet?

Dr. Kasenally: We were looking into it to see whether there were other alternatives. For example, there was a suggestion that we could even have another borehole and try to pump water from it into the watercress region, but this was found to be economically not viable and not cost-effective. We are now looking at the situation anew in view of the fact that, for the first time, in many years, we are having an adequate flow of water. We will try to do our best to ensure that these watercress growers, the *ti-dimounes*, are adequately cared for, and do not face economic hardship.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES –
ADVISERS**

(No. B/160) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether in regard to advisers attached to his Ministry, he will state –

- (a) their names, and
- (b) the date of their appointment.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are at present eight advisers attached to my Ministry and I am tabling the information relating to the second part of the question.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister kindly inform the House on which basis were they appointed?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are a set criteria in terms of requirements of the Ministry and also in terms of the competencies of the advisers and the procedure is for the Ministry to submit the names with recommendation to the Prime Minister's Office which eventually gives the approval for the appointment of advisers.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has just stated that there are a set criteria. Could he inform the House what are these criteria?

Mr Gokhool: It is a combination of academic and professional qualifications as well as experience in the field that are taken into account and also the needs of the Ministry.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has talked about the needs of the Ministry. Could he inform the House in what way his Ministry needed advisers?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that my Ministry takes care of two sectors: Education and Human Resources. Previously, it was only a single ministry, that is, the Ministry of Education, and 17 advisers were posted to one Ministry. Now, I have the responsibility for two huge sectors. I think I am coping with half the number of advisers.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is not how many advisers the previous Government had and how many we have, because the people voted for a change. Could the hon. Minister inform the House to which specific departments are the advisers attached to?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the advisers are posted to various departments, for example, infrastructural management, human resource management and development, E-government, examinations, educational reforms, international relations, school management and also information matters.

Mr Varma: Prior to the appointment of these advisers, Mr Speaker, Sir, were there not civil servants dealing with these specific departments?

Mr Gokhool: In fact, this is an old established practice that Ministers are supported by advisers. I have not invented this system, but wherever there is a need for complementary advice...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, the advisers are there to provide specific advice with regard to certain sectors where the resources are not available in the Ministry.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, could the hon. Minister inform the House where the specific advice was not available so that he had to have recourse to advisers outside the Ministry?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, there are projects and issues which crop up. Together with the advice or the services of the officers, we also need other specific advice with regard to projects and issues and it is a matter which crops up as we are working in the Ministries.

Mr Varma: I have another supplementary question, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister has said that there are issues that crop up where advice is needed. Will he consider to have advisers on an ad-hoc basis and not on a full-time basis?

Mr Gokhool: I think the overall policy is to have advisers on a contract basis, but this is not ruled out because there are advisers who can also be appointed on a project basis.

CHEMIN GROS BOIS – TARRING

(No. B/161) Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he is aware of the bad state of the road leading from La Vigie-Plaine Magnien Highway to Mare d'Albert, commonly known as Chemin Gros Bois, and, if so, will he state –

- (a) since when it has been in that state and has not been repaired, indicating the reasons therefor, and
- (b) the remedial measures that will be taken.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Grand Port/Savanne District Council that part of the road of about 01 km, commonly known as Chemin Gros Bois, which is bounded by sugarcane fields, belonging to the Savannah Sugar Estate, is in a deplorable state. The remaining part of the road, where residential buildings exist, is in good condition. The District Council has also informed that it could not proceed with the tarring of that part, as it is a private road.

Part (b) of the question, therefore, does not arise at this stage, given that the road is a private one.

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to a Parliamentary Question last year, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Public Infrastructure informed the House – and he also visited the place – that the Ministry of Local Government would take up the matter with Savannah S.E.. Will he inform the House whether there has been any contact with Savannah S.E. regarding this road?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the District Council contacted Savannah S.E. and, since it is still a private road, the next step would be to have it public. I must inform the House as well that the financial implication is very high. But, anyway, we have already contacted Savannah S.E.

VILLAGES TOURISTIQUES – LOCATION

(No. B/162) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will state if any of the *villages touristiques*, as announced in the last Budget, will be located in Constituency No. 13, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac, and, if not, why not.

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment (Dr. V. Bunwaree): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I am replying to this question, as it is in relation with the Budget.

As announced in the Budget 2006-2007, the Empowerment Programme will support the setting up of five tourist villages around the island. These villages will offer shopping outlets, restaurants and leisure facilities.

I wish to inform the House that a sub-committee under the Empowerment Programme has been set up to oversee the implementation of the tourist villages. For the first tourist village, the sub-committee has identified a plot of land of 05 acres in the East, at Belle Mare. I am informed that the committee is defining the project concept and will shortly be soliciting the services of architectural firms/individuals for the project design through an open competition.

The committee is also looking for other suitable sites for the setting up of the remaining tourist villages. For the selection of the sites, consideration will be given to the following criteria, namely –

- that the region has the potential to generate a critical mass of tourists
- it is easily accessible to tourists
- it is practical for SMEs to carry out sustainable operations
- the historic and cultural aspects of the region, and
- the involvement of the hotels and other tourist operators as feeders to the tourist villages.

I am further informed that the sub-committee is aiming to have, at least, one tourist village in the northern, southern, eastern and western regions. Consequently, at this stage, the possibility of having one tourist village in the South cannot be disregarded.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Minister be able to inform **the House** when was the last meeting of that sub-committee?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have this information right now, but I will look into the matter and inform the House at a later stage.

Mr Mohamed: Would the hon. Minister be able to inform us who are the members forming part of that sub-committee?

Dr. Bunwaree: I cannot reply offhand. I know one or two members, but I will convey the message to the substantive Minister.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister if he can inform the House who are the members forming part of the main committee, and on what basis Belle Mare was chosen with regard to other locations in the Eastern coast of Mauritius?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a sub-committee; there is no main committee. I don't understand the meaning of main committee. There is a sub-committee looking into the matter.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I, therefore, ask the hon. Minister on what criteria was Belle Mare chosen in lieu of Trou d'Eau Douce and GRSE? Previously, we put the same question in Parliament, and I was made to understand that it would be considered. I would like to know why this has not been considered and why Belle Mare has been considered.

Dr. Bunwaree: I believe the criterion is the same for all the others I have already mentioned. This particular point can be looked into.

Dr. Ramloll: Mr Speaker, Sir, I just heard the Minister say that these tourist villages are concentrated in the northern, southern, eastern and western areas. Can I impress upon the Minister to look into the possibility of having one such village in the region of La Laura/Malinga, in view of the geographical location and the developments to come in future?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, the first criteria is that the region should have the potential to generate a critical mass of tourists. This is very important. The region can be very interesting, but we should look at the critical mass. A survey has to be carried out to look into that.

Mr Mardemootoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister consider the region of Telfair to be one of the potential spots for that *village touristique*?

Dr. Bunwaree: I think this is an interesting suggestion.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister if he can, at least, tell us who is the president of the sub-committee and who appointed this person as such?

Dr. Bunwaree: I will convey the message to my colleague, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am just asking who is the president of the sub-committee.

CONSTITUENCY NO. 13 – MAIN ROADS – RESURFACING

(No. B/163) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping whether he will state if it is proposed to resurface the road leading from La Flora to Tyack and the other main roads in Constituency No. 13, Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac, and, if not, why not.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, the following main roads are being resurfaced before the end of the financial year –

- (i) Savanne Road (A 9) from Britannia to Tyack;
- (ii) La Baraque Road along Rivière des Anguilles village.

I wish to inform the House that resurfacing works at La Baraque Road (B8), along l’Escalier village and Pandit Giri Gossagne Napal Road (B88), were completed in March 2007.

I am circulating the programme of resurfacing works in Constituency No. 13 for the next three years. But, I am open to any suggestion regarding other resurfacing works within the budget. **(Appendix I).**

AIRPORTS OF MTIUS (LTD) –EMPLOYEES - COURSES

(No. B/164) Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Airports of Mauritius (Ltd) information as to if its employees have been requested since July 2005 to date, to follow courses at a private institution and, if so, the reasons therefor.

(Withdrawn)

LOW-INCOME FAMILIES – ‘SITES & SERVICES’ HOUSING PROJECT

(No. B/165) **Mr S. Mohamed (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac)** asked the Minister of Housing & Lands whether, in regard to the project of proposing land to low income families at almost cost price, as announced in the last Budget, he will state where matters stand.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the project for acquisition of land for onward sale at cost recovery to low-income families after provision of required infrastructure, as announced in the 2006-07 Budget Speech, is being implemented under the Empowerment Programme.

I am further advised that a sub-committee that has been set up has already started the exercise for identification of land. Consultations have already been initiated with concerned stakeholders in this respect.

Sir, I wish to state that I shall ensure, as Minister of Housing & Lands, and at my Ministry's end, the acceleration of the implementation of the "Sites and Services" housing project.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Minister consider or has his Ministry consider the constituency of Rivière des Anguilles/Souillac as a potential area for the implementation of this proposal referred to in the last Budget, and if it has not been considered, why not so?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are considering different places where the demand for housing is high, and added to it is the question of availability of land. If the need is felt in Constituency No. 13, we will look into it.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House or give a list of the different areas where land is available for low income families?

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will table a list of the different areas where land is available.

**ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTRE – MEMBERS - HAJJ
MISSION 2006 – AIRFARES, PER DIEM ALLOWANCES, FEES**

(No. B/166) **Mr S. Lauthan (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Arts & Culture whether, in regard to the Hajj mission 2006, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Islamic Cultural Centre, information as to the total amount of money spent on each of the 12 members in terms of airfares, *per diem* allowances and other fees.

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am tabling the information obtained from the Islamic Cultural Centre.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can we know from the hon. Minister if the report of the last Hajj mission is ready? In case it is, could he table the report?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware of the report, but if we have got a report, I will table it.

Mr Lauthan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I make an appeal to the hon. Minister? Being given the chaos that has resulted with the organisation of the last Hajj, can I know whether guidelines have been set, so that the next mission be prepared as soon as possible to avoid such problems recurring?

Mr Gowressoo: Yes, Sir.

AIR MAURITIUS (LTD) – FINANCIAL LOSS

(No. B/167) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from Air Mauritius (Ltd), information as to if –

- (a) the company has ended its financial year ending 31 March 2007 with a loss of eight million euros and, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the percentage of loss attributable to the Air Mauritius-Air Seychelles deals, and
- (c) whether any disciplinary action is being contemplated against those responsible for such losses.

(Withdrawn)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 8 – HEALTH CLUBS

(No. B/168) Mr S. Dayal (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Health & Quality of Life whether he will state if it is proposed to set up health clubs in Constituency No. 8, Quartier Militaire and Moka and, if so, when and where.

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, to date, there are 28 health clubs throughout the island.

In line with the National Service Framework for Diabetes, which places emphasis, *inter alia*, on physical activities, a survey will be carried out with a view to setting up additional health clubs in other regions, including Constituency No. 8, Quartier Militaire and Moka.

**AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD –
CHAIRMAN & GENERAL MANAGER – OVERSEAS MISSIONS**

(No. B/169) **Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE)** asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the missions undertaken by the Chairman and General Manager of the Agricultural Marketing Board since their appointment, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, a list thereof, indicating in each case –

- (a) the countries visited;
- (b) the purpose of the visit, and
- (c) the expenditure incurred for air fares and *per diem* allowances.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will circulate the reply. (Appendix II)

Mr Guinness: Can I know from the hon. Minister whether there was any mission undertaken by either the General Manager or Chairman to India and the purpose of that visit?

Dr. Boolell: It was on two occasions to India. On the 07th to the 19th, it was the AMB which met the expenses incurred, and then on the 22nd to the 28th, the expenses incurred were met by APEDA of India. The purpose of the visit is the following –

- (i) the opportunity to inter-act with existing and the potential suppliers;
- (ii) to ensure that there is regularity of supply, and
- (iii) in respect of seed potato that could be imported provided, of course, sanitary and phytosanitary measures are complied with and then the possibility to import onions with a long shelf-life.

Mr. Gunness: Concerning onions, is it the same delegation to India which ordered a cargo of onions and in which there was some 600 tonnes of perished onions which we had to destroy here?

Dr. Boolell: From information obtained, it seems that there were onions that were imported, but were happened to be of poor quality, and they have impressed upon the supplier to refund the expenses incurred and the claims have been put.

Mr. Gunness: Can we know the total cost of perishable onions that were imported?

Dr. Boolell: I know there is a claim of over Rs7.3 m. But whether the full amount would be refunded, I know the matter is being discussed and looked into.

POTATOES (IMPORTED) – PRICE

(No. B/170) Mr. G. Gunness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the hon. Minister of Agro industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to imported potatoes, he will state if the price thereof has been liberalised and if so, since when and will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Agricultural Marketing Board, the following information since that date –

- (a) the name of the importers, indicating the quantities imported by each of them;
- (b) the quantities imported by the Board, indicating the price paid for the last shipment received, and
- (c) the price at which the Board is selling potatoes to the traders.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Agricultural Marketing Board that in regard to imported potatoes, the price has been liberalised since 01 January, 1998. Government, at that time, decided to stop subsidising potatoes on which huge losses were incurred by AMB.

It was also an opportunity to boost production because of more remunerative prices being offered to planters or growers. In respect of the

information sought from the date of liberalisation, I have been provided with the following information –

- (a) the quota allocation for the years 2000 – 2006. This will be tabled;
- (b) as regards quantities imported by the Board since 1998, these are also being tabled while the price for the last shipment of potatoes received from India at AMB inclusive of all charges is Rs15,000 per tonne;
- (c) AMB is selling potatoes to traders in the price range of Rs16,700 to Rs20,500 per tonne. The AMB has informed that sales of potatoes undertaken through offers from dealers and the most competitive price is determined by the quality of the potatoes put on sale, the quantity purchased by the prospective buyers and on the arrival date of this consignment.

Mr Guinness: Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether AMB buys potatoes from the importers?

Dr. Boolell: It did. It purchased 565 tonnes of imported potatoes in the month of March 2007 from private importers and that was shortly after cyclone Gamede.

Mr Guinness: Can the hon. Minister tell us the price that AMB pays to the importers when it buys from them?

Dr. Boolell: I think I stated it. It is Rs15,800 per tonne and AMB sold the potatoes at Rs20,000 per tonne whereby the normal market price was at Rs16,000 per tonne.

Mr Guinness: Does the hon. Minister find this situation a normal one?

Dr. Boolell: The rationale behind the purchase is, one, to build on existing stock, to ensure that there is not going to be any shortfall, because following cyclone Gamede, there was a huge rush to buy potatoes since this is a staple commodity. And secondly, from information obtained, they tried, of course, to see to it that the price provided to consumers be at the prevailing market rate, that is, Rs11 per pound.

Mr Guinness: The hon. Minister will agree with me that the importers pay a price of Rs15,000 per tonne and they are selling it to traders on the market at Rs18,000 per tonne. But when AMB buys it from those importers, they sell it to the traders Rs20,500 per tonne. Therefore, we are increasing the price to the final consumers and it's not normal.

Dr. Boolell: In fact, it is precisely to build an existing stock and secondly, to see to it that the price is properly regulated so that the consumers can afford potatoes at Rs11 per pound, which is the selling rate.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: From the hon. Minister's answer, it was clear that the price at which the potatoes was sold was much higher than the price that they usually get. May I know from the hon. Minister what was the rationale behind selling the potatoes at such a higher price?

Dr. Boolell: As I have stated, firstly, to ensure that that it is quality product, and secondly, to see to it that there is regularity of supply.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister what was the rationale behind taking the potatoes from the importers and selling them at a higher price to the consumers so that, finally, the consumers had to pay more for a commodity that could have been obtained. What is the rationale behind it?

Dr. Boolell: In fact, there was the risk that there could have been hoarding. This is the reason why the Agricultural Marketing Board has to see to it that...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Next question!

**RICHE TERRE – DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS –
TIANLI COMPANY LTD.**

(No. B/171) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the development projects to be undertaken at Riche Terre and the surrounding regions by Tianli Company Ltd., he will state the different components of the projects and the facilities offered to the company.

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

The Tianli Group project comprises the setting up of the Tianli Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone. The name is from Tianli itself. This project will entail foreign direct investment to the tune of Rs17 billion, (that is, 500 million USD) spread over a period of five years and the economic zone is expected to generate some 5,000 local direct jobs over the same period. In addition, the zone is expected to generate export earnings of around Rs6.8 billion annually once the project is fully implemented.

The Tianli Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone will also be declared as a Freeport zone.

The components of the project comprise an industrial zone to accommodate light assembly, processing, manufacturing activities, food processing, Tourism Souvenirs Manufacture, home appliances and garment making by Chinese companies.

In addition, the zone will also comprise residential headquarters for expatriate workers, a service facility to provide support services, logistics and common warehousing facilities, shopping facilities and exhibition halls, and a business centre.

As regards to the facilities offered, Government has leased out a plot of land of 211 hectares (approximately 500 acres) to Tianli for a 99-year period.

The promoter will also benefit from facilities that any third party Freeport developer is normally entitled to, namely, a corporate tax of 15%, exemption from customs duties and value added tax on all materials, equipment and machinery entering the zone. It will also be exempted from the provisions of the Local Government Act relating to rates, levies and licences.

I wish to inform the House that we have been aggressively competing against other African countries for the Tianli business operations to be located in Mauritius. The other African countries had offered Tianli much more favourable terms and facilities such as tax holidays, financing of onsite infrastructure facilities and land free of charge. In fact, these were the initial requests which Tianli had made to set up its economic zone in Mauritius.

It is only after arduous negotiations and owing to our new favourable business environment that Tianli Group has decided to set up its economic and trade cooperation zone in Mauritius.

In view of the substantial benefits expected from the project in terms of FDI and job creation, we firmly believe that Tianli project will contribute decisively to the achievement of our objective of enhanced economic growth.

Mr Cuttaree: The hon. Minister has said that he expects an investment Rs17 billion in that zone. Can I ask the hon. Minister what are the projects in which this investment is going to come?

Dr. Bunwaree: I don't need to read it again, I have mentioned in which projects they are going to invest. I can give the hon. Member a copy. There is a list which I have just mentioned.

Mr Cuttaree: Last week, the Minister of Agro Industry answered a question on this project. He said that he is not aware of the projects in which Tianli is going to invest. Now, the hon. Minister is telling me that I should know. Can I ask the hon. Minister on what basis does he come to the conclusion that, over these five years, during which the investment is going to happen, 5,000 jobs are going to be created and in what areas?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already mentioned the components of the project. I can repeat it. The whole region will be considered as a Freeport zone and they are going to invest in various activities. According to the plan which they have submitted, it would be the investment of Rs17 billion over five years and 5,000 direct jobs to be created.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the Minister when was the Letter of Intent issued to Tianli Company Ltd.?

Dr. Bunwaree: There is a framework agreement which has been signed in the month of March this year.

Mr Bérenger: Since the hon. Prime Minister said only a few days back that, if required, alternative land will be found for this project, can I ask the Minister whether before replying to this question, he has liaised with the hon. Prime Minister to see where matters stand?

Dr. Bunwaree: The matter is being looked into, Mr Speaker, Sir. But the project is so attractive that all of us have to be patriotic, including the planters who are there.

Mr Bundhoo: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether Tianli Company Ltd was given the same or different facilities in various parts of the world and, if yes, why did they choose Mauritius?

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already answered. They could have gone to other countries, but they have been attracted by Mauritius. In fact, they have asked for many things which they have not obtained and yet they have come to Mauritius. We must not forget the active involvement of the Prime Minister with his economic diplomacy which has helped these people to come here.

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Minister whether it is wise to commit that acreage of land for 99 years, being given the world economic situation, and things evolve fast in the globalised world?

Dr. Bunwaree: This is the same land that we had earmarked before 2000 for the cybercity of Mauritius and they decided to leave it bare land and they went somewhere else to take the most productive land of the country. This is a matter of opinion, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mrs Perrier: Sir, in his reply, the Minister stated that 5,000 jobs will be created for that project. He also stated that there are expatriate workers who would be accommodated on the land. Can we know which category of expatriates will be accommodated?

Dr. Bunwaree: Of course, we cannot expect that there would be no expatriates when they are coming from their country to invest, but the conditions will always be the same, that expatriates will come to work only in such posts where Mauritians are not available or are not willing to work.

Mr Guinness: Has the Minister checked, because last week, I laid some photos on the Table of the Assembly to show that the company has already encroached on the land. Has the Minister had the opportunity to see to it, because the actual lease has not yet expired. Can the Minister confirm whether the company has already moved on site?

Dr. Bunwaree: I am not aware of that. I'll check, Mr Speaker, Sir,

Mr Guinness: Can the Minister inform the House whether the rezoning of the land has already been done?

Mr Speaker: Can I inform hon. Members that I read in the press yesterday that there is a Court case pending before the Judge in Chambers and that the lawyer appearing for the applicant, made a statement before the Court, and the Judge said that we should abstain from referring to the matter. I saw that in the press yesterday. I will invite hon. Members to be very cautious while putting questions.

Mr Guinness: My question has nothing with the case, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am just asking whether the land has already been rezoned.

Dr. Bunwaree: I am not aware, Sir. I have to check.

SMALL PLANTERS – COMPENSATION - CYCLONE GAMEDE

(No. B/172) **Mrs L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for la Caverne & Phoenix)** asked the Minister of Agro industry & Fisheries whether he will state if it is proposed to grant some form of compensation to small planters for the losses incurred as a result of bad weather conditions associated with cyclone Gamede.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to circulate the reply because the incentives and facilities being granted to planters are so extensive. (**Appendix III**).

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister since when the compensation has been given to the planters and what is the amount?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, we offer loans at a very concessionary rate to the planters at the rate of 3% interest per annum, while the market rate is 14%. The number of loans processed and approved stands at 2,203 for a total amount of Rs96.4m. Over and about that, accounts of planters, which are in arrears, are being rescheduled on a case to case basis and a substantial repayment period is being granted to them. Then, of course, there is the Small Planters Welfare Fund which has implemented a Crop Insurance Scheme for vegetables and I have been informed that 503 insured planters were found to be eligible for an indemnity.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Will the hon. Minister say whether any form of support has been given to the small planters in terms of fertilizers, seeds or seedlings which are normally given in such cases?

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, seeds have certainly been given to the planters and I can state, in no uncertain terms, that the recovery for vegetable crops, as far as new plantations are concerned, is as high as 80%.

Mr Bodha: Will the Minister say whether there has been any compensation in cash as was the case in the past?

Dr. Boolell: No, Sir. When compensation was given by the previous Government, it was done on the eve of the general elections and it amounted to bribery, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is no need to raise the voice. Last question, hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that a substantial period of time will be given for the repayment of the loan. May I know from the Minister what is the substantial period time?

Dr. Boolell: Sir, in respect of sugar cane, it is the sum of Rs8,000 per arpent repayable in five years, including one year moratorium. For vegetables and fruits, it is Rs30,000 per arpent repayable in four years, including six months moratorium. For pig and livestock breeders, it is the sum of Rs40,000 per borrower; for the small fishermen: Rs40,000 per borrower; for the hydroponic projects: Rs75,000 per borrower, all three repayable in four years, including six months moratorium.

SC/HSC EXAMINATION FEES – 2003 TO 2007 – SUBSIDIES

(No. B/173) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the examination fees for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate for each of the years 2003 to 2007, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, the number of students who entered for those examinations, and
- (b) indicate the amount of subsidies disbursed by his Ministry.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the deadline for the payment of fees for SC and HSC examinations was initially on 09 April 2007 for students

from State/Grant Aided Private Secondary Schools and 10 April 2007 for fee paying secondary schools. Upon requests from many schools, additional entries would be collected by the MES up to 19 April 2007 without penalty, in view of the fact that more and more students are showing interest to take part in these examinations on account of the Government subsidy.

I am informed by the MES that it is only after the whole exercise is over that it will be possible to indicate the position of the number of students who have entered these examinations. I am tabling the information available as at now for years 2003 and 2007.

As regards the second part of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, the amount of subsidies disbursed for SC and HSC by my Ministry in respect of 50% subsidy on examination fees for school going candidates sitting for the first time for financial years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 is being tabled.

In 2007, it is to be noted that, under the new scheme the Ministry of Social Security will meet –

- the full cost of examination fees for those students coming from households earning less than MUR 7,500, and
- in the case where two or more students in a household would be sitting for SC or HSC examinations, it will meet 50% of the cost of examination fees for students provided the monthly income of the household does not exceed MUR 10,000.

As regards the other school going students sitting for the SC and HSC examinations for the first time, 25% of the cost of these examination fees will be borne by my Ministry through a transfer of fund to the MES, in due course. The exact amount will be known only when the whole exercise of registering students for these examinations is completed. Indicatively, the total Government subsidy for the SC and HSC examination this year will be in the range of MUR 140 m and MUR 150 m.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister, since he cannot give the final number of students who have entered for the exams, the percentage of students who have already paid for the SC exams up to date?

Mr Gokhool: I cannot give the figure in percentage. The absolute figures are 18,428 for SC and 8,418 for HSC.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May we know from the Minister what was the number of students for these two categories who had entered exams last year?

Mr Gokhool: I can give the figure for that year. For 2006, the number of students for SC was 19,371 and for HSC, it was 8,862. However, I need to add that the figures for 2007 do not include those who will pay the fees and then I'll be able to give the total figures.

SC/HSC EXAMINATION FEES – YEAR 2007 – SUBSIDIES

(No. B/174) Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the payment of examination fees for the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate for the year 2007, she will state the amount of money disbursed as subsidies by her Ministry.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as to date, my Ministry has made a payment of Rs73,587,589.50 to the Mauritius Examination Syndicate with regard to students eligible for the 100% and 50% payment of examination fees for School Certificate and Higher School Certificate.

Dr. Hawoldar: May I ask the hon. Minister how many students are getting the facility of full payment of fees for the year 2007 and how many students had full facilities for the year 2006? I would like to know the approximate number of students.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a total number of students eligible on this new scheme which amounts to 8,620. Out of this, 7,852 are eligible under the criteria of 100% and 768 under the criteria of 50% compared to 2006 where there were only 1,828 and money was disbursed at the tune of only Rs8 m.

ALEEMIAH COLLEGE - INCIDENTS

(No. B/175) **Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East)** asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the situation prevailing at the Aleemiah College, Phoenix, he will state where matters stand, indicating the measures that will be taken by his Ministry to redress the situation.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, the continued unrest at Aleemiah College (Girls) was the result of two incidents, namely the circulation of a letter by a teacher, which students of Forms I to III were forced to sign, under threat, to the effect that they had not participated in the protest of 16 March 2007 and the fact that some students were insulted by two teachers.

The PSSA and the Implementation Committee are currently working on the recommendations contained in the mediator's report and I am personally following up the matter. In the meantime, some other problems have, unfortunately, cropped up: for instance the letter which the students of Forms I to III were forced to sign or/and the alleged disparaging remarks by a lady teacher towards some students.

In order to create the required conditions for a normal resumption of studies at the beginning of the second term on 23 April 2007, I have taken the following steps -

- (i) I personally met the President of the Halkae Quadria Ishaat-I-Islam, on 14 March 2007, to review with him the situation at Aleemiah College and to ensure that all problems affecting the school are resolved within the set structures. The President of the Halkae Quadria Ishaat-I-Islam has agreed to collaborate and has also given the assurance that he does not propose to close the school;
- (ii) I have also been in contact with the Student Council, the PTA and the teachers' representatives;
- (iii) I have requested the PSSA to have a team of supervisors to regularly visit the school, interact with the students, teachers and parents in order to forestall any problem;
- (iv) I convened a meeting on 05 April 2007 with the representatives of teachers, PTA and the Student Council, to hear the grievances of these three parties and to decide on the way

forward on how to stabilize the situation in the present conditions. I have stressed upon all these parties on the need that appropriate procedures be followed to bring a comprehensive solution to the above-mentioned problems so as not to aggravate the situation;

- (v) as a result of that meeting, I have set up a Fact Finding Committee under the chair of my Permanent Secretary. This Committee has been mandated, to hear the different parties involved in the above incidents especially the two incriminated teachers and the manager of the school. The students will also be allowed to depone before this Committee. This Committee will also be required to come up with recommendations on the way forward, and
- (vi) I shall have a working session with the Implementation Committee whereby I will make an audit of the recommendations that have so far been implemented and take stock of what remains to be done on 19 April 2007. The other recommendations of the mediator's report will also been taken on board by this Implementation Committee. All the proposals made by the different stakeholders, namely the representatives of teachers, Parents Teachers Association and the Student Council, at my meeting with them on 05 April 2007, will be taken up at the level of the Implementation Committee on 19 April 2007.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is unfortunate that instead of assisting and finding a comprehensive solution or helping to assist in the implementation of the solution to contain the unrest, some quarters are creating more unrest by erroneously amplifying the situation to further their own personal agenda.

Having said this, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry, in liaison with the PSSA, is closely monitoring the situation at the school. I also propose to effect a visit to Aleemiah College at the beginning of the second term.

Dr. Husnoo: There have had different committees that have been set up to try to solve the problems that have been going for the last six months. We have committees from the Ministry of Education, from Halkae Quadria Ishaat-I-Islam and two *ad hoc* committees. There is one manager there and one post of manager is being advertised as well. All these committees, all

these managers are being appointed, may I ask the hon. Minister who is in charge of that college and who is the manager in charge of that college?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a manager of the college. He is a Rector who looks after the administration of the college. But as I have indicated, the college is owned by a religious body; this is the set up in which the college operates.

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform us whether there had been a decrease in the intake of the students in Form I and Lower VI this year?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the intake this year, there has been a slight decrease, but as the hon. Member will note, admission to colleges is by parental choice. This is the situation not only in Aleemiah College, but there are other colleges which are facing this decline in student population.

Mr Soodun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is aware that Dr. Subraty has been designated as mediator and can the hon. Minister confirm to the House if the report of Dr. Subraty is being implemented?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the case, because initially Government decided that a set of priority recommendations be implemented, then there were representations made that the other recommendations should also be taken on board. This is the case and the Implementation Committee has taken all the recommendations on board. There are, I think, about 52 and it will take some time to ensure the implementation of all these recommendations.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House how many items are being taken into consideration out of the 52 recommendations made by Dr. Soobratty.

Mr Gokhool: I don't have the exact figure, but I can check from the report that I have here. From the last report that I have got, there are 15 of them which have been looked into and action has been taken. The committee continues to meet to look at the other recommendations.

Mr Lauthan: M. le président, l'honorable ministre a parlé au début de sa réponse de « *continued unrest* ». Ne pense-t-il pas que le ministère et la PSSA auraient dû jouer leur rôle de régulateur d'autorité ? Suite à une question de mon collègue la dernière fois, au lieu de publier les 52 recommandations, on avait choisi de publier 22 seulement en escamotant les 30 autres recommandations, parmi 19 touchaient des manquements au niveau de l'administration et 4 soulignaient des manquements au niveau de la PSSA. C'est ce qui a amplifié la colère et la frustration parmi eux.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, I differ from the opinion of the hon. Member because the idea is to bring back the situation to normal. That is why Government decided, in its own deliberate judgment, to look at those recommendations which are priority, and Government has not left out the other recommendations. These are being looked at.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Gokhool: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I, by way of information, inform the House that there is a Union which is deliberately trying to stir up the students and the chairperson of the Parent Teacher Association has made a public statement that that Union should stay away from the problem which is at Aleemiah College.

Mrs Perrier: M. le président, est-ce le ministre peut s'assurer que derrière ce dégraissage d'élèves, il n'y a pas l'intention déguisée de fermer le collège pour le convertir en un collège technique ou payant?

Mr Gokhool: I have given my answer. The organisation has told me that they don't intend to close the school.

JEAN LEBRUN GOVERNMENT SCHOOL – CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

(No. B/176) Dr. A. Husnoo (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Jean Lebrun Government School, he will state if he is aware that the building is structurally unsafe and that there was a project for a new building, the construction of which was due to start in April 2007 and, if so, will he state if construction has started and if not –

- (a) whether it has been rescheduled, and
- (b) when works are likely to start.

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

A survey carried out in 2005 revealed that the buildings housing the Jean Lebrun Government School were structurally safe.

As regards the project for a new building to accommodate the pre-primary unit and eight classrooms, the works have been re-scheduled as the Engineering Section of my Ministry has advised a soil investigation of the site. The Geotechnical Investigation report is expected by mid-June 2007 and the construction of the new building is expected to start in July 2007 and to be completed by the end of January 2008.

**PAS GEOMETRIQUES/STATE LANDS – TECHNICAL
COMMITTEE**

(No. B/177) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to *Pas Géométriques* and State lands, he will state –

- (a) the expected date of the setting up of the Special Technical Committee, and
- (b) if no option letters will be sent to the lessees before the Committee submits its recommendations.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, following various representations and requests made to my Ministry regarding campement site leases on *Pas Géométriques* and State lands, a Special Technical Committee has already been set up last week. The Special Technical Committee chaired by my Ministry, and comprising of representatives from the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development, the Valuation Department, and the Registrar General's Department, will specifically, *inter-alia*, review the findings of the first Technical Committee in the light of the various representations and requests, and will have such consultations as may be deemed necessary with stakeholders with a view to ensuring that –

- (i) no campement site lessee is unduly penalised;
- (ii) Government policy of maximising revenue from State land is safeguarded, and
- (iii) the public interest prevails over the interest of the individual with due weightage to the notions of fairness and equity, without impairing individual rights, but simultaneously fostering individual obligations to the Mauritian society at large.

To date, no option form has been issued to any of the 1282 campement site lessees, and it is but obvious and natural that no such letter will be issued pending consideration of the findings and recommendations of this Special Technical Committee.

In regard to industrial leases on *Pas Géométriques*, an inter-ministerial committee under the chairmanship of my Ministry has already been set up to review these leases in line with the policy and philosophy behind the new campement site lease.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the review of the findings of the first technical committee will include the reviewing of premiums, rentals, taxes and options as well as the clause of termination so that nobody is unduly penalised.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I mentioned that there will be a global approach so that we don't penalise any individual.

Mr Guimbeau: M. le président, j'aurais aimé déposer sur la Table de l'Assemblée une liste des baux industriels dont des bungalows, des *guest houses*, des *boarding houses*, où il y a une disparité quand même assez choquante. I can table it, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister prepared to table a copy of the findings of this first technical committee on the Table of the Assembly?

Mr Dulull: We will look into the possibility, Mr Speaker, Sir.

PAS GEOMETRIQUES/STATE LANDS - ZONING

(No. B/178) Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the zoning of *Pas Géométriques* and State lands along the coast under categories A, B, C, D or E, he will state the criteria laid down for the determination of each zone.

Mr Dulull: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised that the criteria used for the zoning of *Pas Géométriques* and State lands along the coast are as follows -

- (a) quality of beaches together with sea frontage, and
- (b) estimated market value.

May I emphasise that the zoning exercise has officially been carried out by the Valuation Office, taking these criteria into consideration.

CENTRE POLYVALENT - PAILLES

(No. B/179) Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (First Member for GRNW and Port Louis West) asked the Minister of Local Government whether he will state if the *Centre Polyvalent* of Jonction, Pailles, has been vested in the Black River District Council and, if so, when.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the handing over of the new Recreational Centre at Cité Jonction, Pailles by the National Development Unit to the Black River District Council started on 02 April 2007 and was completed on 13 April 2007.

I wish to inform the House that I have had meetings with the representatives of the Black River District Council as well as members of the *Force Vives* of the region in connection with activities to be organised in that centre.

Mrs Navarre-Marie: M. le président, le ministre peut-il confirmer s'il y a toujours des équipements de la MFDC à l'intérieur de ce bâtiment, ce qui entrave les activités des habitants de la région ?

Dr. David: Il y a quelques équipements de la MFDC, M. le président, mais cela n'entrave en rien parce qu'on a déjà commencé à s'organiser pour les activités.

ENTERPRISE MAURITIUS (LTD) – IRON BARS - REPORT

(No. B/180) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether he is aware that Enterprise Mauritius (Ltd) has recently prepared a report on Government policy in regard to the liberalization of the price of iron bars and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom, information as to if –

- (a) one of its recommendations relates to the need for a transition period before liberalization should take place, and
- (b) a copy thereof could be obtained and be tabled.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is Government decision that with effect from 18 November 2006, prices of iron bars of 8mm and above be increased by 20% pending an in-depth study of the industry by the Management Audit Bureau (MAB), in collaboration with the Commission for the democratisation of the economy. A draft MAB report clearly states that the 20% increase of price of iron bars in 2006 was correct.

During one of the meetings of the Committee set up to conduct the study, of which Enterprise Mauritius formed part, the latter was requested to meet with manufacturers and identify accompanying measures that may be needed to enable them to cope with the proposed measures on iron bars.

Enterprise Mauritius submitted its report to the Committee as a working document. In turn, the MAB team has taken into account the submission of Enterprise Mauritius in making its own report.

The House may wish to note that the policy decisions taken by Government on 06 April 2007 in favour of price liberalisation and reduction of customs duty from 30% to 15% were found to be more appropriate by the ministerial Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Xavier Duval, and comprising of the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Sithanen, hon. Dr. Bunwaree and the Attorney-General, hon. Valayden, and myself.

These decisions were taken after due consideration was given to all views contained in all studies conducted, namely by the Ministry of Industry, the MAB/Ministry of Finance, Enterprise Mauritius and that of the Commission for the democratisation of the economy.

Regarding the request to have one copy of the report to be tabled, I would like to reaffirm that same was commissioned by and submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, The hon. Minister has not answered to my questions. Part (a) of my question is “whether one of its recommendations relates to the need for a transition period before liberalisation should take place”. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the report made these recommendations?

Dr. Jeetah: I have answered, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Minister agreeable to table a copy of the report?

Dr. Jeetah: I have answered that part as well, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Is it yes or no?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Just to help hon. Members, I think the Minister stated that it was commissioned by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Ganoo: Would the hon. Minister answer to another question? I would like to know whether the report stated clearly that the liberalised price would be higher than the fixed standard price?

Dr. Jeetah: I did answer that in the PNQ that we had last week, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

NATIONAL PAY COUNCIL – SETTING UP

(No. B/181) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment whether, in regard to the National Pay Council, he will state –

- (a) the date it has been set up,
- (b) if its Chairperson has been appointed, and
- (c) if the views of the different unions/workers federations have been sought before the setting up of the Council and the appointment of its Chairperson.

Dr. Bunwaree: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to remind the House that paragraph 68 of the Budget Speech of June 2006 made mention of the abolition of the tripartite mechanism for annual wage compensation and the setting up of a National Wage Council which will retain the spirit of tripartism and ensure that the level of wages and compensation are linked to productivity and capacity to pay.

In line with this policy, the National Pay Council is now in the process of being set up administratively.

The National Pay Council will be a tripartite forum constituted of a Chairperson and 15 members as follows –

- 5 representatives from Government
- 5 representatives of employers, and
- 5 representatives of workers

The Council is expected to meet on a quarterly basis. More frequent meetings may be held as and when required.

Mr Sen Marimootoo Ramsamy has been identified to be the Chairperson of the Council.

Employers' and workers' organisations were invited to submit to my Ministry, by Friday last, the names of their representatives who may be considered for appointment as member of the Council.

I have received the proposals of the MEF.

However, the federations of trade unions have notified me that they will not be making proposals for nomination of their representatives on the Council.

In the circumstances, I have renewed my appeal to the federations of trade unions in a letter I have addressed to their federations yesterday, 16 April 2007, to reconsider their position and submit their proposals for nomination by Thursday 19 April 2007 at latest.

As regards part (c) of the question, I have, since September last year, held several meetings with the representatives of the federations of trade unions and also with the Mauritius Employers Federation to apprise them, *inter alia*, of the proposed setting up of the Council.

Mr Ganoo: Is the hon. Minister aware that all the confederations have expressed their disagreement to the appointment of Mr Ramsamy as Chairperson?

Dr. Bunwaree: In a way, I have to say yes, but representatives of other federations have come to me and have expressed their feelings in favour of Mr Ramsamy.

Mr Ganoo: Can the hon. Minister confirm to the House that the three most important confederations, namely NTUC, MTUC and the MLC have all again expressed their disagreement to delinking the question of productivity to annual wage compensation?

Dr. Bunwaree: Yes, Sir, and this has been a constant fight. I even met yesterday three confederations separately and they held the same language. The hon. Member was in Government in 2001 and he must know full well that on 07 December 2001, the then Cabinet agreed that Professor Lim Chong Yah from Nanyang Technological University be appointed as Consultant to review the wage determination mechanisms in Mauritius. He was to be assisted by Professor Reisman and, among the main observations of the Consultant appointed by the then Government in December 2001, was that the current wage determination system is complex with over 460 different rates, over-managed, and with a conspicuous absence of productivity considerations. It is fragmented, uncoordinated, rigid and lacking uniformity in basic fundamentals and the Annual Tripartite

Committee should stop raising wages based only on CPI increases. These were the findings and the then Government had worked on that report. It was agreed in a Cabinet meeting that the National Economic and Social Council be requested to examine and advise them.

(Interruptions)

And they had no time!

Mr Ganoo: In view of the fact that now the National Pay Council will be called upon to determine a yearly minimum wage instead of the annual compensation is, therefore, the Minister confirming the fact that the National Remuneration Board, the PRB, the National Remuneration Orders will be done away with completely in the coming months when the new law will be enacted?

Dr. Bunwaree: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am happy that this question is put so that I can remove the confusion. This has nothing to do with the PRB and NRB. This Council is going to replace the usual mechanism we had, the Tripartite Committee, which, in fact, sat only twice a year in the month of May to decide upon the quantum or the rate of compensation that has to be given for the cost of living. This Council is going to do the same thing. It is not going to enter into the other aspects which the PRB and the NRB are going to look into as usual.

Mrs Perrier: M le président, le ministre dans sa réponse a dit que la *National Pay Council will be set up in the spirit of tripartites*. Est-ce qu'il peut donc confirmer que la vocation de cette nouvelle instance va s'assurer qu'il y ait compensation salariale et non une augmentation de salaire qui n'a rien à voir parce que la compensation était basée sur la perte du pouvoir d'achat du travailleur par rapport à l'inflation de l'année précédente alors que depuis toujours - et cela va continuer à l'être - l'augmentation salariale a toujours été discutée sur une base bilatérale entre employeur et employés ?

Dr. Bunwaree : L'honorable membre a tout à fait raison, mais il faut aussi prendre en considération que les entreprises doivent continuer à fonctionner et qu'il faut enlever les freins qui empêchent les investisseurs de venir. Quand ils apprennent qu'ils doivent continuer le travail comme cela a été le cas jusqu'à maintenant, ils ont peur et ils ne viennent pas. Mais avec cette mesure, on donne plus de confiance aux investisseurs et il est tout à fait logique de prendre en considération la capacité de paiement des entreprises. C'est tout ce qu'on a ajouté.

Mrs Perrier : M le président, comment un ministre du travail peut venir déclarer une telle chose alors que sa mission est de protéger les travailleurs de ce pays ? Comment peut-il venir dire que les investisseurs vont venir, vont être rassurés, si les salaires ne vont pas augmenter ? Est-ce que le ministre est en train vraiment de fonctionner comme un ministre du travail, responsable de la sauvegarde et des intérêts des travailleurs.

Dr. Bunwaree : Ma mission, M. le président, est certainement de protéger les travailleurs, mais aussi d'aider à la création d'emplois et de rendre les familles et les travailleurs de ce pays heureux.

Mr Ganoo : Will the hon. Minister confirm the fact that these five representatives of the workers who will be sitting on the National Pay Council will be, in fact, chosen by the Minister or the Ministry, because all the confederations have been asked to submit their individual list and it will then be up to the Minister to decide who will be the five representatives of the workers? Can the hon. Minister confirm that?

Dr. Bunwaree: It is like that for the NRB and for the institutions. There is nothing new in that.

Mr Ganoo: Does the hon. Minister has any objection that the confederations and the unions themselves select the five representatives.

Dr. Bunwaree: If the hon. Member can help me to ask them to give me five names, I will take these five names.

VERA CLUB – PALMAR – TAXI LICENCE

(No. B/182) Mrs D. Perrier (Fourth Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether in regard to the applications for the transfer of Public Service Vehicle (PSV) taxi licence from holders thereof to operate from the Vera Club at Palmar, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to –

- (a) the number of applications submitted;
- (b) the dates on which the applicants were heard by the Authority, and
- (c) if the applications have been approved and, if not, why not.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Transport Authority that 70 applications were received in April 2005. The applicants were heard by the Licensing Committee on 18, 19 and 20 July 2006.

I am advised that pending the outcome of discussions between the National Transport Authority, hotel-taxi operators, the Ministry of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications and AHRIM to reach an agreement between taxi operators and hotel management on working arrangements for hotel-based taxis, a decision has not yet been taken on the applications.

These discussions are expected to be completed in May of this year and a decision will be taken by the NTA by the end of May.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister say whether all those applications of PSV taxi licence at the Vera Club hotel will be on a priority basis?

Dr. Beebeejaun: There is no priority list. Those who have applied will be given consideration.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to know whether those who are working now since the opening of the Vera Club will have priority on that list?

Dr. Beebeejaun: There is a committee at the NTA. I am not going to interfere.

Mrs Perrier: Can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister confirm whether he has received a shortlist from MPs of the constituencies No. 9 and 10 to whom the licence will be given?

Dr. Beebeejaun: There wasn't any shortlist presented by anyone.

Mrs Perrier: Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to lay this list on the Table of the Assembly.

GRSE/FLACQ – BUS OPERATORS

(No. B/183) **Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he is aware that the bus operators on the route Grand River South East to Flacq have not been paid their dues since January 2007 and, if so, will he state the reasons therefor.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, bus operators are compensated in respect of the free travel scheme subject to provision of satisfactory level of service to students and old aged and disabled persons.

I am informed by the National Transport Authority that the three individual bus operators licensed to operate on the route Grand River South East to Flacq have not yet been compensated for period January 2007 to date as they have not been providing services according to the timetable. In fact, from 01 to 10 January 2007 and on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, there was no service at all and on occasions, only 2 out of the 3 buses were operating. This has caused much hardship to the inhabitants of the region, specially students and old aged and disabled persons.

The National Transport Authority has conducted a full inquiry and is initiating disciplinary proceedings against the bus operators.

Finally and more importantly, despite being requested by the National Transport Authority to submit their waybills in order to determine the amount of compensation payable to them, the operators have so far, failed to do so.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the Minister knows that we have only three individual buses on that route from Flacq to Grand River South East. We know that students and old people travel by these buses. What are the other measures that are taken when these buses are not on the route, apart from not paying them?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been two separate issues. The first is about the three buses operating. I think for humanitarian reason, we'll re-route them and the services will be taken over by the CNT.

We'll provide two buses with 17 trips per day. So, the services will improve.

Mr Gunness: The Minister is telling me that those three buses will be re-routed, that is, they will go on other routes. Can the hon. Minister inform the House what are the routes that these three buses will cover?

Dr. Beebeejaun: One has requested for another route. The other two have not come forward yet, but I think we'll help them and find another route. I think it is only fair that we give to them.

Mr Barbier: Can the Minister give guarantee to the House that the same policy of assessment before payment is applied to each and everyone operating in this sector?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Of course!

TAXIS MALHERES – TAXI LICENCES

(No. B/184) **Mr J. C. Barbier (Third Member for GRNW and Port Louis West)** asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether he will state if application forms have been issued for Public Service Vehicle (PSV) taxi licences to the members of the association called "*Taxis Malhérés*" and, if so, when.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, no application forms for PSV taxi licences have been issued to members of the association called "*Taxis Malhérés*" as such.

The NTA has invited applications for Public Service Vehicle Taxi licences from any interested and eligible persons to operate in twelve localities, following a decision taken by the NTA Authority Board on 03 April 2007.

Press communiqués were published on Wednesday 04 and Thursday 05 April 2007 and the closing date for submission of application forms was Friday 13 April 2007.

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, to put an end to the hunger strike of the *Association Taxis Malhérés*, has the Attorney-General told them that on Wednesday last application forms will be issued to them?

Mr Speaker: How can the Deputy Prime Minister answer for the hon. Attorney-General?

(Interruptions)

Mr Guinness: Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

Mr Speaker: I have already ruled out.

Mr Guinness: I am asking the Minister whether he is aware that application forms from his Ministry have been issued on Wednesday last. The application forms are issued by his Ministry.

Mr Speaker: Next question!

“THE OUTLINE OF ENERGY POLICY” 2007-2025

(No. B/185) Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne and Black River) asked the Minister of Public Utilities whether he will table a copy of the document entitled “The Outline of Energy Policy” 2007-2025 and make a statement on Government policy concerning the preferred strategy, renewable energy and ethanol production.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, in reply to PQ B/45 on 27 March 2007, I informed the House that a document entitled “Outline of the Energy Policy 2007-2025” has been prepared in the context of the accompanying measures tied to the reform of the Sugar Industry as elaborated in the Multi-Annual Adaptation Strategy (MAAS) 2006-2015. This is one of the pre-conditions to the disbursement of the first *tranche* equivalent to 6.543 m. euros by the European Commission. This would have to be followed by a detailed long-term coherent energy policy document for subsequent disbursements. The Outline Energy Policy document has already been forwarded to the European Delegation and it effectively supersedes the Power Sector Capacity Expansion Plan 2006-2013, which had been prepared by my Ministry at an earlier date. I am placing a copy of the document in the Library of the National Assembly.

However, for the benefit of the House, I would like to highlight some of the key policies put forward in the document.

With regard to the Electricity Market Structure, complete unbundling is not considered as being an option and the CEB will continue to be a major player in the generation of electricity. The principle of avoided cost for pricing of electricity sold to CEB by IPPs has been discontinued. Henceforth, as regards Sugar Industry IPPs, there will be an apportionment of investment with respect to common equipment used for the purpose of allowing the sugar industry to mill cane, process sugar, produce ethanol or for any other similar activities not forming part of electricity production for sale to the CEB.

While production of electricity from bagasse would be optimised – I wish to stress on the word “optimise” – that every single gram of bagasse will be used for the production of electricity. The policy would be to ensure

the minimum use of coal in the bagasse-coal plants so as to avoid inefficiency in electricity generation. In the unlikely event that there is a decrease in the amount of bagasse available to any bagasse-coal plant in the long-term – deliberately or *force majeure* – any substitution of bagasse-derived energy by coal-derived energy would be deemed to have been generated from bagasse and would be remunerated accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to point out that this policy of Government to diversify away from oil through the use of coal in dedicated boilers with improved technology and design so as to have an efficient electricity generation.

Moreover, Government has also moved towards renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar. Wind power development would be encouraged and the potential for carbon credits would be meticulously explored. The commitment of Government with respect to the reduction of carbon dioxide emission is reaffirmed and, accordingly, carbon credits would have to be fully tapped for the benefit of Mauritius. The use of solar energy for water heating will be encouraged. As regards electricity production from solar energy, which is more complex, this would be studied as part of the renewable energy Master Plan to be completed by mid-2008.

Biofuel production would have to be on a competitive basis, while the switch to E10 is still being examined by the Ministry of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives. Government is revisiting the strategies and plans for the disposal of solid waste. In the process, disposal by resorting to the incineration option is being seriously envisaged. As electricity generation from waste incineration is a spin-off, the CEB will purchase electricity from any such facility at rates which are competitive and comparable to other sources, so as not to adversely impact on its financial sustainability.

I would like to assure the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, in the process of preparing this document, relevant stakeholders including the delegation of the European Commission in Mauritius, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport & Shipping, the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development, the Ministry of Environment & National Development Unit, the Ministry of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives, the CEB and the Mauritius Sugar Authority have been thoroughly consulted through regular this consultation process, there has been general consensus on the contents of the policy document.

For the purpose of the long term energy policy study, terms of reference have been prepared and submitted to the World Bank and the European Union, among others. A plea has been made for technical assistance to secure the necessary expertise to carry out the task. The terms of reference is an annex of the 'Outline of Energy Policy' document. It is to be pointed out that the preparation of the terms of reference has also gone through the same consultation process, as for the outline energy policy document.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can give us the date on which this new document was submitted to the European Union through the European Commission?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the document was passed on to the Ministry of Finance, which submitted it last week. I understand that it has been forwarded to the European Union in Brussels on Thursday or Friday last week.

Mr Bérenger: Can the hon. Minister say whether there has been any reaction from the local representation of the European Union?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been in constant touch and, as I said, the European Union has set up a structure through which we have to go and, so far, the reaction has been favourable. But, they also wanted to have reaction from all quarters, and that's why we disseminated the information to the various stakeholders last week. I am also making sure that the MSPA gets copies of this document.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are now all aware that coal is the most polluting way of producing electricity. Can I ask the Minister whether anything is provided in the 'Outline of the Energy Policy', and, if so, what is provided, so that any new coal station will use the new techniques, the new technology being developed, and those existing also would have, as far as possible, to switch to non-polluting coal?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, our preferred strategy has been to diversify the country's electricity base away from oil, and to increase the share of coal in the country's energy mix. I agree that the present technology of coal is dirty, and we are hoping to move on to the various other technologies that are available. Currently, the technology that is used is the stoker one, both in the CTDS and the bagasse-coal plants. The various other technologies available are pulverised coal, which is the clean coal technology, fluidized bed, and also gasification of coal, which means an ultra clean coal technology.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is also – since the former Prime Minister is interested in it – the stoker type dirty coal energy, which gives us up to 1,600 kWh per tonne, compared to the new one which we are going to have, which will give 2,200 kWh per tonne. There is a latest technology called gasification, which is the most expensive, converting coal to gas. It is the cleanest but most expensive technology, and will provide us with 2,400 kWh per tonne. Over and above these steps taken, the new pulverised clean coal technology will be made available by CT Power. The CEB is also insisting to have an electrostatic precipitator in the chimney, which would track particles, and the residue of the ash will be disposed in a lined ash pond, so as to deter any seepage through our aquifers, thus causing contamination.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to thank the hon. Minister for having agreed to table a copy of this important document, which will enlighten the House. But, I did not hear the Minister say anything about ethanol production.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, ethanol will be produced by the centralised units at Savannah and FUEL. But, we are leaving it to all the various parties to come to some form of agreement. I understand my colleague, the Ministry of Agro Industry, is doing the necessary so that we have a win win situation for all the parties.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the decision to shift away from oil to coal in the production of energy is because of the volatility of the price of oil. In this report, do we have a study of how the price of coal on the world market will behave in the next three or five years?

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no doubt in my mind and even in the mind of the European Union and the States, where they are moving towards coal, because it is the only fossil fuel available with proven reserves that can last much longer than oil, in addition to its even distribution around the globe, making it less prone to geopolitical and other associated risks and, therefore, less volatile in terms of prices. In the medium term, coal will substitute oil to a great extent, thereby reducing the country's dependence on oil. Such a strategy will allow diversification from oil, with the least uncertainty, and would improve security of electricity supply in the country at lower cost than oil. The price of electricity from coal is about half that produced from oil. The higher efficiency of dedicated coal plants, with better technology and design, would allow the cost of electricity generation from coal to be less than that from bagasse-coal plants.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has mentioned the use of the latest technologies to control gas emission by coal-fired power plants. Can we have an indication of the cost of kw/hr that will be produced by the coal-fired power plant?

Dr. Kasenally: The latest technology is the gasification one. Let me give an idea of how much it costs. For gasification technology, the capital cost is currently about 1,400 dollars per KWh in terms of investment whereas for the present technology, it is about 800 and for the cleaner technology, it is about 1,000 USD per KWh.

Miss Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning all these costing comparisons, may I ask the hon. Minister when we are talking about the coal being the cheapest cost of fuel, whether the future cost on the health budget has been involved in that? There are reports where when we equalize all the future health costs, the comparisons become completely different from what we have.

Dr. Kasenally: It is very difficult to quantify what it may be in terms of cost to health. What can coal dirty technology cause? They are particles, but we are taking steps, as I said in the case of the electrostatic precipitator, to reduce emission of particles. This will ensure a cleaner environment. And in terms of health, what can it cause? If you have got highly polluted coal, you can get obstructive lung disease, pneumoconiosis, which is long term and it will affect only the creatures in a certain degree. I am sorry, we have not managed to quantify it, but what we have to do is to take reasonable steps to ensure that the health of our population is not affected.

Mr Bérenger: Since it is a declared policy to move from oil to coal and we agree that coal is dirty, polluting, are we turning to the European Union or the World Bank or the World Environment Fund to finance the shift to cleaner technologies?

Dr. Kasenally: In fact, the whole world is moving to coal and as the technology improves...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Kasenally: The hon. Member cannot be more royalist! Do the hon. Member wants to have the facts as to the thermal plants? In fact, Germany which is the greenest of all the countries are producing about 100 coal plants. As I said, there is a technology. We are having the clean coal technology; we are also having further entrapment of the carbon dioxide to ensure less carbon emission. Gasification is where carbon is powdered and with high pressure, there is carbon - carbon bonding is broken and with oxygen to give carbon dioxide and with water we can get hydrogen which can be used for hydrogen fuel for further energy. We cannot have cleaner energy than hydrogen.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether we are turning to European Union or the World Bank or the World Environment Fund for financing this shift?

Dr. Kasenally: We are going to be funded with accompanying measures for sugar. There is a component of the accompanying funds, but, of course, we could turn also to the World Bank. I think both the World Bank and the European Union will be interested in introducing cleaner technology. Also, Mr Speaker, Sir, once the technology is improved, the cost will go down. We are expecting that gasification technology which is now costing, as I have said, 1,400 dollars to a KWh to come down. The same thing is for cleaner technology like wind turbines; wind farms are springing all over Europe, even offshore, and, as a result of which, the price of the wind turbines is going to come down and, I think, we will be able to invest.

Dr. Mungur: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister, since this plan is from 2007 to 2025, whether any study has been done currently or any prospective study should be undertaken as regards to the amount of acid rain which will produce by the coal powered plant?

Dr. Kasenally: No study is actually being done, but as we move through the century, as we face the problems, there will be prospective study. But what exactly can cause acid rain? There is sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide. The new technology will be able to trap the sulphur, use

it, and even export the sulphur. As a result, you will reduce the impact of acid rain, or whatever it is, to the environment.

Mr Ganoo: I take note of the fact that the hon. Minister said that a Master Plan for renewable energy is being prepared and ready by next year. We all know the problem with renewable energy is the upfront cost and the cost of the KWh; it is more expensive energy. Can the hon. Minister tell us what is the position with Suzlon, because two years ago when we left the Ministry, the CEB was negotiating with an Indian based firm called Suzlon for the setting up of 25 megawatt plant at Bigara? Can the hon. Minister tell us how things are progressing?

Dr. Kasenally: I would tend to agree we have been a bit slow as far as the wind energy is concerned, because the upfront investment was going to be very expensive. But, as I said recently, there is such a fast development in the field of wind energy that the price is coming down. I think, through the accompanying measures, we will be getting from the European Union a component of that amount which we can use as upfront investment in the wind energy and we are planning to have a wind farm in Bigara.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!